



VILLAGE OF  
**MAPLE BLUFF**

2024-25

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REFERENDUM OPTIONS REPORT

# VILLAGE OF MAPLE BLUFF REFERENDUM OPTIONS REPORT

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# VILLAGE OF MAPLE BLUFF REFERENDUM OPTIONS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Referendum Options Report provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing the Village of Maple Bluff in meeting its community service obligations. It highlights financial adjustments required to address inflationary pressures, budget shortfalls, recruitment and retention issues, staffing needs, and growing expectations for services.

### *Challenges Identified*

The Report identifies the following challenges:

- *Inflation and Budget Shortfalls:* The village struggles to keep pace with inflation due to state-imposed levy limits, necessitating budget adjustments and reserve fund usage.
- *Recruitment and Retention:* Wages below market average contribute to turnover across departments, impacting service continuity and staff morale.
- *Service Demands:* Increasing expectations and regulatory requirements place strain on existing staff resources, affecting service quality and responsiveness.
- *Public Safety Needs:* Growing needs for police and fire services outpace current staffing levels and compensation incentives, reducing service capacity and public safety.

### *Mitigating Options*

To address these challenges and sustain service quality, the report identifies the following:

- *Financial Adjustments:* Proposed budget increases to cover inflationary costs.
- *Competitive Wages:* Adjustments to attract and retain qualified personnel.
- *Staffing Increases:* Addition of personnel to meet growing service demands.
- *Public Safety Enhancements:* Hiring additional police officers and improving incentives for fire department staff to ensure public safety needs are met.

### *Conclusion and Referendum Proposal*

The Village is considering a referendum to increase property taxes. Three options are proposed to address varying degrees of needs—from basic inflation adjustments to comprehensive enhancements in staffing and service provisions (see pages 16-17). Each option corresponds to a specific financial impact on residents, aimed at maintaining essential services, prioritizing key positions, and meeting public safety demands.

OPTION 1: Maintain Essential Services

OPTION 2: Maintain Essential Services & Priority Positions

OPTION 3: Maintain Essential Services, Priority Positions, & Public Safety Needs

### *Next Steps*

The Village plans to engage residents through informational meetings and surveys to gather feedback on the proposed referendum options. This process aims to inform decision-makers and ensure community support for financial adjustments in 2025.

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Referendum Options Report is to provide an overview of challenges facing the Village of Maple Bluff in meeting its community service obligations. This report outlines the need for financial adjustments to address inflationary pressures and budget shortfalls, enhance recruitment and retention efforts, expand essential staffing levels, and meet growing expectations for public safety and general services. It serves as a comprehensive resource to inform residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers about the challenges and proposed solutions necessary to sustain the quality of municipal services.

## MUNICIPAL SERVICES BACKGROUND

The Village of Maple Bluff encompasses approximately one square mile and has a population of 1,433 residents. Development of the area began in the 1870's and continued until it was incorporated as a village in 1931. Maple Bluff is a landlocked community bordered by the City of Madison to the north, south, and east, and by Lake Mendota to the west.

The Village of Maple Bluff funds an array of services. Municipal departments include Administration, Recreation, Public Works, Police, and Fire Rescue. The Village currently budgets for 20 full-time staff positions across all departments, supported by seasonal workers, interns, and part-time employees. Staff prides itself on the services they provide village residents.

### Full-Time Staff by Department

<i>Administration</i>	<i>3.5</i>
<i>Recreation</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Public Works</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Police</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Fire</i>	<i>4</i>

### *Administration Department*

The Administration Department ensures that Village services are delivered efficiently, resources across departments are managed responsibly, and the interests of the community and needs of employees are addressed. The Department handles Municipal Court, election administration, permitting and licensing, zoning and planning, financial management, human resources, regulatory compliance, and municipal utilities. The Administration Department is usually the first and main point of contact for village residents.

The Administration Department budgets for the equivalent of 3.5 full-time and 1 part-time staff members. These consist of a Deputy Administrator who also serves as Clerk and Treasurer, a dual role Court Clerk/Deputy Clerk, and 1 part-time Accounts Payable Clerk. There are three personnel with split roles across the Administration Department and another department, including the dual role Village Administrator/Chief of Police, the dual role Deputy Treasurer/Recreation Director, and the dual role Records Administrator/Police Administrative Support Specialist.

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## *Recreation Department*

The Recreation Department engages in the planning, organization, and rental of village park lands, facilities, and equipment. The Department also organizes, coordinates, and oversees various recreational programs, activities, and events.

The Recreation Department budgets for a .5 full-time staff member, the dual role Recreation Director/Deputy Treasurer, and up to 35 seasonal employees to support and help run programs.

## *Public Works Department*

The Public Works Department provides services to ensure infrastructure reliability and associated maintenance needs are met. Its primary services include maintenance and repair of roadways, refuse, recyclables, and yard waste disposal, water and sewer systems maintenance and repair (including sanitary and storm sewers), snow removal, park upkeep, and facility maintenance.

The Public Works Department budgets for 5 full-time staff members and 1,200 hours of part-time seasonal work. The full-time positions consist of a dual role Public Works Director/Urban Forester, a Public Works Foreman, and 3 skilled laborer positions.

## *Police Department*

The Police Department provides 24-hour police services to ensure peace and order within the village. Its primary services include the enforcement of laws and ordinances, response to emergency calls, investigation of suspected criminal activity, crime prevention, traffic enforcement, emergency preparedness and response, and victim / public assistance.

The Police Department budgets for 7 full-time staff members and approximately 3,700 hours of part-time work. The full-time positions consist of a dual role Chief of Police/Village Administrator, an Administration Sergeant, an Operations Detective Sergeant, and 4 patrol officers. In addition, the Village's Records Administrator also serves as a Police Administrative Support Specialist, splitting their time between the Police and Administration departments.

## *Fire Rescue Department*

The Fire Rescue Department provides 24-hour fire and emergency medical services (EMS). Its primary services include fire suppression and prevention, vehicle extrication, public fire and EMS education, community risk reduction, fire inspection and code enforcement, water and ice rescue, emergency management planning, and emergency medical transport services at the Advanced Emergency Medical Technician level.

The Fire Rescue Department budgets for 4 full-time staff members as well as a team of part-time, student intern, and paid-on-call members. These include a dual role Public Safety Director/ Fire Chief, 3 Assistant Fire Chiefs, 7 part-time Duty Officers, 6 student interns, 17 paid-on-call staff, and 1 volunteer Medical Director.

# VILLAGE OF MAPLE BLUFF REFERENDUM OPTIONS REPORT

## NOTABLE EXTERNAL FACTORS

Residents might think that municipalities can simply raise taxes to pay for increased costs, but this is not the case in Wisconsin. The local portion of property taxes in Maple Bluff have remained relatively flat since the referendum in 2020, while costs and needs for services have risen disproportionately. Increases in State Aid and alternative sources of funding are limited, and several factors contribute to this situation:

### *Impact of State Imposed Levy Limits*

The State of Wisconsin limits municipal property tax increases through “Levy Limits”. These increases are tied to either municipal borrowing, new real estate construction, or referenda. As such, referenda are increasingly relied upon by municipalities with low levels of growth to help cover increasing operational costs. (For more information, see <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/whats-driving-property-tax-increases/>)

### *Declining Public Sector Employment*

Public sector employment is falling and compared to other states, Wisconsin tends to deliver more services at the local level. This creates a general need to evaluate whether public sector employment levels are sufficient to meet the needs of citizens, and whether government employers can compete with the private sector for workers. (For more information, see <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/wisconsins-public-sector-employment-continues-to-fall/>)

### *Limitations of State Aid Percentages*

Although the state government has increased its proportion of financial burden for public services over the past 50 years, the aid percentages have fallen short of inflation. This has left municipalities more reliant on property taxes to fund several key public services that are delivered more at the local level in Wisconsin than in other states, such as law enforcement, fire/EMS, public health, and parks. This has also made it particularly critical that local governments in Wisconsin maintain the workforce necessary to meet the needs of their communities. (For more information, see <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/dollar-for-dollar-where-does-wisconsin-rank-in-local-government-spending/>)

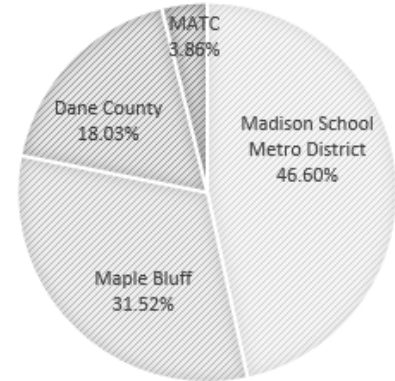
### *Funding Trends for Local Services*

Communities in Wisconsin depend on property taxes more than most of their peers nationally and all other Midwestern states, but every other Midwestern state gives municipalities broader taxing authority. In addition, Wisconsin communities are already seeing Fire and EMS services faltering, a continuation of decline among police staffing, and an atrophy of public services more broadly. Without a sustained investment in their communities through increased property taxes (often through referenda), Wisconsin residents can anticipate the logical outcomes – significantly decreased quality and scope of public services. (For more information, see <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/dollars-and-sense-is-it-time-for-a-new-municipal-financing-framework-in-wisconsin/>, <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/total-number-of-police-in-wisconsin-already-at-historic-lows-continues-to-drop-in-2022/>, and <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/wisconsins-ems-agencies-describe-a-system-in-crisis/>)

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## CURRENT PROPERTY TAXES

Between 2021 and 2023, State levy limits restricted the Village to a 3.37% property tax increase for operating expenses. This was impactful to Village operations, as property taxes support about 80% of the Village budget, and staff wages / benefits make up approximately 71% of the Village's total operating costs. So, while property values have been on the rise in the village (24-37% between 2021 to 2023) and the marginal cost to residents has remained controlled, municipal funding has experienced increasing strain.



### Where Property Tax Dollars Go

Each year, residents receive a property tax bill that includes amounts for the Village of Maple Bluff, Madison Metropolitan School District, Dane County, and Madison Area Technical College. Currently, 31.52% of the total property tax bill is retained by the Village. The remaining funds are distributed to the other taxing authorities.

### Village Budget

	2021 Budget	2022 Budget	2023 Budget	2024 Budget
<b>REVENUES</b>				
General Property Taxes	3,352,922	3,399,567	3,615,951	3,735,751
Other Taxes	75,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
Intergovernmental Revenues	360,885	313,450	342,773	384,035
License and Permits	45,350	45,350	50,350	55,950
Fines, Forfeitures and Penalties	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Public Charges for Services		30,000	34,500	34,500
Miscellaneous Revenue	322,903	314,022	320,709	349,913
Other Financing-TID contribution		7,500	8,000	8,000
Other Financing - Reserve funds				132,158
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>4,182,060</b>	<b>4,214,889</b>	<b>4,477,283</b>	<b>4,805,307</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
General Government	776,654	771,914	760,306	802,011
Public Safety - Police	984,471	1,015,772	1,072,817	1,184,857
Public Safety - Fire	581,164	607,254	634,537	684,600
Public Works	484,935	499,135	529,573	554,742
Culture and Parks	165,455	167,571	186,383	206,356
Recreation	235,546	234,539	244,706	252,445
Infrastructure Contribution	168,572	117,805	219,801	140,998
Debt Service	785,263	800,899	829,160	979,298
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>4,182,060</b>	<b>4,214,889</b>	<b>4,477,283</b>	<b>4,805,307</b>



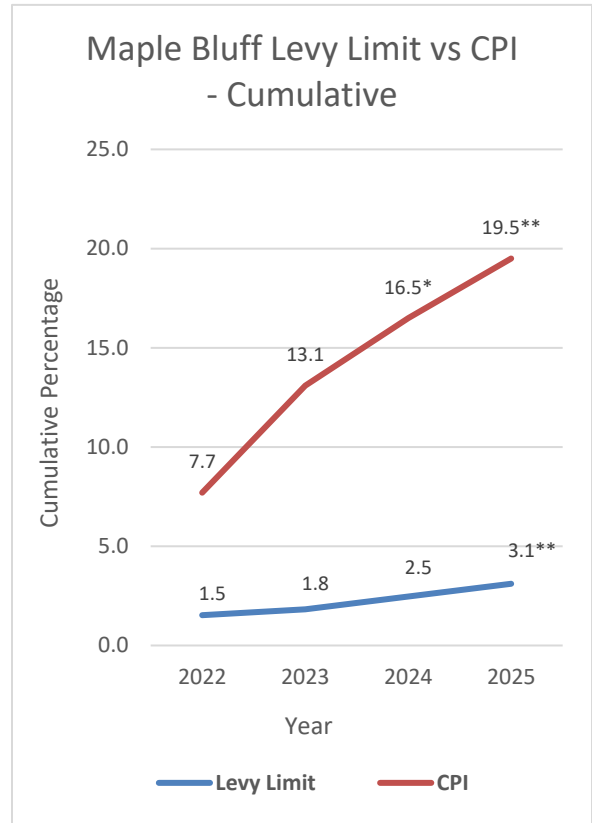
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## ADDRESSING INFLATION & BUDGET SHORTFALL

The Village of Maple Bluff is facing challenges in meeting costs for services, largely due to external factors like price inflation (as measured by the Consumer Price Index or CPI) and state-imposed tax levy limits that generally restrict property tax increases to the percentage increase of net new construction. Market value increases from existing homes do not count in the levy limit formula.

Maple Bluff is a developed and landlocked community with few opportunities for new construction. Consequently, the Village's capacity to augment municipal funding through property taxes is constrained and the village must seek approval from voters through a referendum to surpass levy limits.

In compliance with the state's levy limit law, Maple Bluff enacted property tax increases of 1.53%, 0.30%, and 0.64% in 2022, 2023, and 2024 respectively. Over these same years, inflation (measured in changes to the CPI) was 7.7%, 5.4%, and 3.4%. This disparity between allowable tax increase and inflation required the village to use \$132,158 of reserve funds to balance the 2024 annual budget. Left unaddressed, the Village can anticipate compounding annual shortfalls and a reduction in services.



\*12 months ending 4/30/2024  
 \*\* Estimated based upon historic trends

### *Inflationary / Budget Shortfall Adjustments Needed*

Village Trustees have recognized that given the continued disparity between allowable tax increases and inflation, coupled with budget shortfalls, the village **must act now**. Given that Village costs have not kept up with high inflation in recent years, and continued inflation is anticipated, **residents should be aware of this systemic issue and that the Village will likely need to address this challenge again in the not-so-distant future.**

- 2024 shortfall \$132,000
- Inflation adjustments (non-compensation) \$129,000

**Estimated Annual Cost to Keep up with Inflation: \$261,000**



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## IMPROVING RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, & WAGES

Since 2021, almost all village departments have been operating below full staffing requirements due to recruitment and retention challenges. These challenges stem from Village wages falling below local market expectations, a reduction in the total number of job applicants, a decrease in qualified applicants, elevated work hours, and rising service expectations. Since January 2021:

- Police Department was below full staffing requirements 56% of the time
- Public Works Department was below full staffing requirements 35% of the time
- Fire Rescue Department was below full staffing requirements 22% of the time
- Administration Department was below full staffing requirements 7% of the time

Vacancies place an added burden on existing staff to meet community service expectations. This includes covering extra shifts, working extended hours, and taking on additional tasks and roles. The effect is negatively impacting employee health, morale, and work/life balance, leading to more turnover, thereby creating an unsustainable situation.

The village has experienced significant employee turnover. When employees leave, they take many months/years of training, experience, and institutional knowledge with them. This is difficult to replace and the time and effort to train new employees is extensive, further increasing the burden on staff. Since January 2021, the Village has experienced:

- 86% turnover in the Police Department
- 50% turnover in the Fire Department
- 40% turnover in the Public Works Department
- 33% turnover in the Administration Department

Many employees left for opportunities with higher compensation.

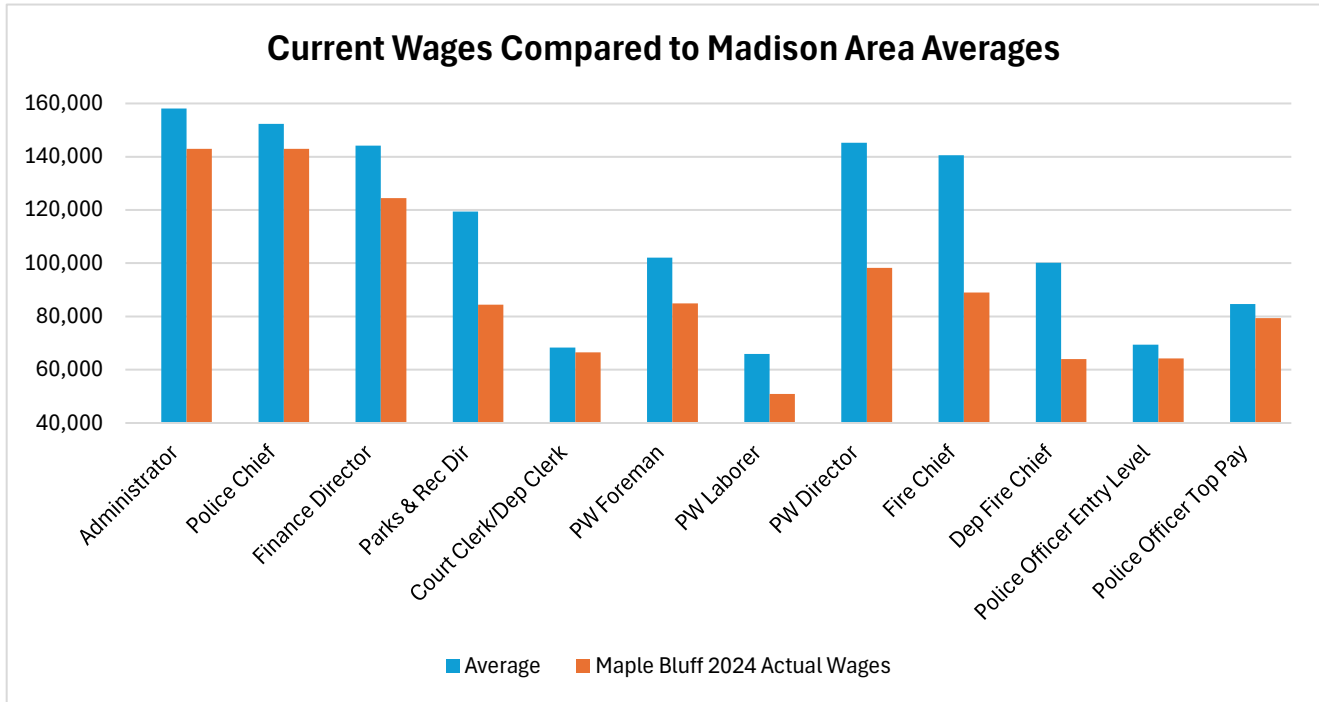
Although the Village adjusted staff compensation in a 2020 operating referendum, many neighboring municipalities have since made significant adjustments as a result of compensation studies, making the Village's current wages less competitive (see the chart that follows). Also, this does not consider private sector wages, which have increased significantly in Dane County since 2020. Without an adjustment, current recruitment and retention challenges—already a major issue—are likely to remain or increase.

### *Competitive Wage Increases Needed*

Village Trustees have found that **wages for all Village of Maple Bluff positions are below the average wage of comparable positions in Madison area municipalities.** Additionally, Maple Bluff wages are the lowest of all comparable for the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Public Works Director, and Public Works Laborer positions.

**Providing compensation closer to the average of local area municipalities will help improve recruitment efforts and reduce turnover, allowing the Village to attract and maintain a team of qualified, competent, and experienced Maple Bluff employees.**

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Data compiled from the following Compensation Studies: Shorewood Hills 2022, City of Sun Prairie 2022, City of Monona 2023  
Municipalities Included: Village of Cottage Grove, Dane County, Village of DeForest, City of Fitchburg, City of Madison, Village of McFarland, City of Middleton, City of Monona, Village of Oregon, Village of Shorewood Hills, City of Stoughton, City of Sun Prairie

## *Additional Wage & Benefit Adjustment by Department*

- Administration 3.5 full-time \$45,550
- Administration part-time \$5,400
- Police 7 full-time \$151,050
- Police part-time \$23,900
- Fire 4 full-time \$135,600
- Fire part-time \$38,800
- Public Works 5 full-time \$90,800
- Public Works part-time \$13,000
- Recreation 0.5 full-time \$16,400
- Recreation part-time \$10,000

**Estimated Annual Cost for Competitive Wage Increases: \$530,500**

## **GROWING SERVICE DEMANDS & OBLIGATIONS**

Historically, Maple Bluff has maintained a low tax burden on its residents through lean staffing levels, but incremental increases in service demands and other obligations have placed significant strains on Village employees. Over the years, staff have increasingly struggled to maintain the level of services residents are accustomed to, in the desired timeframes, and

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without additional support. However, increasing concerns and a professional recommendation to make immediate adjustments have caused the Village to consider adding staff now.

## *Increasing Demands*

Village employees take pride in meeting the high standards of residents but demands on staff have intensified over time. Increased severe weather events, installation of new structures and features, as well as maintenance of aging infrastructure and equipment place a compounding strain on staff, and the Public Works and Recreation Departments in particular. Residents appreciate the responsiveness and level of service that these Departments provide, but a continuation of lean staffing in the face of growing demands has pushed them beyond capacity.

Similarly, the Administration Department has observed incremental increases in labor demands for their services. In 2023 the village observed a 152% increase in records requests from 2022, and a 24% increase in building permits compared to four years ago. Similarly, the number of committee and board meetings held in 2023 was 43% higher than the previous 5-year average. Meanwhile, Village staff have made significant efforts to improve communication with residents through website enhancements and weekly Constant Contact messaging. Still, there remains concern that staff and the Village are not doing enough to maintain the desired level of services, ensuring transparency in operations, and involving residents in decision making.

The labor for all these activities – including communication, materials preparation, analysis, coordination, and record keeping – requires significant additional staff time and attention.

## *Growing Obligations*

Over the past several years, administrative staff have responded to expanding regulatory and industry-based expectations impacting accounting, elections, and reporting requirements. At the same time, they have experienced significant fluctuations in personnel, managed zoning and legal challenges, and undertaken several complex projects and improvement practices.

During 2023 alone, staff facilitated water and sewer rate adjustments, MG&E electrical upgrades, water/sewer/stormwater infrastructure improvements, a zoning ordinance update effort, information technology enhancements, numerous legal questions and claims, and a new staff performance evaluation process. These projects and initiatives were in addition to day-to-day support and operational requirements that staff currently struggle to maintain.

## *Staffing Analysis*

Acknowledging these challenges, the Village hired Public Administration Associates to perform a staffing analysis study. Among other recommendations to the Village Board in January 2024, the consultant identified the following as immediate actions the Village should take to respond to the challenges and provide the community with its desired service levels:

- Adding one full-time administrative assistant
- Defining limitations to manage citizen expectations
- Enhancing support for employees
- Assessing and maintaining work/life balance for staff

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## *Staffing Increase Needed*

The Village of Maple Bluff has historically utilized existing staff to meet evolving needs, continually adding or transferring duties amongst employees and departments. This has resulted in too many responsibilities. **The prevalence of over-tasked employees, active indications of staff burnout, and impending transitions of long-term members require immediate consideration.**

To ensure increasing demands and growing obligations are met, Village Trustees have identified an interest in adding the following additional staff positions (outside of the Police Department):

- One administrative support person (full-time wages & benefits) \$118,000
- Additional 2,000 hours for Public Works Labor (part-time) \$64,600

**Estimated Annual Cost of General Staff Support: \$182,600**

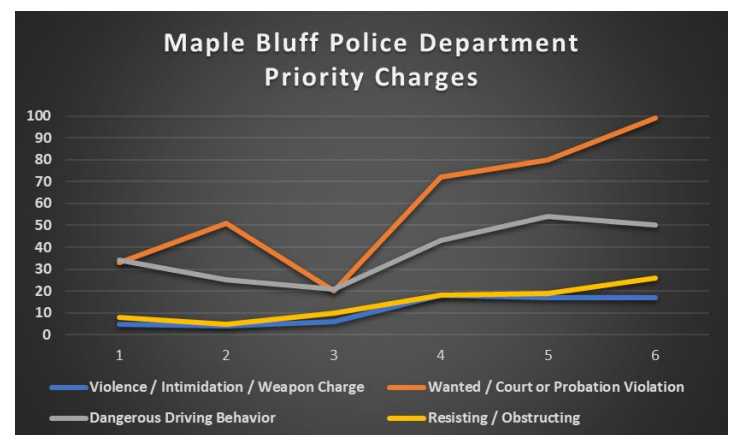
## **GROWING POLICE PROTECTIVE SERVICE NEEDS**

Serving a small community surrounded by growing urban areas, the Maple Bluff Police Department has pursued a strategy of proactive patrolling and crime prevention to keep occurrences of crime low and village residents safe. In contrast to more “call-driven” or as-needed policing used by many departments in larger cities, Maple Bluff officers have historically achieved crime prevention and community safety through proactive contacts. Now, with increasing risk factors, growth in neighboring communities, and emerging challenges, the Village is considering increased staffing to maintain adequate police presence and officer safety.

## *Increasing Risk Factors*

While village residents experience very little crime as victims, Police Department leadership has concerns about public safety under current staffing practices. Specifically, the Department has noticed a greater proportion of dangerous behaviors, making the environment riskier for officers and the public. Over the past 6 years traffic contacts have remained flat, but during this same period officers have observed increases in the number of individuals exhibiting dangerous driving behaviors, fleeing, resisting, and obstructing arrest. Additionally, Maple Bluff officers are making a higher number of arrests, more frequently encountering repeat offenders, and issuing more serious charges. The result – reflected in the statistics and graph below – is more work and risk for Maple Bluff officers. In 2023, officers observed the following trends in comparison to the 2018 - 2022 average:

- 34% increase in crimes investigated
- 35% more total criminal charges
- 36% more total arrests
- 90% more repeat offender arrests
- 41% more dangerous driving behaviors
- 117% more fleeing motorists
- 77% more priority charges



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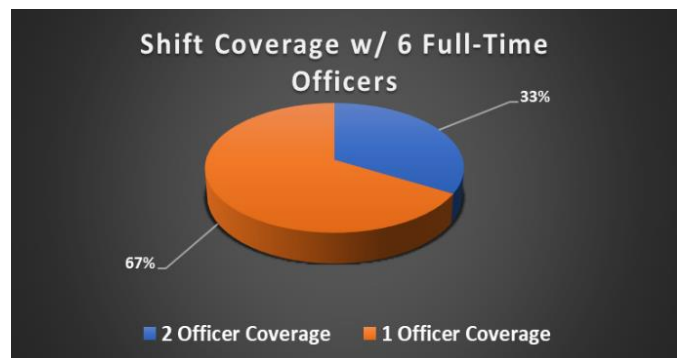
Resident observations of crime are low, and investigations very rarely involve residents as suspects, but the risks that officers and the public are exposed to have changed. Maple Bluff officers are encountering more habitual or repeat offenders, in number and proportion. While repeat offenders made up 33 (43%) of all arrests in 2018, they increased to 71 (70%) of arrests in 2023. Repeat offenders commit multiple crimes and disproportionately impact community safety. Dealing with repeat offenders requires more time and resources, but their arrest and successful prosecution also reduces the likelihood of further offenses and deters crime.

## *Anticipated Growth*

Madison is experiencing rapid population, job, and traffic growth, ranking high among the strongest multifamily demand markets in the country. Some apartment complexes have already been built near Maple Bluff, while others are scheduled for development in the no-so-distant future. Given existing growth trends and plans, the Chief of Police is concerned about escalating spillover onto public safety in Maple Bluff. The increase in recent and anticipated apartment housing developments around Maple Bluff will lead to higher activity levels and more traffic on the village's perimeters and increase the need and demand for Village police services.

## *Current Staffing Model Challenges*

Historically, Maple Bluff has maintained lean staffing levels by budgeting for one full-time officer on duty at a time. As a result, Village officers work alone at least 67% of the time—often during times of significant activity. When a Village officer on solo patrol is responding to a call, any additional need for police requires the response of another agency's officers. Consequently, when a Maple Bluff officer needs backup or receives multiple calls, a safety concern and/or a delay in response are likely. Additionally, administrative tasks take approximately 35% of an officer's time. When working alone, this means that Maple Bluff officers are not able to maintain a consistent community presence. Plainly speaking, Maple Bluff officers usually work alone, and this limits the services they can provide.



Officers have been exposed to more than usual stressors in recent years. In addition to managing the complexities of a pandemic, social unrest, economic volatility, and heightened political division, Maple Bluff officers have endured the increase in risk amid challenges of short staffing. This has resulted in heightened levels of stress and fatigue, which not only affects officer well-being but also their ability to effectively serve the community. As recruiting and retaining police officers has emerged as the primary concern of many police leaders, nationally and locally, the Maple Bluff Police Department strives to support officers and improve work conditions.

Patrol staffing for the Maple Bluff Police Department currently consists of 4 full-time patrol officers and 2 Sergeants. Full-time officers and Sergeants cover about 75% of all shifts, while part-time officers cover the remaining 25%. Part-time officers provide the department with

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varying two-officer coverage and fill-in for full-time officer sickness, vacation time, training, and special events. However, with a strong labor market few police officers are looking for part-time work and the Department cannot rely on part-timers to provide the precise shift coverage needed. Ultimately, while part-time staff continue to offer a cost-effective service to the community, the Chief of Police thinks expanding funding for more part-time officers is not a viable solution to emerging community and Department needs.

## *Proposed Increase in Two Officer Patrols*

The Village is considering an enhanced patrolling approach to manage these increasing risk factors, spillover from population and traffic increases, and staffing challenges. The Chief of Police proposes the addition of two full-time officers, allowing the Police Department to staff two officers on patrol for up to 2/3 of all patrol shifts—covering twice as many shifts with two officers as today. Additional officers would support the Village’s proactive policing approach, reduce elevated safety risks, and prepare the Department for Madison’s growth. The Chief also believes that the addition of full-time officers would improve recruitment and retention, owing to the many benefits of a 2-officer approach covered in the list above.

Benefits of 2-Officer Coverage
<u>Officer Safety</u> : Backup / support to control dynamic situations
<u>Officer Accountability</u> : Peer support and responsibility sharing
<u>Enhanced Response Capability</u> : Division of labor, coverage, & tasks
<u>Improved Public Safety</u> : Enhanced presence, response, & scene management
<u>Collaborative Decision-Making</u> : Share information, expertise, & ideas
<u>Handling Multiple Incidents</u> : Respond to simultaneous incidents
<u>Improved Support</u> : Supervisor focus on investigative & admin duties
<u>Community Engagement Opportunities</u> : Presence & relationship building
<u>Training &amp; Mentoring</u> : Build camaraderie, trust, competency, & morale
<u>Officer Wellness &amp; Work-Life Balance</u> : Prevent burnout & fatigue
<u>Staffing Resilience</u> : Reduces impact of officer absences on service capability

## *Two Additional Full-Time Officers Advised*

In summary, the Village of Maple Bluff has staffed police services for one full-time officer on duty most of the time and utilized part-time staff to help cover absences, training, event support, and multiple officer coverage when able. **However, the Village now finds itself in an environment where frequent single officer coverage is an increasingly risky and stressful practice, part-time police officers are hard to find, officer retention is a concern, and service demands associated with Madison area growth are increasing.**

To double the number of shifts in which two-officer coverage occurs – from 33% to 67% of all shifts – the Chief of Police recommends the Village add two full-time police officers.

- Two full-time officer wages (top pay) \$190,000
- Two full-time officer benefits \$96,000
- Associated operating costs \$11,500

## **Estimated Annual Wage, Benefits, and Operating Costs of Two Additional Full-time Police Officers: \$297,500**

## **FIRE PAID-ON-CALL COMPENSATION & CONTINUING EDUCATION**

The number of “volunteer” firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) has steadily decreased across the country over the past two decades, leaving fire departments to compete for a decreasing pool of candidates. The result has been escalating competition between fire and



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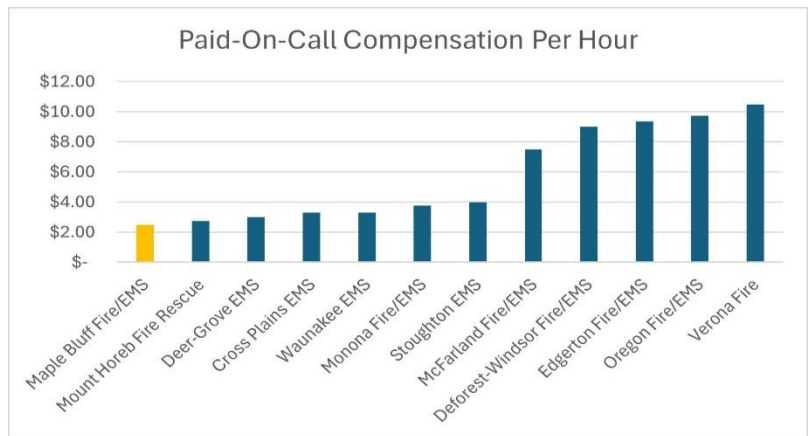
EMS departments – mainly through compensation initiatives – to meet their staffing needs. This has resulted in a recategorization from “volunteer” to paid-on-call staff who, although not working for free, are compensated modestly for the work they do. Similarly, fire internship programs have become an innovative way to subdue the costs while maintaining quality fire and EMS services. As internship programs become more popular among departments, natural competition for applicants ensues.

The Maple Bluff Fire Rescue Department relies on both paid-on-call staff and interns to maintain effective response capabilities. While the full-time leadership team oversees department administration and operations, the part-time, student intern, and paid-on-call members are integral to ensuring essential staffing coverage. Maintaining sufficient incentives becomes more and more essential, which is especially true for the Village, as the current Medical Director is the only volunteer from the community.

The Village relies on both paid-on-call and intern staff to operate at current service levels. To remain competitive in recruiting and retaining these staff, Department leadership have identified two areas of need: more competitive stipends and continuing education funding.

## *Competitive Stipends for Paid-on-Call Staff*

The Fire Rescue Department’s paid-on-call staff provide an average of 60 hours of on-call time at the firehouse each month. Staffing these paid-on-call personnel is necessary to meet minimum staffing requirements. This is particularly true in Maple Bluff, where community volunteerism is insufficient to meet staffing needs. The paid-on-call staff currently receive a stipend of \$30.00 per 12-hour shift, equating to \$2.50 per hour, plus



\$12.00 for each training and emergency response they attend. This falls short of being competitive and is lower than all similarly staffed departments in Dane County.

## *Continuing Education Funding*

The Maple Bluff Fire Rescue Department operates a student firefighter/EMT internship program, offering six positions filled on a rotating basis. The interns live at the Maple Bluff Firehouse for two years while they attend Madison Area Technical College’s Associate of Fire Science degree program. The Maple Bluff fire internship program is one of six similar programs located throughout Dane County and these students are necessary to the department’s day-to-day minimal staffing requirements. The students attend college courses and obtain professional firefighting and emergency medical certifications while serving the community. They receive a modest monthly stipend of between \$300 and \$500 and up to \$1,000 per semester to help pay for schooling. The Village’s student firefighter/EMT internship program is the only one of the six similar programs within Dane County that does not cover all tuition costs, leaving the program under competitive.



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Full-time staff are required to maintain professional certifications and attend continuing education to ensure a professional leadership standard for the department. The village currently budgets to help chiefs maintain these items, but as industry standards and inflationary costs evolve so do the costs and a modest adjustment to education funding has become necessary.

## *Increases in Stipend and Educational Incentives Advised*

The Fire Rescue Department has historically maintained modest stipends and educational incentives for staff who are necessary for the department to function. **As fire departments place a greater reliance on paid-on-call staff and competition among internship programs escalates, the Village needs to assure the future viability of these programs through incentives.** To ensure minimal staffing of qualified and competent Firefighters and EMTs, the Village needs to adjust current incentives.

- Two additional full-time Police Officers \$297,500
- Fire paid-on-call pay & education incentives \$77,000

## **Estimated Additional Fire Rescue Costs: \$77,000**

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## **CONCLUSION & REFERENDUM PROPOSAL**

The Village of Maple Bluff faces challenges in maintaining the delivery of services to its residents. The increasing costs of operations coupled with rising demands for services, insufficient staffing, and budget shortfalls strain the Village's ability to serve its community. Despite efforts to keep staff levels and costs to village residents low, growing demands have surpassed staff capacity.

One of the primary obstacles Maple Bluff faces is the inability to keep pace with the escalating operational costs and the rising cost of living, which affects municipal wages, benefits, and incentives. Since 2021, the village has operated with insufficient personnel due to recruitment and retention difficulties, exacerbating the preexisting strain from minimal staffing practices. These challenges arise from compensation that falls short of market expectations, a decline in the number of applicants, applicants with fewer qualifications, and staff departures.

Without an increase in funding and adjustment to staff workload, the Village will face escalating challenges in meeting staffing requirements and service delivery. Service quality reductions are predictable without an improvement in staff incentives and an immediate adjustment of staffing levels. Neighboring communities offering more competitive compensation to employees are further exacerbating this issue. Ultimately, the Village may be compelled to scale back staff, programs, and/or services to align expenses with revenues.

To avoid these current and looming challenges, the Village is considering a referendum question on this November's ballot to allow a property tax levy increase. All the items mentioned in this report are currently being considered, summarized as follows:

- Inflationary / budget shortfall adjustments \$261,000
- Competitive wage adjustments \$530,500

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• One administrative support person (full-time wages & benefits)	\$118,000
• Additional 2,000 hours for Public Works Labor (part-time)	\$64,600
• Two additional full-time Police Officers	\$297,500
• Fire paid-on-call pay & education incentives	<u>\$77,000</u>
	\$1,348,600

**To better understand what residents think about these challenges and understand how to best proceed, the Village will be conducting information meetings, an online survey, and additional outreach.** The survey will be mailed to all residents and is also available online. It will provide three options for residents to provide feedback to their elected officials prior to a final decision:

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## OPTION 1: Maintain Essential Services

This option includes **keeping up with inflation and ensuring competitive wages for village staff.**

• Inflationary / budget shortfall adjustments	\$261,000
• Competitive wage adjustments	\$530,500

The **\$791,500** request in Option 1 would provide inflationary wage and operating expense adjustments, restoration of the reserve funds used to cover the 2024 shortfall, as well as additional information technology and urban planning/zoning support for staff.

If a similar referendum question were approved in November, Option 1 would result in a property tax increase of **\$843.53 annually (\$70.29 per month) on a home valued at \$750,000.** The estimated property tax impact per \$100,000 in fair market value would be approximately \$112.47 annually (\$9.37 per month).

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## OPTION 2: Maintain Essential Services & Priority Positions

This option includes **keeping up with inflation, ensuring competitive wages for village staff, funding a full-time administrative support staff member, adding an additional 2,000 hours for part-time Public Works staff, and increasing funding for consultant services.**

• Inflationary / budget shortfall adjustments	\$261,000
• Competitive wage adjustments	\$530,500
• One Administrative Support Person (full-time wages & benefits)	\$118,000
• Additional 2,000 hours for Public Works Labor (part-time)	\$64,600

The **\$974,100** request in Option 2 would provide inflationary wage and operating expenses adjustments, restoration of the reserve funds the 2024 shortfall, additional information technology and urban planning/zoning support for staff, as well as more staff support in the areas of municipal accounting, human resources, elections, general front office duties, and public works

# VILLAGE OF MAPLE BLUFF REFERENDUM OPTIONS REPORT

labor.

If a similar referendum question were approved in November, Option 2 would result in a property tax increase of **\$1,038.14 annually (\$86.51 per month) on a home valued at \$750,000**. The estimated property tax impact per \$100,000 in fair market value would be approximately \$138.42 annually (\$11.54 per month).

## OPTION 3: Maintain Essential Services, Priority Positions, & Public Safety Needs

This option includes **keeping up with inflation, ensuring competitive wages for village staff, funding a full-time administrative support staff member, adding an additional 2,000 hours for our part-time Public Works staff, increasing funding for consultant services, adding two full-time officers to the Police Department, and ensuring competitive incentives for the Fire Department’s paid-on-call and intern programs.**

- Inflationary / budget shortfall adjustments \$261,000
- Competitive wage adjustments \$530,500
- One Administrative Support Person (full-time wages & benefits) \$118,000
- Additional 2,000 hours for Public Works Labor (part-time) \$64,600
- Two additional full-time Police Officers \$297,500
- Fire paid-on-call pay & education incentives \$77,000

The **\$1,348,600** requested in Option 3 will provide inflationary wage and operating expenses adjustments, restoration of the reserve funds the 2024 shortfall, more staff support in the areas of municipal accounting, human resources, elections, general front office duties, and public works labor, additional information technology and urban planning/zoning support for staff, enable the police department to cover approximately 2/3 of shifts with two officers on duty, and improve incentives for our Fire Department’s paid-on-call and intern programs.

If a similar referendum question were approved in November, Option 3 would result in a property tax increase of **\$1,437.26 annually (\$119.77 per month) on a home valued at \$750,000**. The estimated property tax impact per \$100,000 in fair market value would be approximately \$191.64 annually (\$15.97 per month).

## TAX IMPACT SUMMARY

<i>Referendum Option</i>	<i>Estimated Impact for \$750,000* Property</i>
OPTION 1 – Essential Services	\$843.53 / year
OPTION 2 – Essential Services + Positions	\$1,038.14 / year
OPTION 3 – Essential Services + Positions + Public Safety	\$1,437.26 / year

\*Maple Bluff Median Home Value