



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

AGENDA

- Recap of efforts since our last meeting - Elizabeth Hummitzsch, Mueller Communications
 - Options assessment completion and rollout
 - Community survey distribution and promotion
- Initial survey results - Bill Foster, Community Perceptions
- What's next



OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

OUTREACH + RESOURCES

Options Assessment

WESTERN LAKES FIRE DISTRICT

ASSESSMENT OF FIRE/EMS NEEDS & FUNDING OPTIONS
MARCH 2022

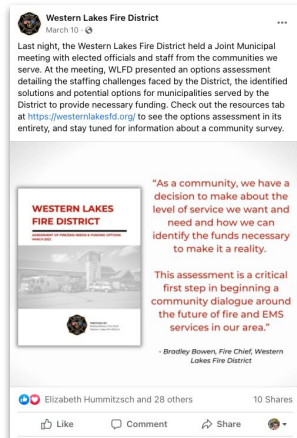


PREPARED BY:
Bradley Bowen, Fire Chief
Western Lakes Fire District

Fact Sheet



Social Media



News Release

FOR RELEASE

March 10, 2022

Media Contact:

Elizabeth Hummetsch

414-390-5500

ehummetsch@westernlakescommunications.com

WESTERN LAKES FIRE DISTRICT ASSESSES CRITICAL NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STAFFING, NECESSARY FUNDING

Options assessment explores challenges, potential solutions to bring WLFD services in line with community needs, national standards

OCONOMOWOC, WIS. - Today, the Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD) released an options assessment detailing the staffing challenges faced by the District, the identified solutions and potential options for municipalities served by the District to provide necessary funding.

The options assessment cites increased calls for services, a growing population and decreased availability of local paid-on-call firefighters as putting a significant strain on WLFD, resulting in increased response times that put residents at risk and increase losses due to fire.

"In just four years, we have seen a 74 percent increase in calls for service," said Bradley Bowen, WLFD Fire Chief. "In 2021, due to a lack of in-station staffing, our fire response times grew and does not meet national standards. We have to increase our staffing to ensure we are serving and protecting local residents to the best of our abilities."

Key to WLFD's challenge is insufficient in-station staffing to respond to calls. Currently, in-station staff must wait for paid-on-call staff to arrive before responding to the vast majority of fire calls that come in, at a time when the number of available paid-on-call staff continues to decline.

"Historically, paid-on-call staff were from the community," said Chief Bowen. "However, since 2001, WLFD has seen a 69 percent decline in paid-on-call staff who live within five miles of a station, dramatically increasing the time it takes for a paid-on-call staff member to report to the fire station when a call comes in - resulting in increased response times."

WLFD's decreased resident paid-on-call staffing is in line with the experiences of fire departments across the region, state and nation as a downward trend in available paid-on-call staff has reached an all-time low.

Additionally, challenges tied to staff recruitment and retention have impacted WLFD. Every year, WLFD loses an average of 40 part-time staff members, largely due to higher-paying job opportunities. Including with other fire departments, or other hourly job opportunities in the community. WLFD's part-time firefighter and EMS staff are currently paid \$14 an hour. For comparison, a part-time hourly salary at local convenience stores range from \$15-\$20 an hour.

Department leaders and municipal staff from communities served by WLFD have assessed community needs and concluded the following measures are necessary to bring fire and EMS

WESTERN LAKES FIRE DISTRICT FACES STAFFING CHALLENGES, SEEKS COMMUNITY INPUT ON FUNDING OPTIONS FOR FIRE SERVICES

In March, WLFD released an options assessment detailing the staffing challenges faced by the District, the identified solutions and potential options for municipalities served by the District to provide necessary funding.

March 2022 Options Assessment

[_WLFD_OptionsAssessment_FINAL_REvised](#) [Download](#)

Options Assessment Fact Sheet

[WLFD_FactSheet_OA](#) [Download](#)

The options assessment cites increased calls for services, a growing population and decreased availability of local paid-on-call firefighters as putting a significant strain on WLFD, resulting in increased response times that put residents at risk and increase losses due to fire.

Key to WLFD's challenge is insufficient in-station staffing to respond to calls. Currently, in-station staff must wait for paid-on-call staff to arrive before responding to the vast majority of fire calls that come in, at a time when the number of available paid-on-call staff continues to decline.

Website

MEDIA COVERAGE

milwaukee journal sentinel

■ FOR SUBSCRIBERS LAKE COUNTRY NOW

Western Lakes Fire District, task force ask for additional \$6.3 million to address staffing shortages

Drew Dawson Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 8:08 a.m. CT March 14, 2022 | Updated 1:02 p.m. CT March 14, 2022

- “‘One of the top things to know is that doing nothing is an option, but doing nothing doesn't mean keeping the status quo,’ Bowen told the Journal Sentinel. ‘It means continued reduction in services and response times.’”
- “The need for the report stemmed from a local, statewide and national issue surrounding volunteer fire departments. As call volumes increase and funding decreases, so do response times and the quality of departments.”

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



Report says WLFD needs over \$6 million to address staffing issues

Options include new wheel tax and referendum

By Dan Colton - Enterprise Staff Mar 10, 2022 Updated Mar 10, 2022

- “According to the report, released by Mueller Communications, the WLFD requires a total of \$6,309,105 in additional funding. That money would cover expenses for 33 more full-time firefighters/paramedics, 15 internship positions, three battalion chiefs, a fire inspector and a full-time administrative assistant.”
- “A growing number of fire departments across Wisconsin are experiencing similar staffing problems, according to a 2021 report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum.”

Oconomowoc Enterprise



COMMUNITY SURVEY

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Dear Residents:



The Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD) provides fire, rescue, and/or paramedic services in the City of Oconomowoc, Village of Summit, Village of Dousman, Village of Lac La Belle, Town of Oconomowoc, Town of the Town of Merton. The District also provides Emergency Medical Services to the Village of Ashippun, Town of Sullivan, Town of Ashippun, and Town of Concord.

In recent years, we have seen the number of residents and businesses in our service area grow. Last year, we responded to more than 6,500 calls, an increase of more than 70% in just four years. This trend is expected to continue as the region and its population continues to develop and grow. We expect to see nearly 10,000 calls per year by 2029. During this time, our funding sources have not allowed us to increase staff nor provide competitive wages. As a result, WLFD response times, which currently do not meet national standards, will only get worse.

As we work to respond to this challenge, we are seeking your feedback. This is a brief survey asking for your input on the best way to manage our current financial situation, the public safety challenges we face, and how to move forward.

Please take 5 to 10 minutes to respond to this survey.

PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY IN ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING WAYS

OPTION 1: To reduce mailing expenses, please fill out the survey online –

- Go to the survey website: www.Feedback2000.com
- Enter your survey code:

OPTION 2: By paper – If you do not have internet access, please return the survey to Community Perceptions: PO Box 607, Slinger, WI 53086.

Additional Surveys: The survey code included above can be used only once. To obtain access to additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call (262) 234-1055.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BEFORE APRIL 17, 2022.

Final survey results will be reported at a public WLFD meeting this spring and will also be available on our website. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

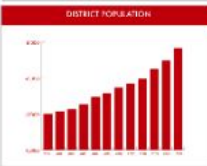
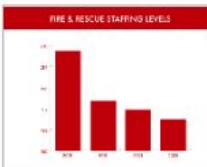
Chief Bradley Bowen
Western Lakes Fire District

Western Lakes Fire District History

THE CHALLENGE

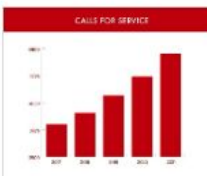
Declining Staffing Levels

In 2001, the agencies that now make up the Western Lakes Fire District had a total of 226 staff (full-time, paid-on-call, and interns). In 2011, these communities had a total staff of 188. Ten years later, in 2021, WLFD had a total staff of 181. In 2022, staffing was further reduced to 174, due in large part to WLFD's inability to offer competitive wages to recruit and retain both part-time and paid-on-call staff.



Increasing Population

During the past decade, the resident population within WLFD increased by more than 3,600 residents. In addition, there are also more commercial corridors, recreational facilities, and specialty care facilities that require services.



Increasing Calls for Service

As population and commercial growth continue, the number of calls for fire and emergency medical services grows as well. In 2017, WLFD responded to just over 3,775 fire/EMS calls for service. In 2021, WLFD responded to more than 6,500 total calls for service, an increase of more than 70% in just four years. Factors affecting the increased call volume include an aging population, mental health, drug/alcohol, and increased population.

Fire doubles in size every 30 seconds.

WHAT ARE THE FUNDING OPTIONS?

To pay for the additional staffing and wage increases, we developed two options for community feedback:

OPTION 1: Collect a wheel tax

Wisconsin law allows municipalities to collect an annual municipal vehicle registration fee ("wheel tax"). The fee applies to vehicles with automobile registration. Considering the eligible vehicles (automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles) registered in our municipalities, the table to the right displays the tax necessary to fully fund the proposed staffing levels.

Municipality	Registered Vehicles	Total Additional Wheel Tax per Vehicle
City of Oconomowoc	18,201	\$172
Town of Merton	4,206	\$203
Town of Dousman	2,546	\$194
Town of Oakdale	1,805	\$279
Village of Dousman	3,262	\$16
Village of Lac La Belle	795	\$218
Village of Summit	2,054	\$330

Would you support implementing a wheel tax to pay for additional WLFD staff?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Undecided

OPTION 2: Seek support through a voter-approved referendum

The State of Wisconsin limits the amount of property taxes a municipality can collect each year. To exceed that levy limit, each municipality needs to secure voter approval through a referendum. The referendum could appear on the August 2022 ballot, which, if approved, would provide additional funding starting with the 2023 budget. The chart to the right displays the tax increase property owners would see if the referendum passes.

Municipality	Annual Property Tax Increase per \$100K	Monthly Impact per \$100K
City of Oconomowoc	\$60.00	\$6.00
Town of Merton	\$68.74	\$6.87
Town of Dousman	\$62.86	\$6.29
Town of Oakdale	\$77.37	\$7.74
Village of Dousman	\$240.14	\$24.01
Village of Lac La Belle	\$91.30	\$9.13
Village of Summit	\$87.47	\$8.75

Would you support a referendum to pay for additional WLFD staff?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Undecided

Comments/suggestions:



COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT MATERIALS

- Key Messages, talking points, FAQs
- Website Language
 - WLFD Website and Municipal Websites
- Social Media Copy and Graphics
- Social Media Guidelines

Western Lakes Fire District Community Survey Key messages, Talking points and FAQs

Key Messages to Proactively Share:

During community presentations, conversations, etc, lead with the following key points:

- The Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD) is seeking community feedback on funding options for fire services.
- The survey comes on the heels of a comprehensive options assessment completed by the District that highlights a critical need for increased in-station staffing and increased wages.
- As a community, we have a decision to make about the level of service we want and need and how we can identify the funds necessary to make it a reality.
- This survey will provide Western Lakes Fire District and local elected officials with insight from local residents as we work to address challenges and ensure sustainable, high-quality fire and EMS services in our area today and into the future.
- The surveys, which are expected to arrive in residents' mailboxes during the week of April fourth, ask community members to provide input on the following options for funding staffing and wage increases:
 1. Raise additional revenue through a wheel tax, or
 2. Raise additional revenue through increased property tax levy via referendum

Additional Talking Points:

If needed, the following talking points can be used to share additional information explaining why we have deployed this survey and what the need is at WLFD:

- **A recent assessment highlights a critical need for increased in-station staffing and increased wages.**
 - It cites increased calls for services, a growing population and decreased availability of local paid-on-call firefighters as putting a significant strain on WLFD, resulting in increased response times that put residents at risk and increase losses due to fire.
 - Key to WLFD's challenge is insufficient in-station staffing to respond to calls.



OUTREACH

News Release



FOR RELEASE:
March 30, 2022

Media Contact:
Elizabeth Hummiltzsch
414-390-5500
ehummiltzsch@mwellercommunications.com

WESTERN LAKES FIRE DISTRICT SEEKS COMMUNITY INPUT ON FUNDING OPTIONS FOR FIRE SERVICES

Survey will soon be mailed to households throughout the District

OCONOMOWOC, WIS. – The Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD) is seeking community feedback as it works to evaluate funding options to ensure sustainable staffing and increase wages to bring fire and EMS capabilities in line with industry standards and best practices, as dictated by the demands, size, makeup and population of the communities served by the District. The survey comes on the heels of a [comprehensive options assessment completed by the District](#).

"As a community, we have a decision to make about the level of service we want and need and how we can identify the funds necessary to make it a reality," said WLFD Chief Bradley Bowen. "This survey will provide Western Lakes Fire District and local elected officials with insight from local residents as we work to address challenges and ensure sustainable, high-quality fire and EMS services in our area today and into the future."

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1. Raise additional revenue through a wheel tax, or
2. Raise additional revenue through increased property tax levy via referendum

WLFD is working with independent survey administrator, Community Perceptions. Final survey results will be reported at a WLFD Board Meeting meeting later this spring and will also be available on the WLFD website.

How to Complete the Survey

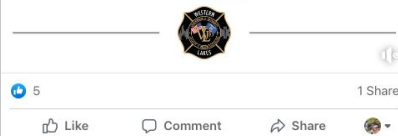
Surveys will arrive in residents' mailboxes during the week of April 4 and may be completed online or on paper through April 17:

- Online: Log on to www.survey2000.com and enter the survey access number printed on the survey received by mail. Residents are encouraged to take the survey online to reduce handling costs.
- Paper: Complete the hard copy survey received by mail and return it in the provided postage-paid envelope to Community Perceptions: PO Box 607, Slinger, WI 53086.

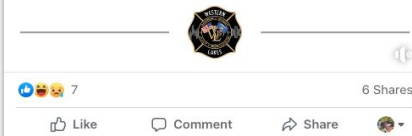
Social Media



SUBMIT YOUR FEEDBACK!
Responses to WLFD survey due
Sunday, April 17



REMINDER:
Complete the WLFD survey
by April 17



Website

SURVEY WILL SOON BE MAILED TO HOUSEHOLDS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

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Each survey code can be used only once. To obtain a second survey for another adult in your household, please call (262) 214-1055. Residents will be asked to leave a detailed message with their information, and an additional code will be provided.

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MEDIA COVERAGE



Area leaders say WLFD budget increase has community support

Upcoming survey to poll residents on the issue

By Dan Colton - Enterprise Staff Mar 31, 2022 Updated Mar 31, 2022

Majority of respondents support property tax increase for fire funding

OCONOMOWOC – Results of a survey on a potential referendum to increase the Western Lakes Fire District budget shows 62% of respondents support a property tax increase to raise additional funds.

The district said in March that it requires an additional \$6.2 million to bolster

SOUND OFF

What do you think?

Phone: 262-513-2641

Email: soundoff@conleynet.com

according to the release, to administer and analyze results from 2,982 surveys that were returned

- “I have been having phone conversations, and for the most part everyone is supportive once you explain the current staffing issues right now,” said Dousman Village President Jack Nissen.”
- “That is the case in other municipalities, according to officials, but some say the real test of support will arrive in the coming weeks as a survey is sent out to residents to gauge the level of interest in potentially raising enough money to fund the WLFD’s requested budget increase.”
- “These preliminary results demonstrate the value Western Lakes residents place on high-quality fire and EMS services,” said WLFD Chief Brad Bowen in a news release. “This data will be incredibly useful as we determine how best to move forward as a District.”



Preliminary Community Survey Results



Western Lakes Fire District
Spring 2022

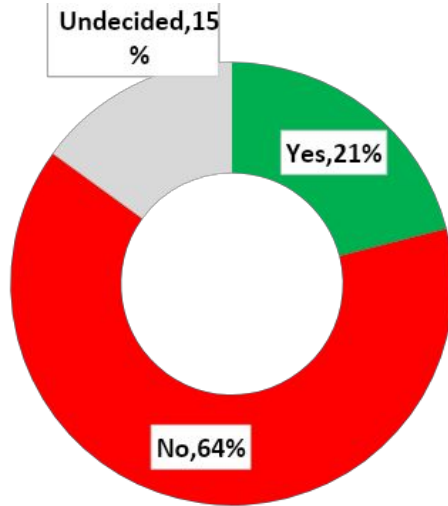


COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

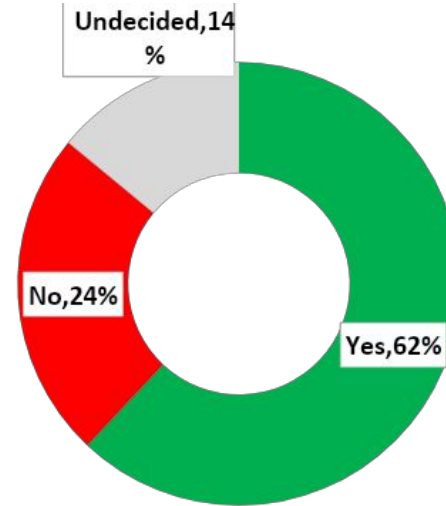
Which option(s) would you support to fund additional WLFD staff?



Wheel Tax



Referendum



Contents



Background Info



Survey Information



Results & Analysis



Wrap-up/Questions



Community Perceptions Process



Residents within the Western Lakes Fire District were mailed a paper survey. Respondents could:

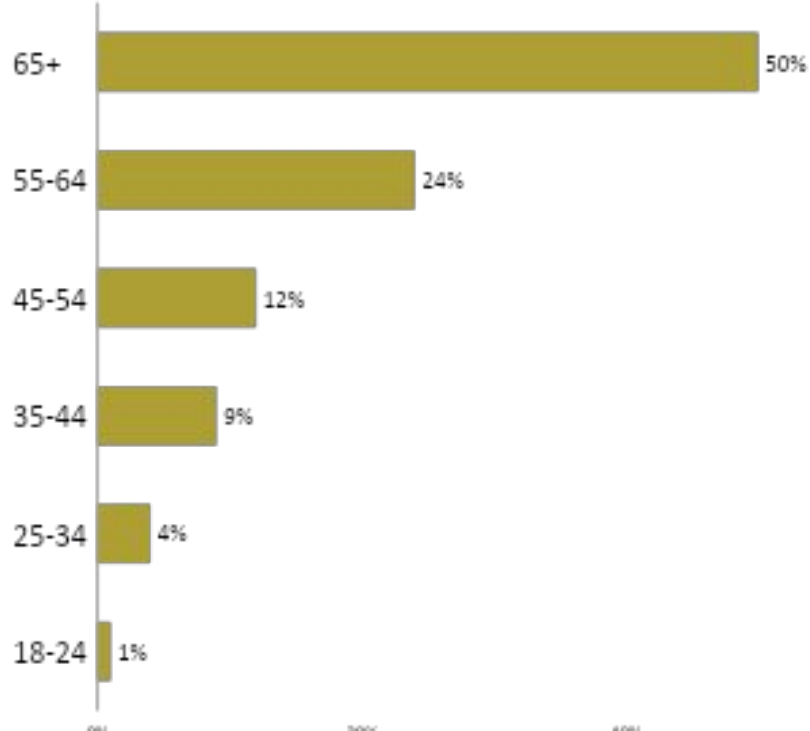
- Fill out the paper survey and mail directly to Community Perceptions
- Use the survey access code to take the survey online

Survey Information

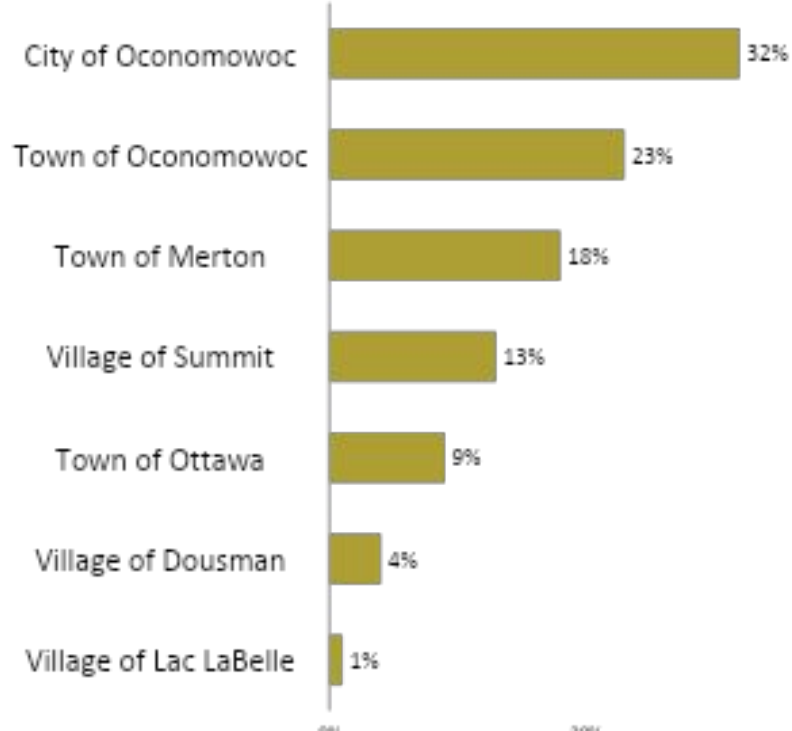


- **April 2022** survey window
- **3,017** total respondents
 - 1,143 paper
- Response rate: **17%**
- Margin of error: **+/- 1.8%**

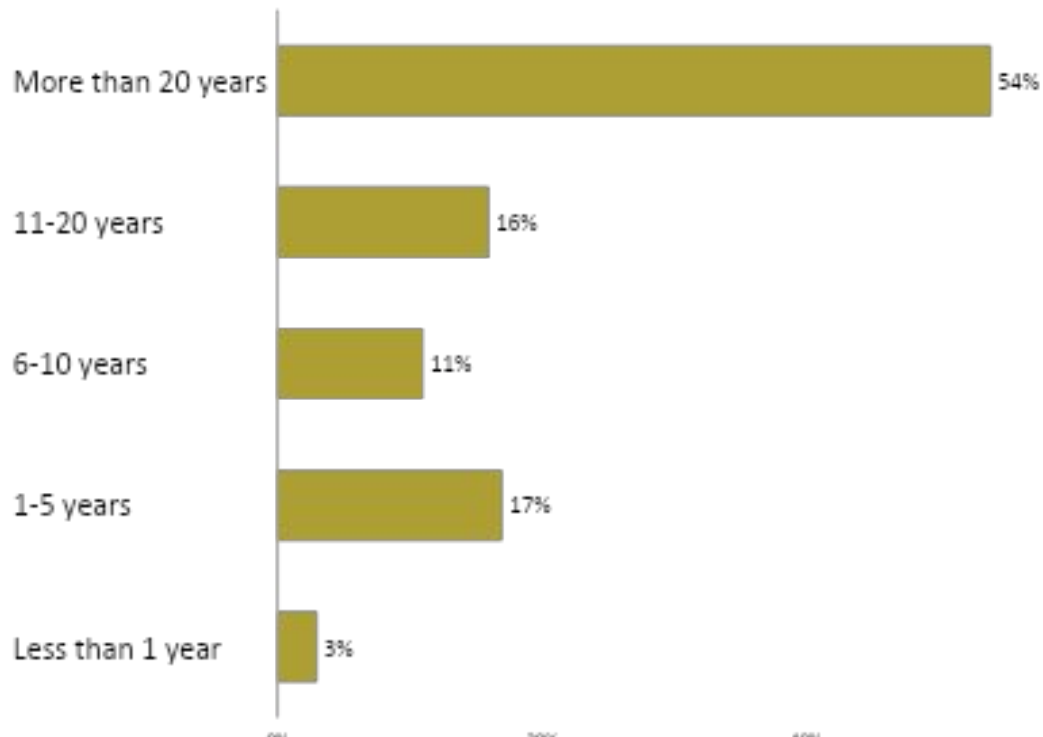
Respondent Age



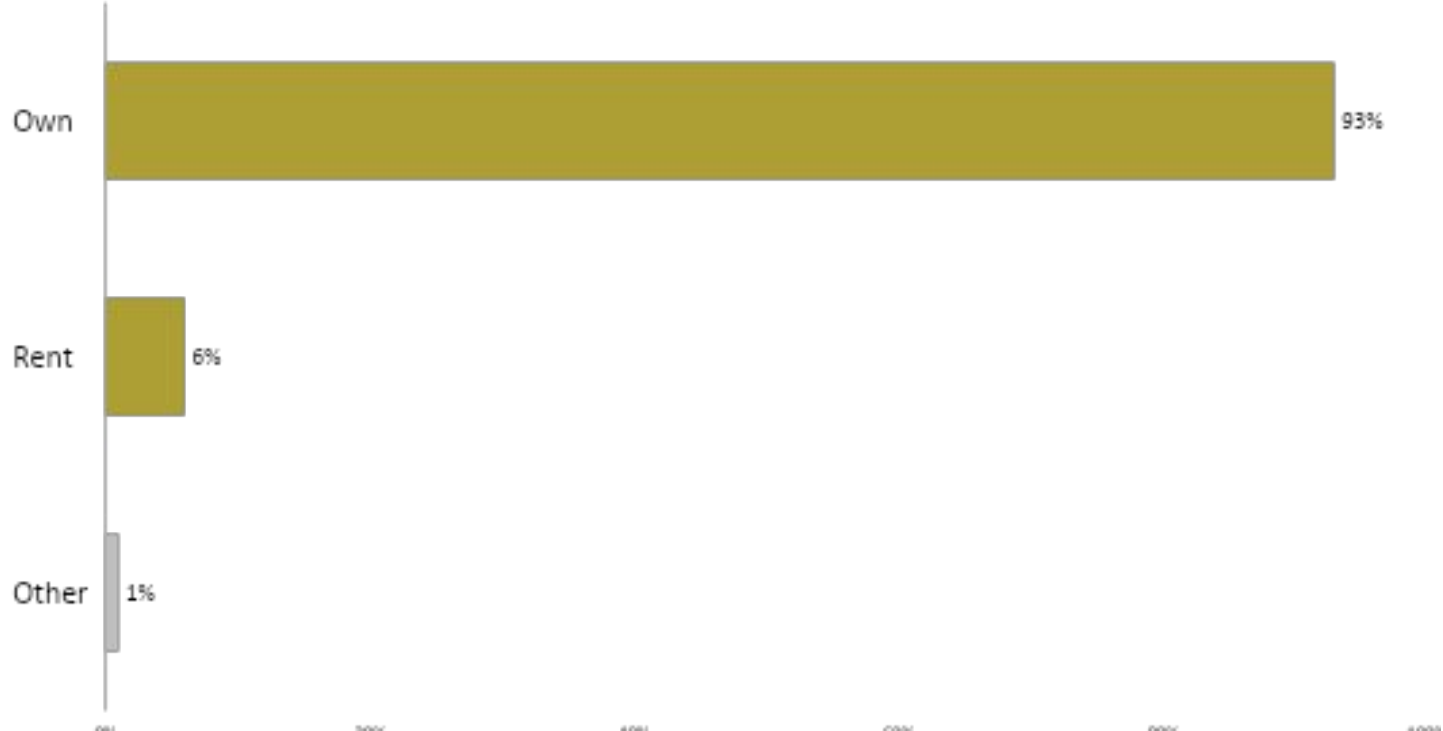
Respondent Location



How long have you lived in the area?



Which best describes your housing status?



WLFD History



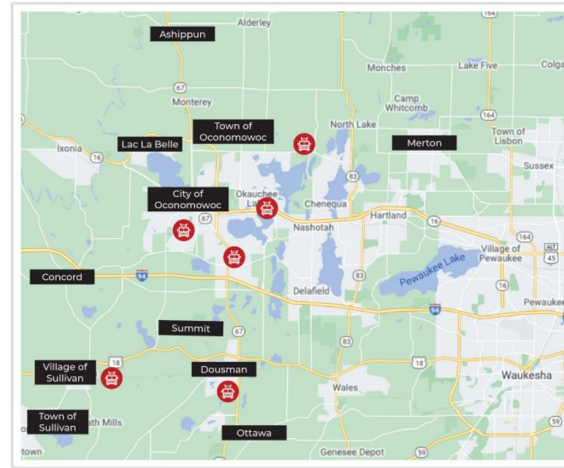
Western Lakes Fire District History

The Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD) provides:

- **Basic and advanced life support** (CPR, first aid, paramedic services, and invasive life-saving procedures).
- **Fire services** (fire emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, fire inspections, and public education).
- **Specialized response** (water and dive rescue, as well as large-scale incident response).
- **WLFD staffs and operates five fire stations and one EMS-focused station to serve more than 54,500 residents in a 215 square mile area.**



Fire Stations and Service Area

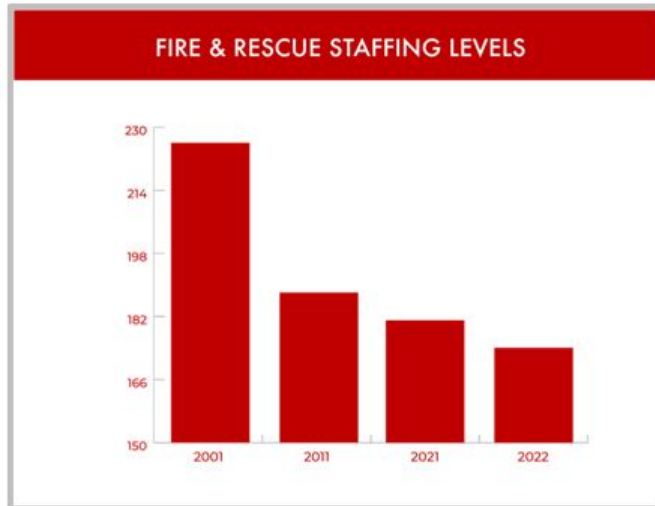


The Challenge 1/2



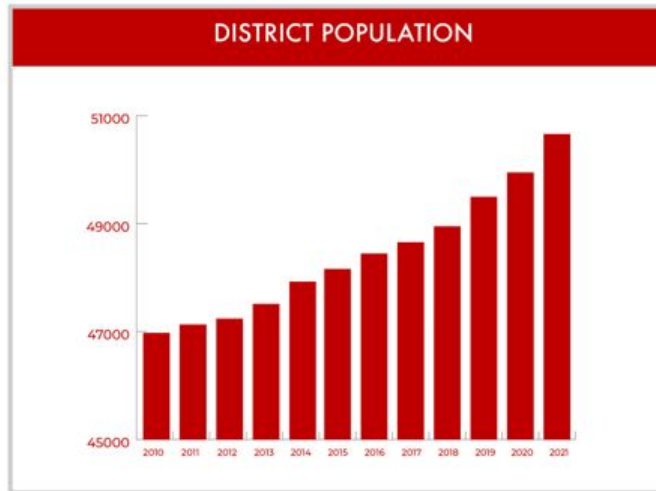
Declining Staffing Levels

In 2001, the agencies that now make up the Western Lakes Fire District had a total of 226 staff (full-time, paid-on-call, and interns). In 2011, these communities had a total staff of 188. Ten years later, in 2021, WLFD had a total staff of 181. In 2022, staffing was further reduced to 174, due in large part to WLFD's inability to offer competitive wages to recruit and retain both part-time and paid-on-call staff.



Increasing Population

During the past decade, the resident population within WLFD increased by more than 3,600 residents. In addition, there are also more commercial corridors, recreational facilities, and specialty care facilities that require services.

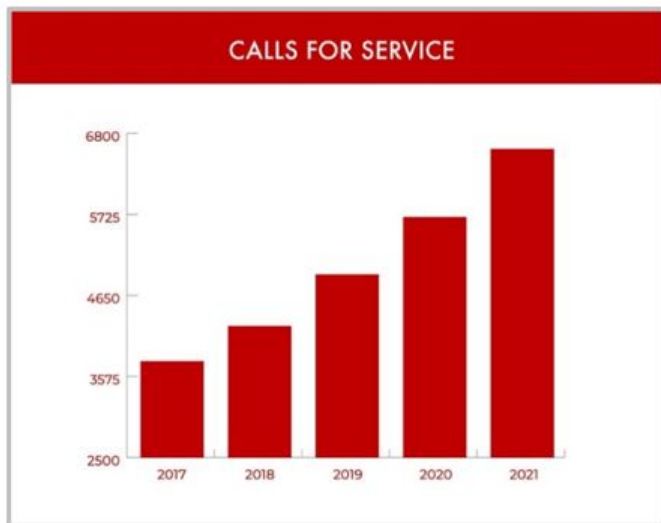


The Challenge 2/2



Increasing Calls for Service

As population and commercial growth continue, the number of calls for fire and emergency medical services grows as well. In 2017, WLFD responded to just over 3,775 fire/EMS calls for service. In 2021, WLFD responded to more than 6,500 total calls for service, an increase of more than 70% in just four years. Factors affecting the increased call volume include an aging population, mental health, drug/alcohol, and increased population.



Increasing Response Times

Over the past five years, fire response times have increased, challenging our ability to provide lifesaving care to residents. Currently, WLFD fire response times do not meet national standards. In the future, property owners will likely see more loss because of fires than comparable communities.

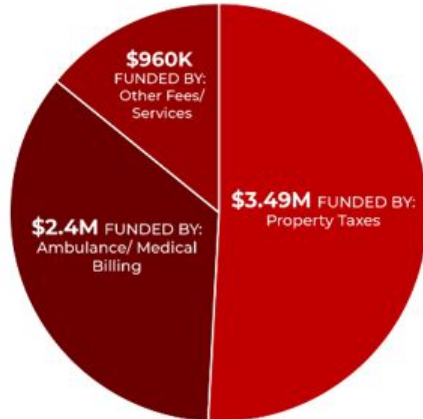
**Fire doubles in size
every 30 seconds.**

Funding Background

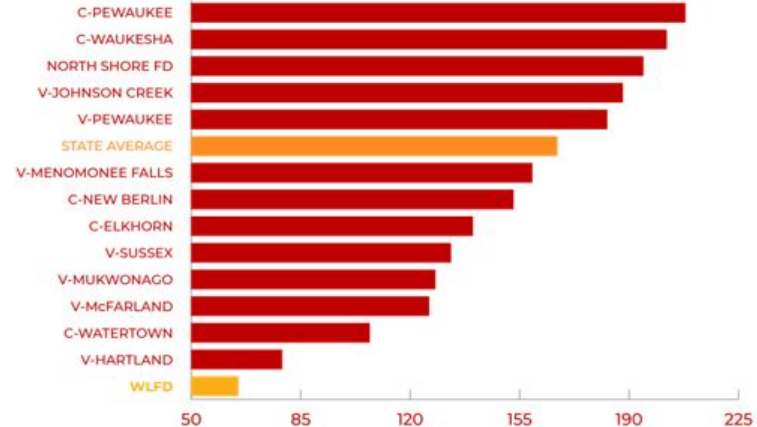


- WLFD is funded through a mix of revenue sources, including municipalities' property tax levy, state and federal payments, and fees for services (such as ambulance services, hazard mitigation, fire inspections, etc.). WLFD's 2022 operating budget is \$6.8 million, of which 80% is personnel costs related to salaries and benefits. While costs for providing fire and EMS services, as well as the demand for these services, have increased in recent years, funding for these services has remained stagnant.
- Based on the most recent data, WLFD has the lowest per capita costs when compared to peer communities.

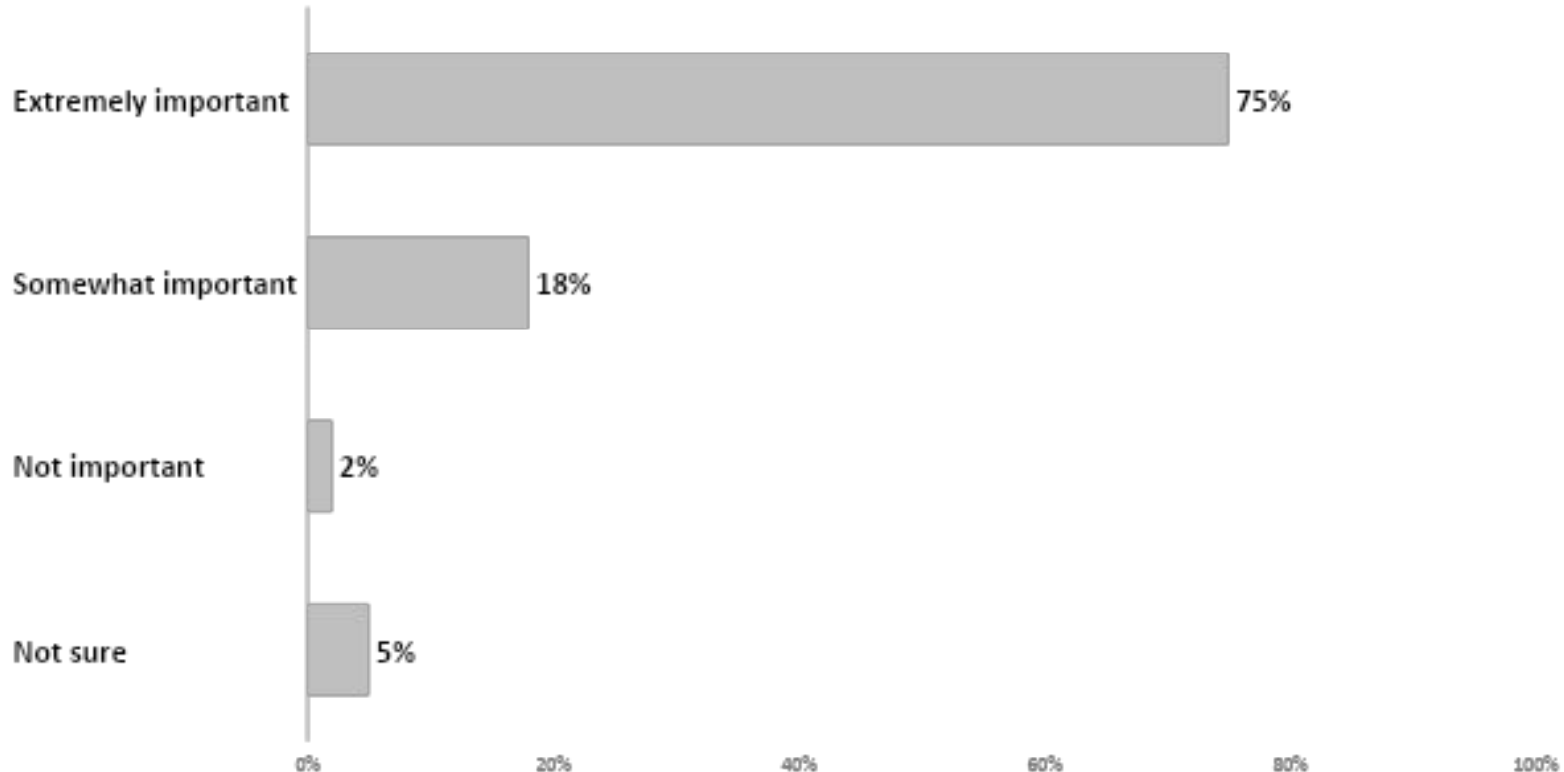
2022 FUNDING SOURCES



2019 FIRE/EMS SPENDING PER CAPITA



How important is it to you and your family to have high-quality emergency services?



What is needed?



Department leaders and municipal staff have assessed the needs across all WLFD communities that receive fire services. To bring fire and EMS capabilities up to appropriate levels, we will need:

- 33 additional firefighter/paramedics (11 per shift spread across our five fire stations)
- 3 battalion chiefs (one per shift) ? 12-15 paid interns (positions are not new, but the Department of Labor now requires intern positions to be paid positions)
- 1 full-time administrative assistant
- 1 fire inspector
- In addition, we need to increase staff wages to be competitive and avoid staff departures, as well as enhance staff recruitment and retention.

Increasing staffing levels would require an additional \$6.3 million each year. This investment would be shared across WLFD communities that receive fire services, based on a funding formula that accounts for a community's calls for service, population, the value of their facilities, and land value.

Municipality	Funding Formula Allocation for 2023	Total Community Share of Increase
City of Oconomowoc	35.48%	\$2,238,470
Town of Merton	18.97%	\$1,196,837
Town of Oconomowoc	17.30%	\$1,091,475
Town of Ottawa	6.90%	\$435,328
Village of Dousman	5.90%	\$372,237
Village of Lac LaBelle	1.60%	\$100,946
Village of Summit	13.85%	\$873,811
TOTAL:		\$6,309,105

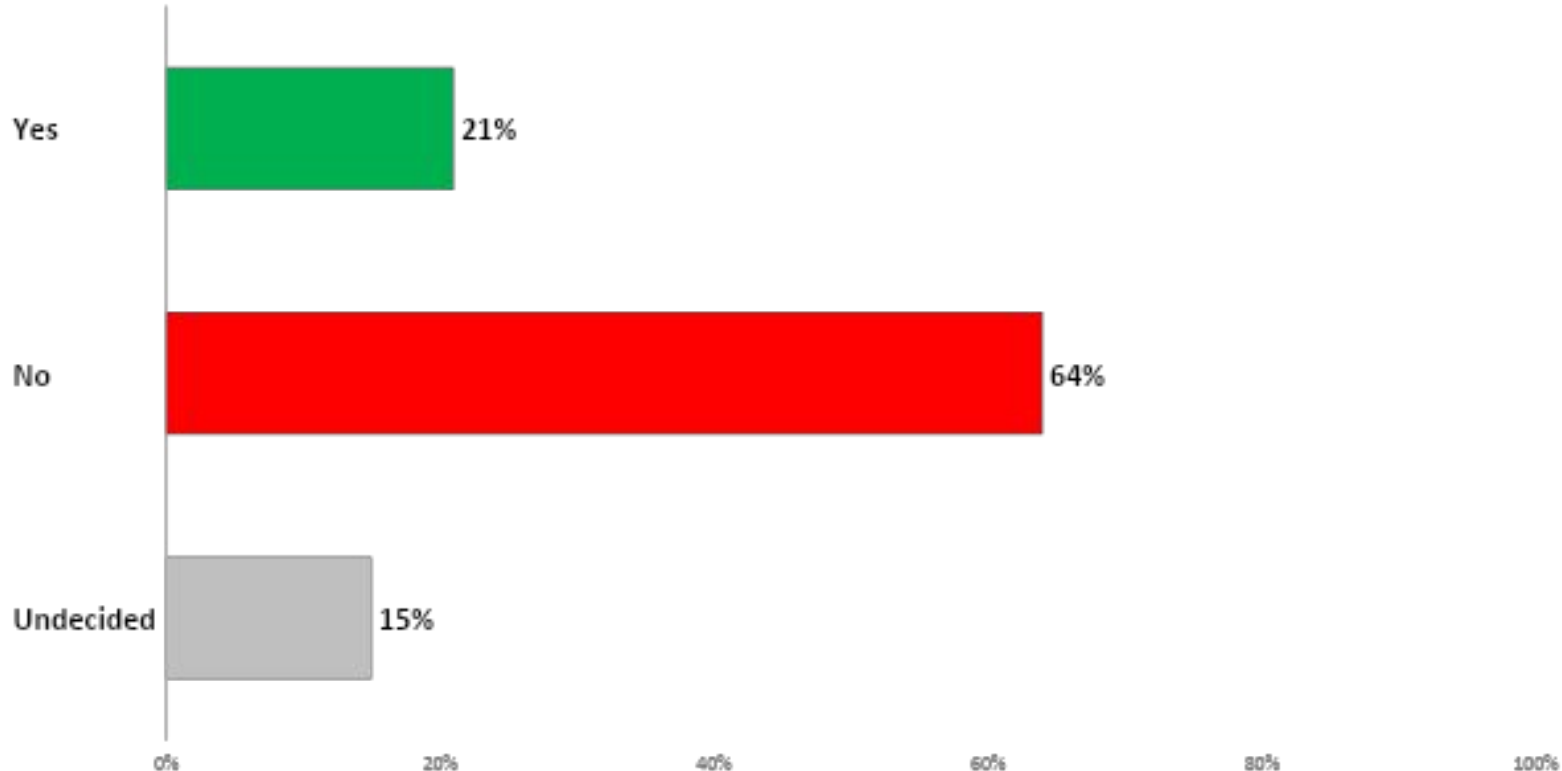
Funding Option 1: Collect a wheel tax



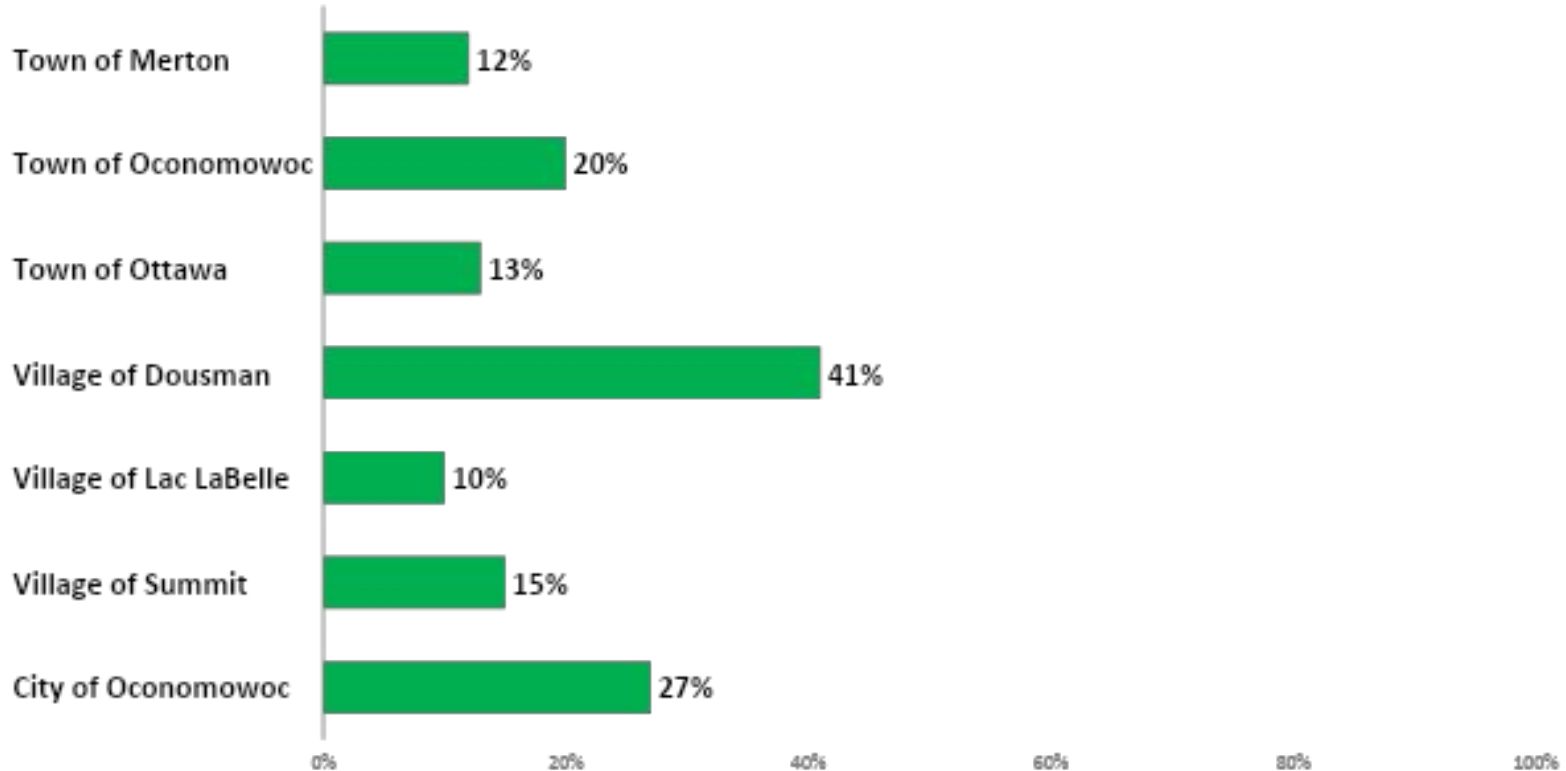
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Municipality	Registered Vehicles	Total Additional Wheel Tax Per Vehicle
City of Oconomowoc	18,261	\$123
Town of Merton	4,228	\$283
Town of Oconomowoc	5,946	\$184
Town of Ottawa	1,989	\$219
Village of Dousman	3,252	\$114
Village of Lac LaBelle	195	\$518
Village of Summit	2,854	\$306

Would you support implementing a wheel tax to pay for additional WLFD staff? (Option 1)



Support for Option 1 by Municipality



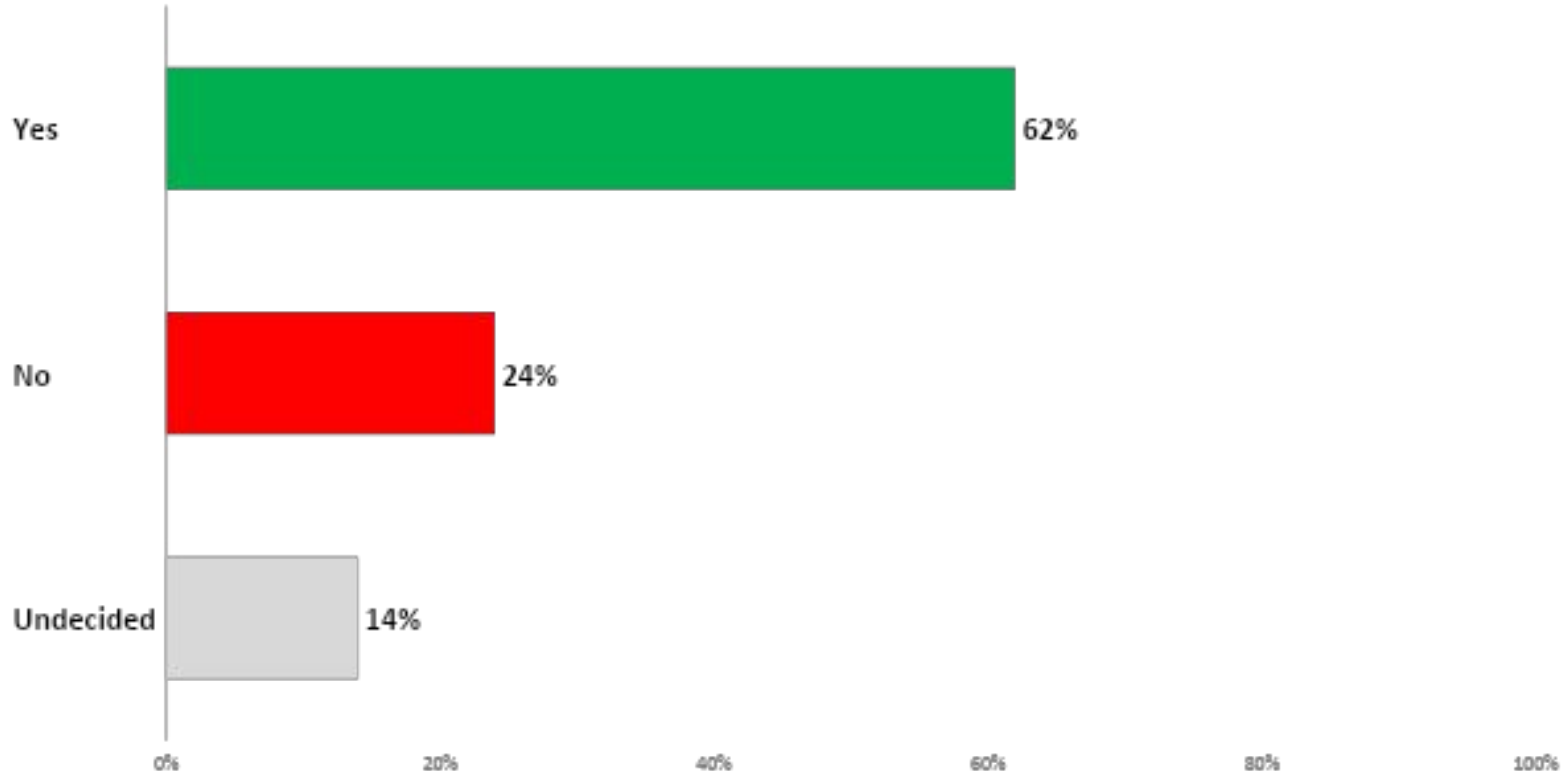
Funding Option 2: Seek support through a voter-approved referendum



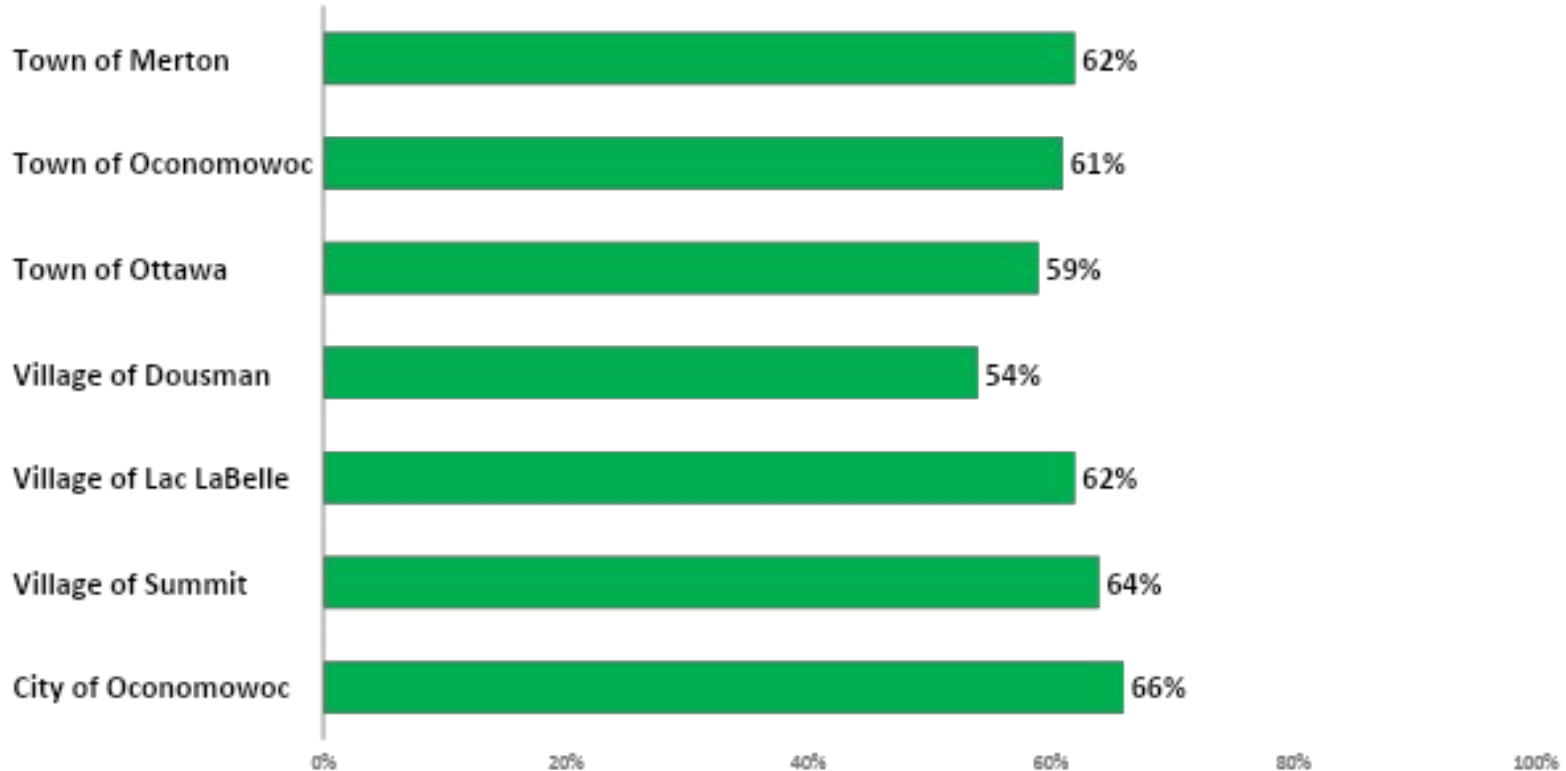
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Municipality	Annual Property Tax Increase per \$100K	Monthly Impact per \$100K
City of Oconomowoc	\$80.10	\$6.68
Town of Merton	\$66.24	\$5.52
Town of Oconomowoc	\$62.65	\$5.22
Town of Ottawa	\$77.23	\$6.44
Village of Dousman	\$160.14	\$13.35
Village of Lac LaBelle	\$74.30	\$6.19
Village of Summit	\$82.47	\$6.87

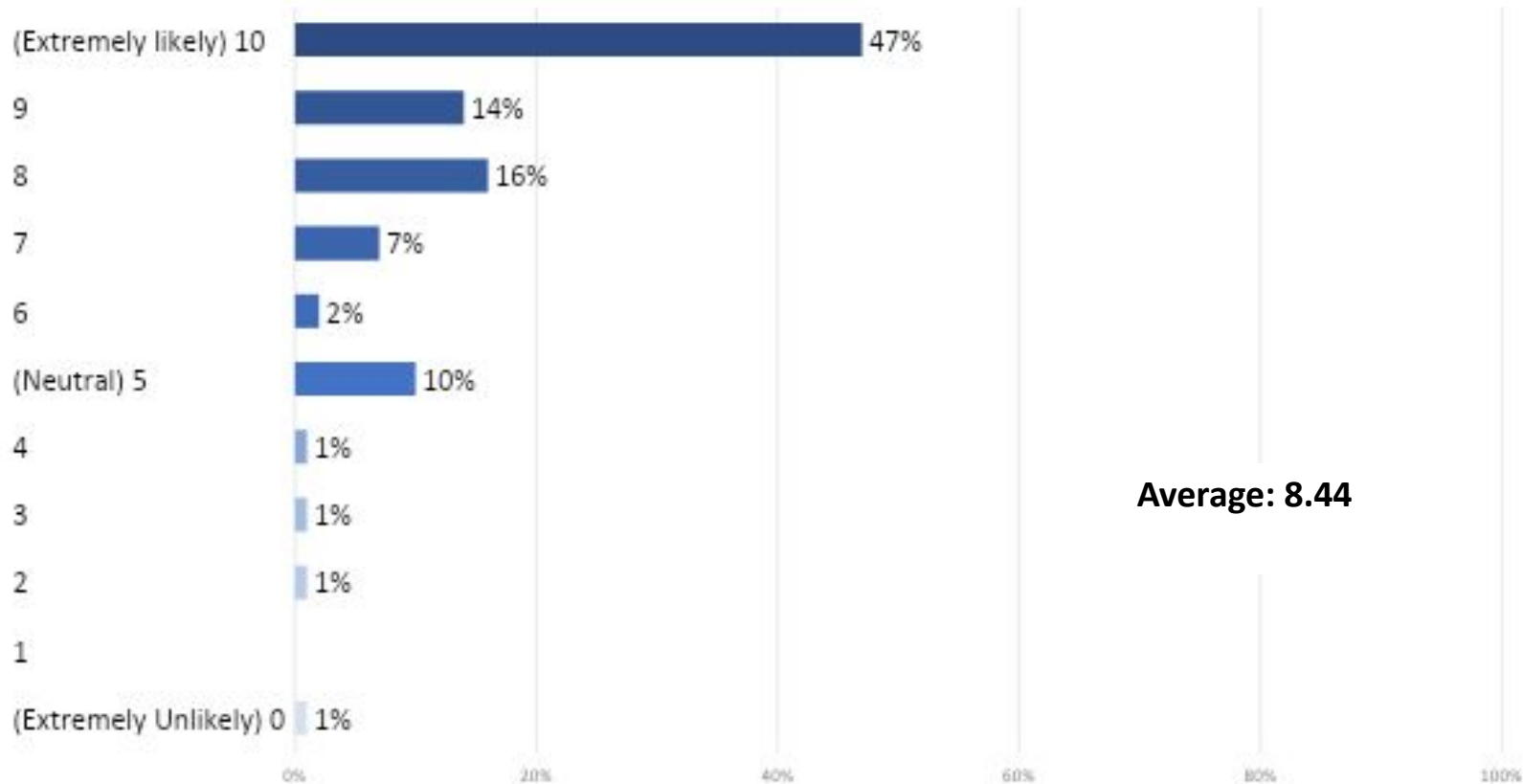
Would you support a referendum to pay for additional WLFD staff? (Option 2)



Support for Option 2 by Municipality



How likely are you to recommend living in the area to a friend or family member?



What did we learn?



- ✓ The vast majority of respondents would recommend living in the area to a friend or family member.
- ✓ 93% of respondents felt it is was either extremely important or somewhat important to have high-quality emergency services.
- ✓ A majority (62%) of respondents favored a referendum over a wheel tax (21%) to pay for additional WLFD staff.





Questions or Comments?

WHAT'S NEXT

- Today full survey report; including summary of comments, available to joint owners meeting
- Municipal electeds to determine path forward for funding
 - If a municipality opts to move forward with a referendum, the deadline to pass language for the August election is May 31



THANK YOU
