

2026 REFERENDUM FOR FIRE & EMS STAFFING

**PLAN FOR DELIVERING SAFE AND EFFICIENT FIRE AND
EMS RESPONSE TO THE WESTON COMMUNITY**



AGENDA

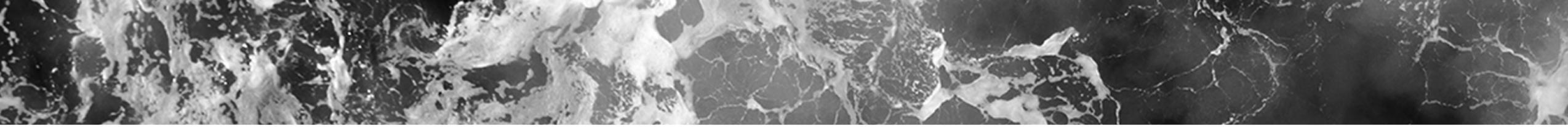
- Key Metrics & How We Got Here
- Population Trends & Rising Costs
- Department Staffing
- Fire Response – *importance, costs, mutual aid*
- Tax Impact
- Questions



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- The district started in 2014 with a heavy dependence on part-time staff.
- The number of part-time staff has decreased significantly since that time, at the same time call volume has significantly increased.
- Fire and EMS are not immune to the significant inflation that occurred from 2021-2024.
- Multiple practices have changed:
 - Until 2021, firefighters earned minimum wage from 2300-0800
 - Until 1/1/2025 some firefighters were not offered health insurance
 - 3 years ago, the EMS Division Chief position was cut from full-time to part-time in an effort to balance the budget
 - Additional hours have been added to EMS training, also new requirements have been placed on individuals to operate fire apparatus by various governmental agencies
- Several options were explored over the past several years:
 - Several efforts have been made to recruit and retain part-time employees
 - A large effort was made to recruit paid on-call firefighters
 - A federal grant was applied for to offset the cost of additional staff
 - SAFER has already maximized the use of automatic and mutual aid





KEY METRICS

Population Growth Rate

The area the SAFER district serves has grown exponentially since formation in 2014. Between 2010 and 2020 Marathon County experienced a total population increase of 3,950 residents, 1,343 of those residents chose to live in the Villages of Weston and Rib Mountain, the following slides shows the growth vs. staff increase since 2016.

Net New Construction

The only way a municipality can increase operating tax revenue is by having an increase in “net new construction.” With this growth comes a greater demand for services across all departments, including police, public works, parks, planning, and fire/EMS.

Inflation

Municipalities are not immune to the high inflation rates the nation has experienced since 2020. Increases to materials (equipment/streets), benefits (health insurance), and wages have all impacted the budget.

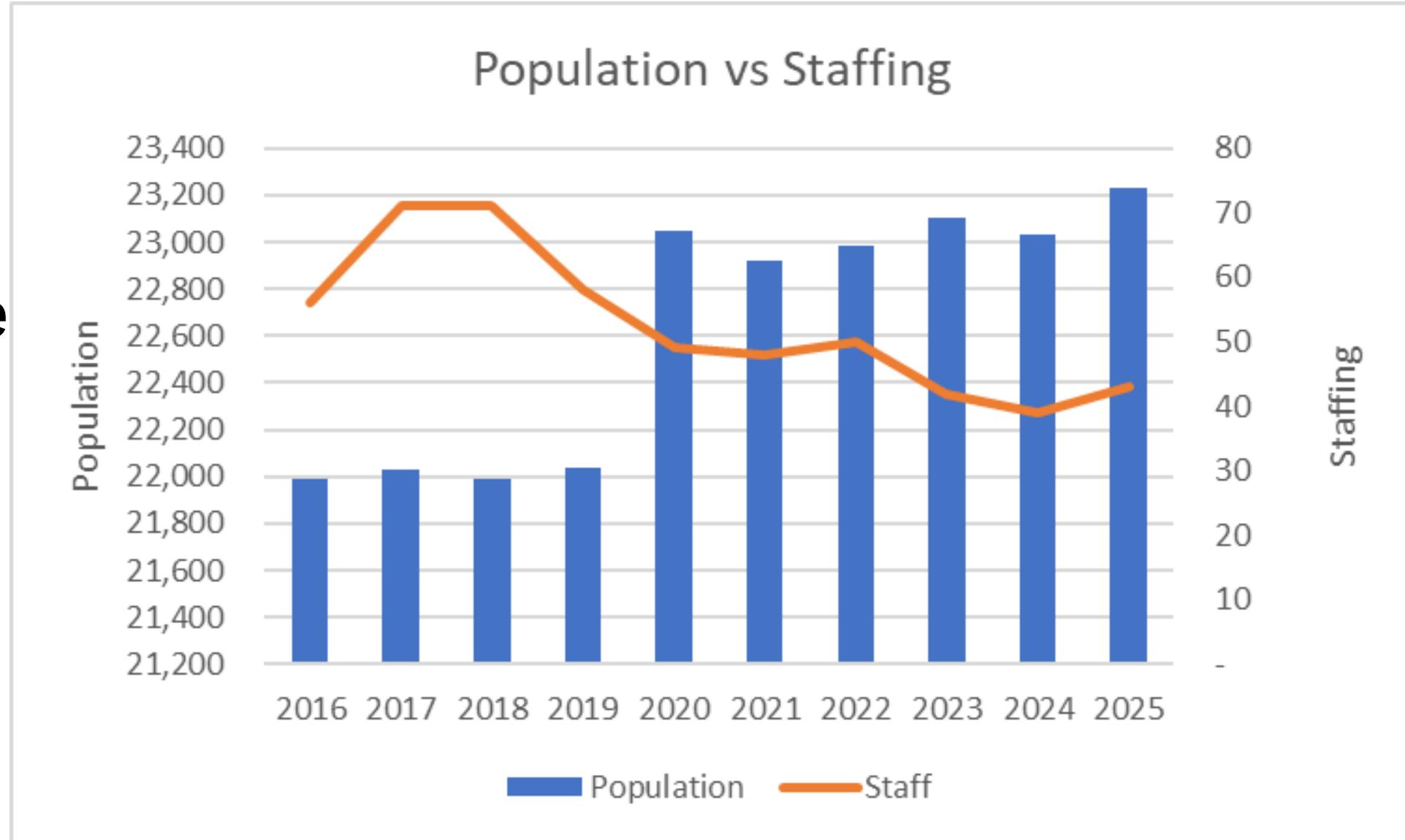


6%

**Population
INcrease since
2016**

23%

**Staffing
DEcrease**



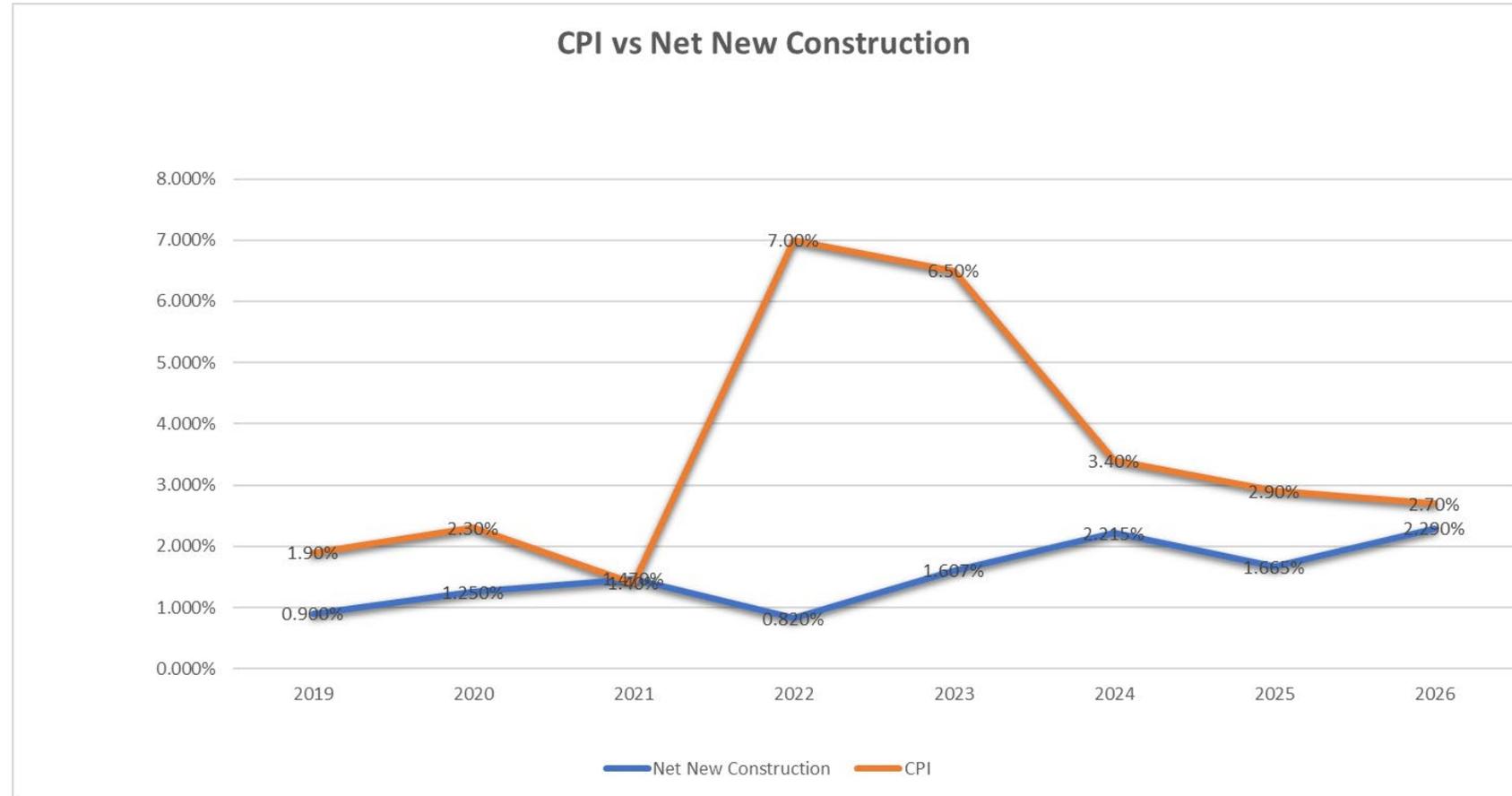
INFLATION — RISING COSTS

- Costs have increased, some significantly.
- Many of the increased costs are beyond our control, such as equipment, energy and insurance.
- Our health insurance has increased at an average rate of 7.11% per year since 2015, resulting in an 85% overall increase in health insurance.
- During this same time, SAFER modified insurance benefit to decrease costs to the district, unfortunately this decreased coverage to employees.
- Some maintenance fees have increased significantly.



THE LAST 8 YEARS

- The Village is allowed to increase taxes based on net new construction, unfortunately the net new construction has not kept up with inflation.



ALLOWABLE LEVY INCREASE SINCE 2018

| Budget Year | Tax Year | Assessed | change | Net new New Construc | Allowable Levy Increase |
|-------------|----------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2019 | 2018 | 1,142,273,800.00 | | 0.900% | 45,632.00 |
| 2020 | 2019 | 1,152,114,300.00 | 9,840,500.00 | 1.250% | 63,789.00 |
| 2021 | 2020 | 1,165,819,300.00 | 13,705,000.00 | 1.470% | 75,997.00 |
| 2022 | 2021 | 1,169,882,900.00 | 4,063,600.00 | 0.820% | 42,958.00 |
| 2023 | 2022 | 1,182,509,600.00 | 12,626,700.00 | 1.607% | 86,273.00 |
| 2024 | 2023 | 1,204,938,000.00 | 22,428,400.00 | 2.215% | 122,139.00 |
| 2025 | 2024 | 1,755,747,700.00 | 550,809,700.00 | 1.665% | 93,844.00 |
| 2026 | 2025 | 1,786,457,900.00 | 30,710,200.00 | 2.290% | 131,392.00 |



COST PER RESIDENT

Municipal Spending: Net Fire-EMS Per Capita Comparison



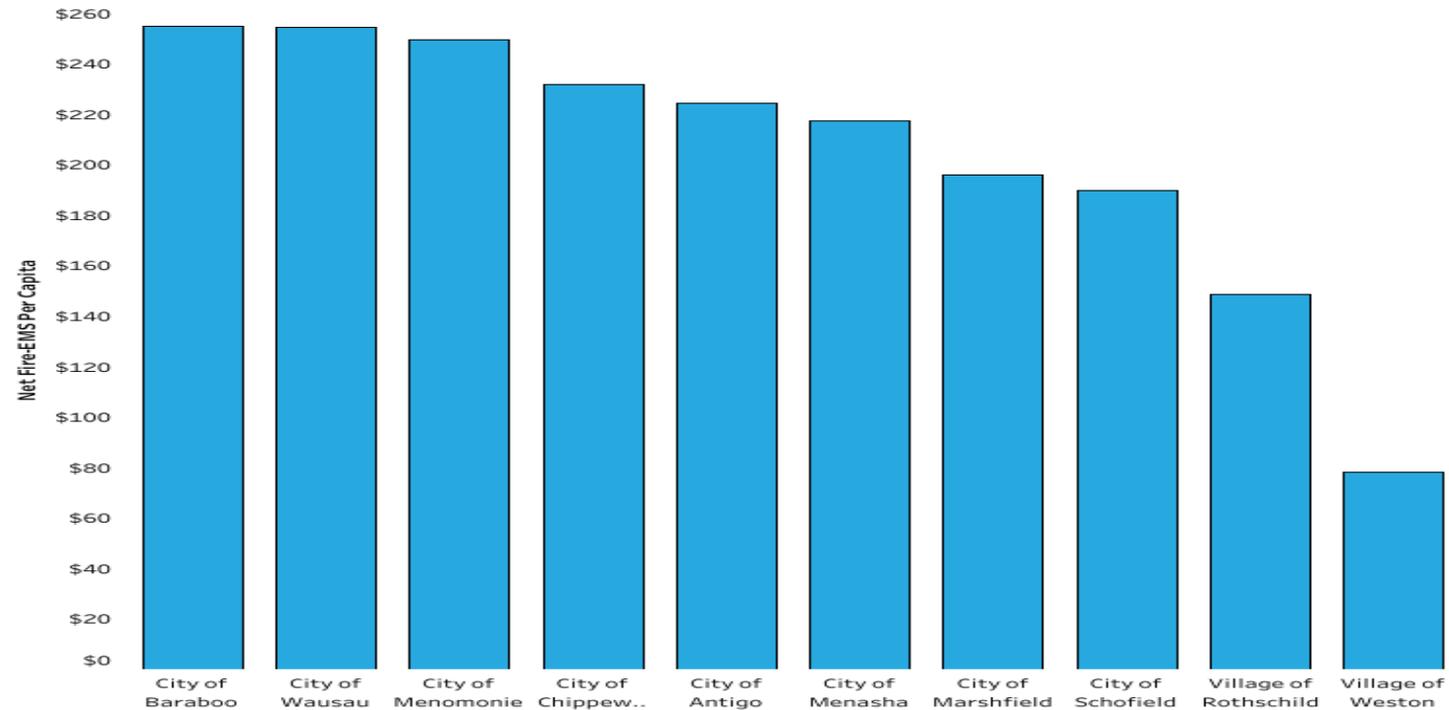
This page compares net fire-EMS spending per capita for the most recent data (2023) for a custom selection. Choose up to 10 municipalities below to compare or create a custom comparison for another value.

[Click to Return to Main View: Municipal Spending](#)

Select Cities or Villages
Multiple values

Custom Comparison: Net Fire-EMS Spending per Capita

- General Government
- Street Maintenance
- Net Fire-EMS**
- Net Police
- Net Basic Spending
- Net Operating Spending
- Property Taxes
- Shared Revenues
- Municipal Debt
- Fund Balance
- Individual Income



STAFFING



2026 DAILY STAFFING

- 2026 Staffing is 9, minimum staffing is 7
- **Station 1**
 - Captain
 - Engineer
 - Firefighter/Paramedic
 - Firefighter/Paramedic/EMT

- **Station 2**
 - Battalion Chief
 - Engineer
 - Firefighter/Paramedic
 - Firefighter/EMT/Paramedic
 - POC
 - Intern



STAFFING OF 9 FIREFIGHTERS

- **Station 1**

- Captain (Assigned to Engine 1)
- Engineer (Assigned to Engine 1)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1 and Truck 1 if trained)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1 and Truck 1 if trained)

- **Station 2**

- Battalion Chief (Assigned to Battalion 2)
- Engineer (Assigned to Rescue 1/Med 3)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Rescue 1/Med 3)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)



STAFFING OF 8 FIREFIGHTERS

- **Station 1**

- Captain (Assigned to Engine 1)
- Engineer (Assigned to Engine 1)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1 and Truck 1 if trained)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1 and Truck 1 if trained)

- **Station 2**

- Battalion Chief (Assigned to Rescue 1)
- Engineer (Assigned to Rescue 1)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)
- Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)



STAFFING OF 7 FIREFIGHTERS

- **Station 1**
 - Captain (Assigned to Engine 1)
 - Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1/Engine 1)
 - Firefighter (Assigned to Med 1/Engine 1)
- **Station 2**
 - Battalion Chief (Assigned to Rescue 1)
 - Engineer (Assigned to Rescue 1)
 - Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)
 - Firefighter (Assigned to Med 2)



COST OF A NEW FIREFIGHTER

THE COST EXCEEDS THE ALLOWABLE TAX INCREASE MOST YEARS LEAVING THE VILLAGE TO LOOK FOR OTHER WAYS TO FUND ADDITIONAL STAFF



Wage

67,506



Benefits

30,000



Training

2,000



Gear

4,500

\$104,006



FIREFIGHTER DOWNTIME

- Daily station cleaning
- Daily apparatus inspections
- Equipment repair and inspections
 - Although most maintenance is done by a private party basic repairs, cleaning etc. is done in house, hose testing
- Training/certification maintenance
 - 5,735 hours of training completed by district staff in 2025
 - Crews build and repair training props
- Special events
 - Multiple activities including alarm installation, special event standby, and school visits
- Fire prevention inspections
 - 2,587 inspections completed in 2025
- Physical fitness



STRUCTURE FIRE RESPONSE

- NFPA 1710 recommends a minimum of 15 firefighters for a low hazard residential structure fire. In 2026, including auto aid 14 firefighters will respond on SAFER's initial response.
- NFPA 1710 recommends a minimum of 28 firefighters for a medium hazard and 43 firefighters for a high hazard response on the first alarm.
- SAFER has also lost a "water haul" credit recently due to staffing and apparatus reductions. This unfortunately has increased insurance rates for those that live outside of the municipal water district.



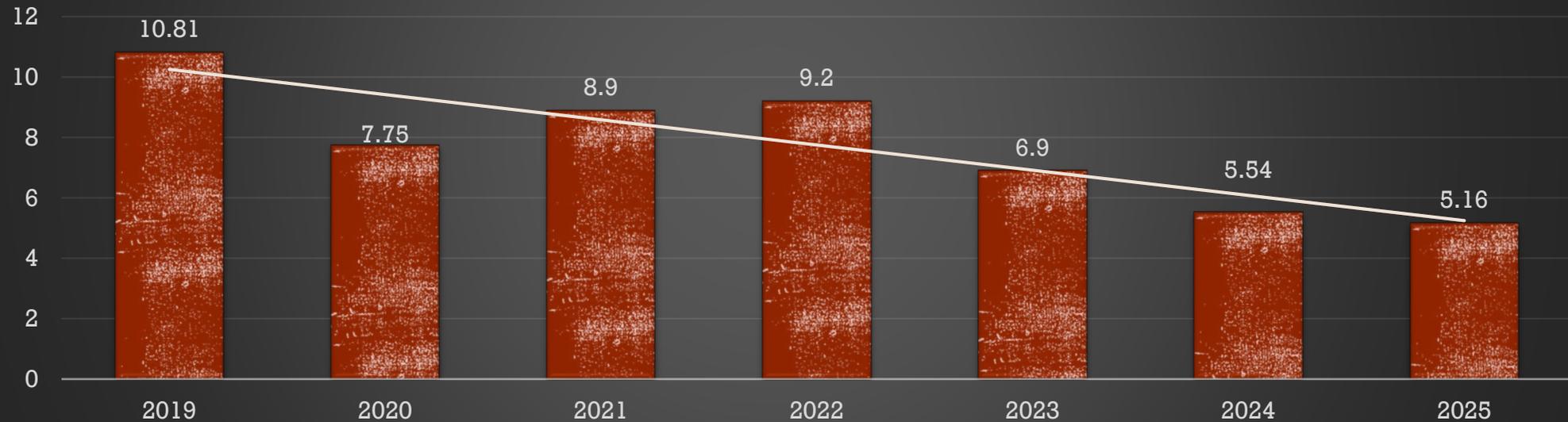
FIRE AND EMS STATISTICS

- In 2024, 47 citizens died in structure fires in Wisconsin.
- For every 1,000 fires in the US there are 29.4 injuries.
- Recent studies conducted by the underwrites laboratory found that fires in modern residential structures produce 200 times more smoke and burn 8 times faster than fires 50 years ago.
- Cardiac arrest victims' chance of survival decreases 10% each minute.
- Importance of time for treatment of heart attack and stroke.

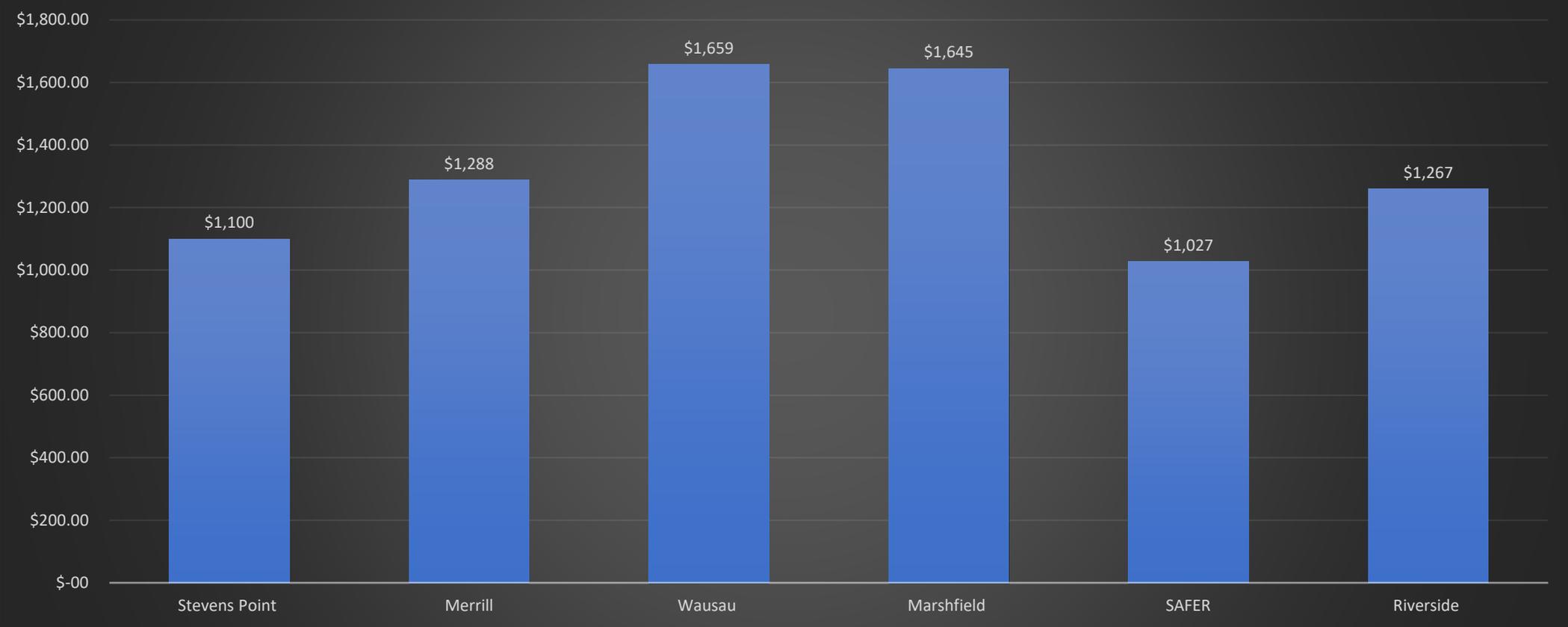


NUMBER OF FIREFIGHTERS AT STRUCTURE FIRES

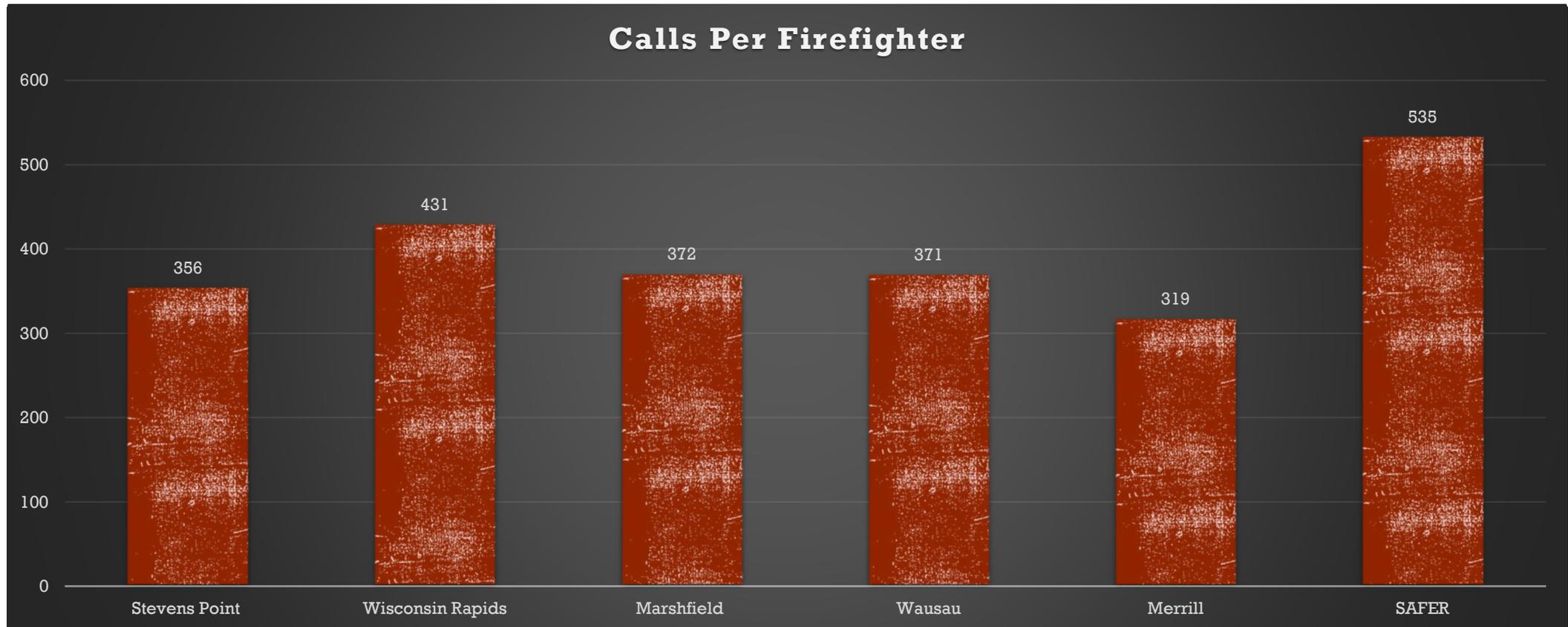
Average # Firefighters per Scene



COST PER CALL



FIREFIGHTER WORKLOAD



MUTUAL AID

- Last year mutual aid was requested over 100 times.
 - When mutual aid is requested response times will be longer, sometimes significantly.
 - Mutual aid partners may not have the ability to deliver advanced life support.
- SAFER provided mutual aid back to those same communities approximately 50 times.



DELAYED EMS RESPONSES

- 2025
 - 324 calls >10 minutes
 - 24 calls >15 minutes
- In some cases, delayed responses time may have little to no impact on patient outcomes.
- In other cases, a delay can make a significant difference:
 - Cardiac arrest
 - Stroke
 - Heart attack
 - Choking
 - Overdose



NOTABLE INCIDENTS

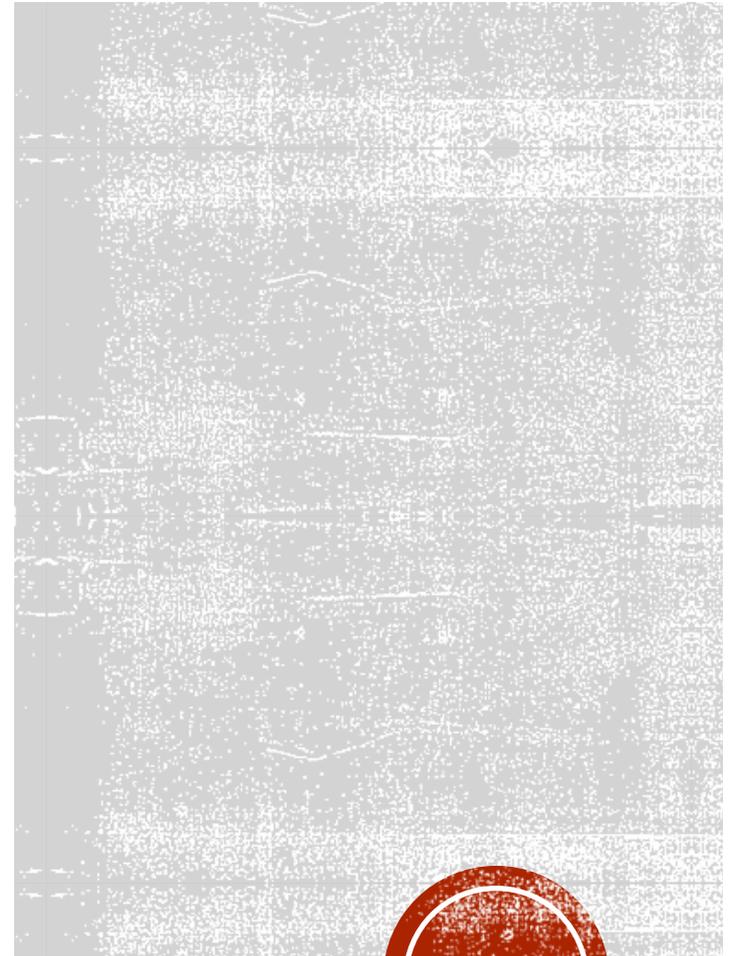
- 10/8/2024--Bluebonnet Lane Village of Rib Mountain; all units on calls, no fire response available, first engine arrived after approx. 20 minutes. Home was a total loss.
- 3/25/2025--Cty Rd O Initial response of only three firefighters for a heavily involved house fire.
- 10/05/2025--Michael Drive, Village of Weston; all units on calls, two off duty firefighters and one intern responded initially, waited for auto aid units to respond before making entry. Home suffered significant damage in the basement, one firefighter injured and remains on light duty. At the same time another EMS call occurred in the Village of Weston, only unit available to respond was Mosinee Fire District.
- 10/19/2025--All EMS units on calls from Wausau, Riverside and SAFER no units immediately available to respond for child suffering an allergic reaction.



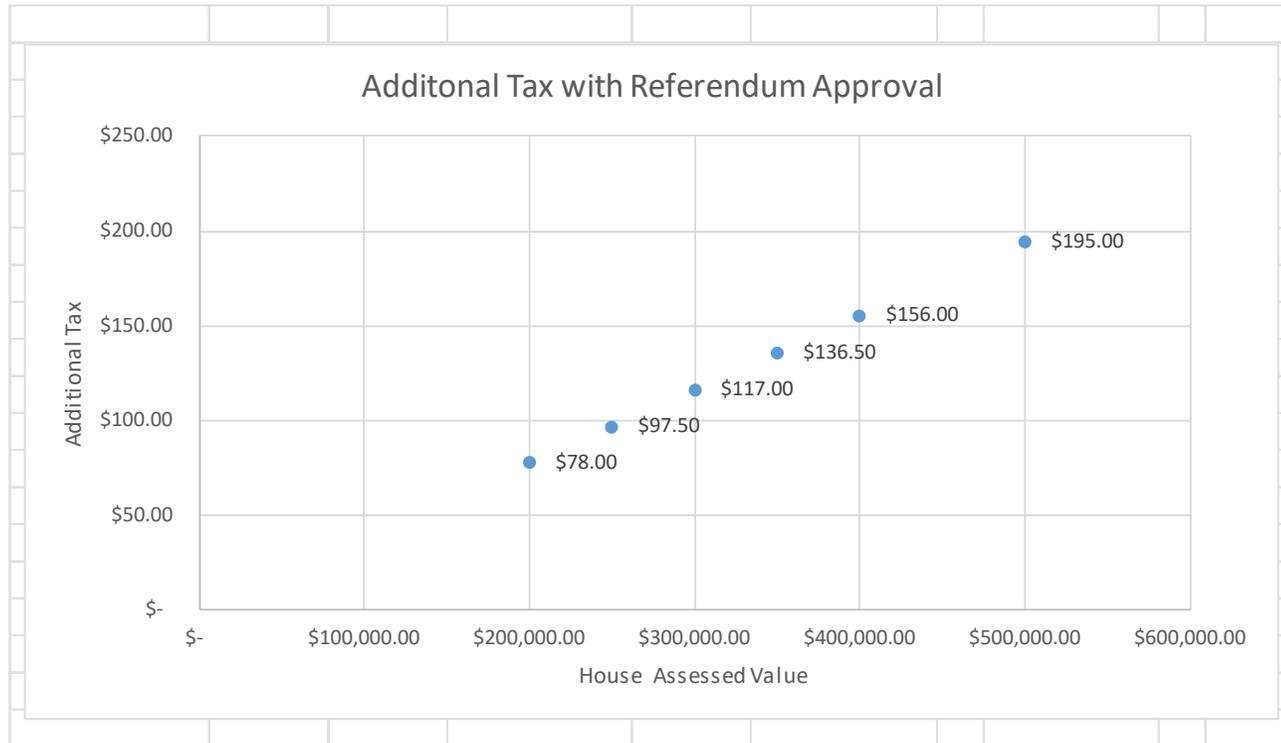
TAX IMPACT



The allowable levy increases are not enough to fund additional staff requiring a referendum seeking more funding.



APPROXIMATELY WHAT WOULD AN APPROVED REFERENDUM COST THE AVERAGE HOMEOWNER?



| Assessed Value | 2026/2027 Tax |
|----------------|---------------|
| \$ 200,000.00 | \$ 78.00 |
| \$ 250,000.00 | \$ 97.50 |
| \$ 300,000.00 | \$ 117.00 |
| \$ 350,000.00 | \$ 136.50 |
| \$ 400,000.00 | \$ 156.00 |
| \$ 500,000.00 | \$ 195.00 |



ADDITIONAL STAFF WILL ALLOW US TO MOVE FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

ADEQUATE STAFFING

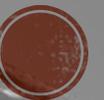
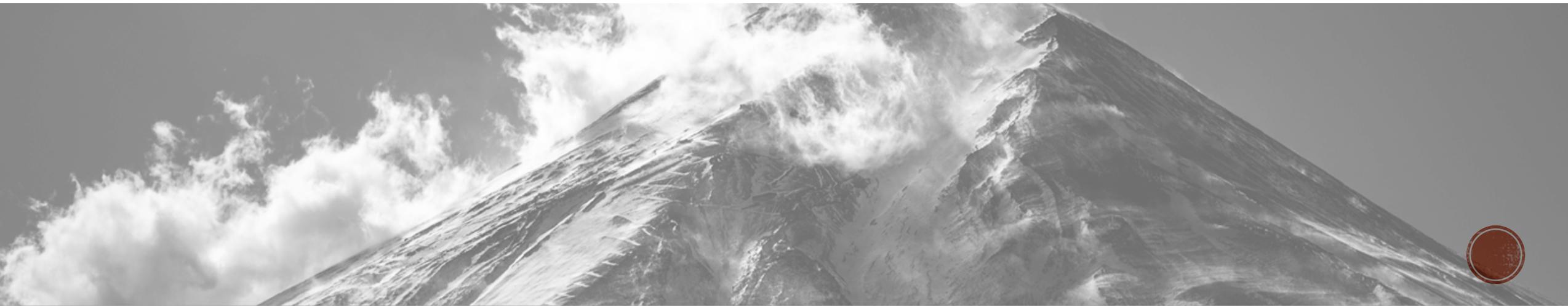
An additional six staff will be hired, adding two firefighters per shift.

REDUCED DELAYED RESPONSES

SAFER will be able to respond to more calls minimizing mutual aid and decreasing response times.

REDUCE FIREFIGHTER FATIGUE

Increase firefighter & patient safety, reduces errors, and increased employment satisfaction.



THE REFERENDUM QUESTION AS IT WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT IS:

Under state law, the increase in the levy of the Village of Weston for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2027, is limited to 2.293%, which results in a levy of \$8,670,828. Shall the Village of Weston be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2027, for the purpose of paying the Village of Weston's share of the cost for SAFER to hire and retain six additional full-time firefighters/paramedics, by a total of 6.92%, which results in a levy of \$9,270,828 and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$600,000 for each fiscal year going forward?

If a Majority Vote "Yes"

If approved, a \$600,000 increase to the property tax levy would allow the Village to pay its share of the cost for SAFER to hire and retain six additional full-time firefighters/paramedics.

If a Majority Vote "No"

If the referendum is rejected, the Village would not be able to increase the property tax levy and the Board of Trustees may alter current fire protection staffing/services or other municipal services, as necessary, to balance the budget.



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR

JAMI GEBERT

jgebert@westonwi.gov

(715) 241-2610

SAFER CHIEF

JOSH FINKE

jfinke@saferdistrict.org

(715) 355-6763

