



Village of Westmont

31 West Quincy Street, Westmont, Illinois 60559

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PUBLIC NOTICE

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 8, 2026 - 4:30 PM
Village Hall - 31 W. Quincy Street

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Public Comment
5. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Minutes of the August 21, 2025 regular meeting and the November Budget Workshop
6. Unfinished Business
7. New Business
 - a. Park District Digital Sign Funding Request
 - b. Media Training
 - c. Personnel Code Amendments
 - d. TIF Status Update
 - e. Stormwater Review
 - f. Road Construction Methods Follow-up
8. Reports
9. Miscellaneous
10. Meeting Schedule
11. Adjourn

Note: Any person who has a disability requiring a reasonable accommodation to participate in the meeting should contact the ADA Compliance Officer, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Monday through Friday, Village of Westmont, Illinois, 60559; or telephone (630) 981-6210 voice, within a reasonable time before the meeting. Listen Everywhere, an assistive listening, mobile app, is now available to visitors attending Board and Commission Meetings held in the Village Hall Board Room.

<https://westmont.illinois.gov/581/ADA-Listen-Everywhere>



**Village of Westmont
ADMINISTRATION**

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Administration & Finance Committee

Thursday, August 21, 2025

Minutes*

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL - Trustees: Guzzo, Liddle, Nero, and Barker. Mayor Gunter & Clerk Szymiski. Staff: Manager May, Chief Gunther, Director Mielcarski, Assistant Parker, Director Altic, Director Hennerfeind, Director Ries, Deputy Chief Frank, Deputy Chief Fitzgerald, Director Brainerd, Director McIntyre, and

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

V. MINUTES

A. The minutes from the special meeting on March 27th, 2025, and regular meetings on April 3rd and July 10th, 2025, were approved with a motion by Trustee Barker and a second by Trustee Scales

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- **Credit Card Fees for Permits** Finance director Alan Altic provided an update on credit card fees for permits, a topic continued from a previous meeting. The goal is to assess a credit card fee for permits, especially as the Village moves to an all-online permit application system, which could involve multi-million dollar projects and significant fees.
 - **Negotiations with Tyler Payments** The village's credit card processor, Tyler Payments, initially proposed a 3.65% fee for residents, which has been negotiated down to 3.25%. Alan Altic indicated that Tyler Payments is unwilling to reduce the fee further, noting that nearby Hensdale charges the same rate for all

transactions, including water billing, which is a major source of credit card transactions.

- **Exploring Alternative Fee Structures** Alan Altic inquired about the board's appetite for a different model, such as charging residents 3% and the village absorbing a 5-cent transaction fee to cover the remaining 0.25% spread. Currently, the village caps credit card payments for permits at \$5,000, requiring checks for higher amounts, but this will not be feasible with an all-online system.
- **Payment Options for Residents** Residents will still have the option to pay with cash or check in person, and a free online option for e-checks exists, with the village absorbing a \$1.95 transaction fee for e-checks regardless of the permit fee amount. The primary question is whether the 3.25% credit card fee for permits is acceptable, given that it aligns with other municipalities, or if the village should push for a 3% fee by absorbing more costs, similar to what customers might see at a restaurant.
- **Board's Direction on Credit Card Fees** The board approved the 3.25% credit card fee for permits, which Alan Altic will communicate to Tyler Payments to proceed. This decision aligns with the growing trend of retailers and restaurants passing on processing fees to customers.
- **Hotel Motel Tax Revenue Overview** The village has a 5% hotel motel tax rate, the maximum allowed by statute for a non-home rule community, which must be used to support tourism and promote overnight stays. In 2024, the village collected \$968,000 from this tax, with projections to reach \$1 million in 2025. The fund currently has a surplus of almost \$3 million, indicating healthy financial standing .
 - **Investment in Tourism and Economic Development** Moving to invest heavily in tourism and economic development, particularly with a new chamber president and economic development consultant, to generate more sales tax revenue. Ideas included marketing events like the October Natiatorum event to attract more visitors to restaurants, funding the chamber for similar initiatives, and promoting other local attractions like pickleball and SkyZone trampoline park as destinations.
 - **Current Use of Hotel Motel Tax Funds** Over the last three years, hotel motel tax funds have been used for various purposes, including \$313,000 for maintenance and upkeep of Westmont Center, \$346,000 for holiday lights and decorations, and \$472,000 for fire baskets and watering in downtown. Additionally, 50% of the communications staff's wages and a portion of PD staffing costs for event patrols are allocated to this tax.
 - **Grant Programs and Partnerships** The village utilizes hotel motel tax funds for grant programs to support events and organizations, including the Rotary Club, Reliance Club Foundation for Spring Fling, and the Westmont Parks District for

events like holidays and concerts. The village also sponsors the DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau (\$140,000 over the last few years) and the Westmont Chamber, which helps with tourism and economic development.

- **Maximizing Hotel Motel Tax Utilization** Alan Altic proposed next steps for utilizing the nearly \$3 million in hotel motel tax money, including maximizing the 25% allocation for economic development and infrastructure, which is permissible until December 2026. Other recommendations include moving \$15,000 annually from the general fund to the hotel motel tax for tourism and economic development payments, and allocating salaries of facilities maintenance, public works, and fire department personnel involved in events to this fund.
- **Future Economic Development Initiatives** The board expressed strong support for using the hotel motel tax funds to promote economic development, attract more visitors, and support local businesses and events. The new Vision and Vibe event and the recently hired economic development consultant will also be funded through these tax dollars. Discussions included exploring the potential for increased hotel occupancy and how to make local hotels more attractive to guests.
- **Short-Term Rentals and Tax Implications** Short-term rentals like Airbnbs are not currently subject to the 5% hotel motel tax in Westmont. While it's a gray area, the village has historically deemed the potential revenue from taxing Airbnbs too small to justify the enforcement complexities.
- **FDIBC Program Update: Merit Program Overview** HR Director Renee Brainard and Assistant Village Manager Parker provided an update on the merit program for non-union employees, which went into effect on January 1st of the current year, with the first merit bonus issued on August 1st. The program emphasizes growth, development, and feedback through ongoing conversations, self-reflection, and continuum ratings based on work results and core values.
 - **Spot Bonus Program** The program includes a spot bonus system where non-union employees can award colleagues \$60 bonuses for positive impact, and departments have a pool of money for individual (\$200) or group (\$100 per person) awards. Spencer noted that 143 employee-to-employee bonuses have been given, and significant departmental bonuses were awarded following recent storms.
 - **Merit Bonus Distribution and Program Performance** The merit bonuses for August 1st were distributed based on a color continuum rating system (red to blue, with purple for new employees), which aims to be less judgmental than a number scale. The actual distribution of employees across the performance categories closely matched initial estimates, with the majority falling into the "green" (good, solid) or "teal" (above and beyond) categories.

- **Financial Sustainability and Hybrid Model** The board had allocated \$300,000 for merit bonuses, in addition to a 3% general wage adjustment. To ensure financial sustainability, Spencer explained that annual raises based solely on performance would compound at an unsustainable rate, suggesting a hybrid model that balances annual bonuses with incremental adjustments to base salaries.
- **Proposed Hybrid Compensation Model for 2026** For 2026, a hybrid model is proposed where \$35,000 of the annual bonus money would be integrated into raises, allowing for differentiation in wage adjustments based on performance, ranging from 2.5% for lower performers to nearly 4% for top performers, while keeping the overall compounding rate at a maximum of 3.25%. This approach aims to provide better long-term salary growth for higher-performing employees while ensuring all employees receive adjustments that generally keep pace with inflation.
- **Employee Performance and Compensation Meetings** Control discussed employee performance and compensation, noting that while revenue levels are not the primary metric, a subjective system based on supervisor expectations is in place, with some departments able to create more objective measures. Meetings Control clarified that employees in the "red" would not receive annual bonuses and would only get the minimum cost of living adjustment. They also emphasized that communication between supervisors, employees, and HR has improved, fostering opportunities for advancement and training, which is a key part of the current system.

VIII. REPORTS

- **Community Development Comprehensive Plan** Community development director Joe Hennerfeind presented an update on the community development comprehensive plan downtown plan review. They explained that the new zoning ordinance introduced new districts, and while the current comprehensive plan from 2013 is outdated, some rezonings for public and institutional (PI) properties can proceed without a new comprehensive plan. Joe Hennerfeind is seeking feedback on the extent of downtown rezonings, particularly concerning the boundaries of the B1A (downtown core) and downtown edge districts, and whether to proceed with rezonings to the north and south of the downtown core before the comprehensive plan is finalized.
- **Downtown Rezoning Strategies** The discussion continued regarding the extent of downtown rezoning. Joe Hennerfeind indicated that staff is comfortable with a phased approach, initially rezoning the first block to the north (to Irving) and the first block to the south (to Richmond), including the "restaurant row" area, as B1A (downtown core). Hennerfeind also proposed rezoning R5 (most intensive residential) areas to R7 (downtown residential), allowing for greater density, before the comprehensive plan is complete. The B1A district aims to promote walkability and allows for taller, five-story

buildings, while the downtown edge (similar to B1) permits three-story buildings and some breaks for parking lots.

- **Economic Development Considerations and Community Impact** Joe Hennerfeind fine acknowledged that from an economic development perspective, taking a "huge bite" by rezoning larger areas to higher density would be ideal. However, they emphasized the importance of balancing long-term economic development with the current businesses, recognizing that significant changes could make existing businesses non-conforming or upset homeowners with new five-story buildings behind their homes. Joe Hennerfeind fine committed to providing an analysis of the non-conformities and the pros and cons of "the big bite" versus "the little bite" for the Community Development Committee's (CDC) review. They also mentioned plans to integrate the public works downtown plan with the comprehensive plan and to meet with the downtown Westmont business community.

Summary

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm, on April 21st, 2025, where the minutes from previous meetings were approved. Finance Director Alan Altic provided an update on credit card fees for permits, with the board approving a 3.25% fee after negotiations with Tyler Payments. Alan Altic also discussed the utilization of the hotel motel tax revenue, proposing strategies to maximize its use for tourism and economic development, which Mayor Nero and the Board strongly supported. HR Director Renee Brainard and Assistant Village Manager Parker updated the board on the merit program and proposed a hybrid compensation model for 2026. Community Development Director Joe Hennerfeind feind presented an update on the Community Development Comprehensive Plan and discussed Downtown rezoning strategies.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS - none

X. ADJOURN Motion by Nero and second by Barker

(next meeting is scheduled for October 2, 2025)

**Please note that these minutes were created by Gemini and double checked.*



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2025-11-13 Budget Workshop - Administration & Finance Committee

Committee meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m., the pledge was said, and attendance taken. Mayor Nero complimented Finance Director Altic on preparing the budget in advance so that the new Board was able to review and send in questions to be answered at this workshop. He applauded the transparency that Director Altic has shown.

Finance Director Altic welcomed everyone to this, his first workshop, and reviewed the process that staff has followed. He complemented all the departments on the hard work and dedication to the process.

- **Budget Workshop and Document Distribution** The meeting commenced with a welcome and appreciation for the timely delivery of the 2026 budget documents, which were available to the board almost a week ahead of the workshop, an achievement noted as the first time in almost 15 years. Meetings Control, acting as village manager, thanked Director Altic and team for seamlessly putting the budget together following a process that began in July, facilitating a more efficient review. The timeline for the review includes the workshop on November 13th, a board opportunity for additional questions on November 20th, and a request for budget approval at the November 20th Village Board meeting, with December 11th as a backup date.
- **Guiding Principles and Village Priorities** Staff developed the budget using internal guiding principles focused on enhancing the experience between the public and staff, leveraging technology, improving systems, and providing immediate customer service. Core services, such as ensuring water supply, are mandated, but quality of life items, like flower pots on Cass Avenue, are also budgeted for as they define the village. Staff are focused on accomplishments and maintaining a business-friendly environment through building code enhancements, zoning updates, and improved timeliness of processes. The budget is fiscally responsible and incorporates village board priorities that were discussed informally and formally.



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- **2026 Budget Overview and Fund Structure** Director Altic presented the 2026 budget, which is one of the largest the village has ever had at \$120 million, primarily driven by \$54 million in capital projects, including the fire station. The General Fund, the main operating fund, is healthy with solid fund balance reserves, though over \$10 million of the fund balance is being used for capital projects next year. The village budgets for 14 funds, including capital funds, the General Fund, a debt fund, and two Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for economic development.
- **Revenue Analysis and Tax Components** Taxes constitute the vast majority of the village's revenue, sourced from local taxes like property and utility taxes, as well as state-derived taxes like sales tax, Motor Fuel Tax (MFT), and income taxes shared based on population. Overall revenue growth is forecasted conservatively at around 2 to 3%, with property taxes limited to about 3.1% growth due to CPI and new construction. Approximately \$41 million of the budget comes from taxes, with a breakdown showing that property and some local taxes are fully borne by Westmont residents, while other taxes are generated from a broader base of visitors and external sources.
- **Proposed Telecom Communications Tax Cut** Staff identified an opportunity to cut taxes for Westmont residents by proposing a reduction in the telecom communications tax from 6% down to 5% in the 2026 budget. Director Altic stated that the village does not necessarily need this money and is being responsible by returning it to residents, who fully bear this tax on their cell phone and home phone bills. This tax cut was described as "almost unheard of."
- **Property Taxes and TIF Districts** The village has six different property tax levies mainly centered around core services such as public safety, retirement benefits, and risk liability insurance. The village's property tax portion is about 11% of a typical tax bill, with school districts comprising the majority. The village, as a non-home rule community, is limited by state statute to growing property tax revenues by up to 5% or CPI, currently limited to 2.9%, though new construction allows for an estimated 3.1% overall increase for 2026. TIF revenue is projected to spike in 2025 due to the Quincy Street apartments redevelopment fully coming online.



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- **Sales and Non-Home Rule Sales Tax** Sales tax has shown solid growth of 7.5% over the last year, partly due to new businesses, though the loss of Amazon Fresh contributes to a conservative 2.1% growth forecast for 2026. Roughly 50% of the sales tax is derived from the auto sales industry, which is performing well. The large spike in non-home rule sales tax for 2025 and 2026 is due to the board increasing the tax from 0.5% to 1% in March 2025, which is expected to generate about \$5 million. Finance is creating an "infrastructure fund" for the new half percent of this tax, broadening its use beyond just storm water.
- **Places for Eating Tax and Income Tax** The places for eating tax saw a strong recovery post-COVID, with 5% growth this last year and a conservative 2.1% growth forecasted for next year. Income tax, a state tax distributed based on population, has seen steady growth since COVID but is forecasted for less than 1% growth in 2026 due to potential headwinds from tariffs and the impact of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3) on corporate income. Director Altic noted that the forecasting is conservative to avoid banking on risky revenues.
- **Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) and Road Maintenance Challenge** MFT revenue is not growing substantially, showing only about \$100,000 to \$150,000 growth over the last five years, which Director Altic attributed to the increasing popularity of EVs. The cost to resurface one mile of road is about \$500,000, and MFT revenues only afford about two miles of resurfacing per year, a "not a great calculus" given the 64 miles of roads to maintain. Staff confirmed that with current funding, only about a mile of resurfacing is budgeted for next year, alongside the reconstruction of De Moines.
- **MFT Fund Depletion and Future Road Funding** The MFT fund is nearly bankrupt, with only four to five hundred thousand dollars remaining, meaning future annual funding may be limited to about \$1 million after next year's program. Rebuild Illinois fund grants provided \$3.5 to \$4 million over a three- or four-year period, but that money has been spent. Long-term funding options for road maintenance would include tapping into the new infrastructure tax fund, though it may not be enough to double efforts. The possibility of non-home rule communities like Westmont being authorized to issue a local fuel tax of up to three cents was mentioned as a potential future option.



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- **Discussion on Road Prioritization and Pavement Management** The board discussed the trade-offs between full reconstruction projects like the De Moines curb and gutter project and maximizing standard resurfacing given the limited funding. Trustee Pilli suggested a discussion at the Public Works Committee on whether to prioritize resurfacing over full curb and gutter projects to address the 64 miles of roads. Director Altic confirmed that staff utilize a three-year streets efficiency study, including a non-subjective pavement condition index, to guide decision-making and maintain an acceptable average pavement condition index. Full replacement is needed when the base under the road is failing, as was the case with De Moines and Traube.
- **Road Lifespan, Maintenance, and Debt** The design life for a road is typically 20 years without maintenance, but resurfacing can extend that life, typically done three times in 15- to 20-year cycles. With the current resurfacing rate of two miles per year, the full cycle is too long at 32 years, leading to total reconstruction. To stretch dollars, the village plans to implement preventative maintenance measures like crack sealing and specialized products to soften the pavement. The debt on current road loans is set to come off in 2033, freeing up funds.
- **Interest Income and Investment Strategy** Interest income is considered "free money" generated from investing current idle tax dollars. Earnings peaked at \$3.23 million in 2024, mirroring the high Federal funds rates, and are projected to be close to \$2 million next year. Finance is actively investing money, currently holding close to \$16 million in investments, primarily in Certificates of Deposit (CDs) and highly rated municipal bonds. Director Altic follows a conservative investment approach, adhering to statutory and internal policy restrictions.
- **Grants and Water Rates** Director Altic praised staff for being highly active in pursuing grants across departments, noting that this is not common in every municipality. The new water tower project is being funded through an I.E.P.A. loan with a low interest rate of 1.36% and a "healthy" loan forgiveness of \$1.6 million on the \$6+ million project. Water rate increases are scheduled to take effect in January 2026 and for several subsequent Januaries, based on a water rate study. The budgeted costs include a projected 20-cent increase in the cost of water purchased from the DuPage Water Commission, which is a pass-through cost.



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- **Debt Schedule and Future Issuances** The expense section confirmed a total spending plan of over \$120 million, with large capital investments planned. The debt schedule includes the already-approved state loan for the water tower and reflects the loan amount after the \$1.6 million forgiveness. Future debt issuances, for which Raymond James was approved, include \$4 million for water system improvements and \$30 million for the fire department headquarters, plus almost \$2 million potentially for infrastructure. The existing road loans were renewed in 2022 and are scheduled to come off the books in 2033.
- **Infrastructure and Debt Overview** Staff discussed the \$30 million budget, which includes fire station costs and \$2 million for infrastructure improvements such as roads and sidewalks. The \$27 million budget for the fire station is still an unknown but is hoped to be on the high end, with a guaranteed maximum price expected in the spring. also raised a question about the village's \$70 million debt and its credit limit, seeking to maintain borrowing power.
- **Statutory and Cash Flow Debt Limits** Director Altic explained the debt limit in two ways: statutorily and by cash flow. The statutory debt limit is calculated as a percentage of the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV), which is \$91 million, but only \$1.5 million of the village's current debt is subject to this limit. Alternate revenue debt, which is not general obligation debt, does not count towards the statutory debt limit because a funding source is identified for it.
- **Debt Coverage and Revenue Sources** The village's potential \$34 million debt issuance is supported by sufficient revenues over 20 years, which have been "baked into" the water and rate formulas. For the \$30 million fire department debt, the annual debt service of \$2.2 million is projected to be covered by \$2.4 million in revenues from the additional non-home rule sales tax, achieving 113% coverage. The income from this sales tax is expected to grow, potentially reaching \$3 million by 2030 or 2031, while the debt remains fixed.
- **Alternate Revenue Debt Coverage Ratio** It was clarified that for alternate revenue debt, the village must promise to have 25% more revenue than the debt coverage required for the specific revenue pledged. While there is a 25% coverage requirement for each specific pledged revenue, there is no overall percentage limit based on the village's total revenues. The village's debt related



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to overall expenses is about 5% of the budget, similar to Downers Grove and less than Hinsdale's 10%.

- **Debt-Funded Projects** Finance outlined the projects associated with the debt, including a \$30 million bond issuance for the fire station, architectural fees, temporary housing, and almost \$2 million for infrastructure improvements. The water side includes large projects like improvements for North Park, Chicago, and Willard, and water treatment plant rehabilitation, with \$4 million planned for borrowing. Due to not raising water rates for several years, including during COVID, the water fund does not have the necessary cash, projecting a fund balance dip by 2029.
- **Capital Improvement Projects** It was presented the capital program for the next year, highlighting the top 20 projects out of a list of 57 across various areas like stormwater, facilities, and vehicles. The projects on the list are ranked by cost, not priority, and the 57 projects listed are all budgeted to be done if staff time allows. The staff is splitting the alley costs between storm water and capital projects funds.
- **Specific Projects Clarification** The 20 projects on the slide represent the most expensive ones, and the full list of 57 projects is what is planned to be completed. It was clarified the cryptic alley coding, noting that Alley 7S is between Washington and Hudson near Quincy and 55th, and 3S is adjacent to Lebec Park. It was noted that projects cut from the current budget are likely to be prioritized for the 2027 budget year.
- **Finance Department Plans for 2026** The Finance department budget for 2026 includes a large increase in debt service, which covers principal and interest payments, as a finance function. Key projects include managing and investing the village's \$60 million cash portfolio, implementing a new timekeeping solution with UKG, and issuing the \$34 million bond. The goal for the bond issuance includes maintaining or improving the current Double-A plus bond rating, though achieving Triple-A may be challenging due to pension liability and demographics.
- **Governmental Services Department Plans** The Governmental Services department, which includes the board in its budget, has two full-time employees and one new part-time staff member. Key activities include dealing with over 700



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businesses annually, and their priority for 2026 is getting businesses and residents to understand and use the online permitting and registration system. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests are a key piece of staff time.

- **Human Resources Department Initiatives** Human Resources (HR) is not proposing staffing changes for 2026 and is currently hiring a part-time employee after receiving an overwhelming response of almost 70 applicants. Their goals for 2026 include streamlining the hiring process, updating job descriptions, and implementing the "employee access" feature in the Munis system to allow employees to update their information and view historical pay data. HR is also working on updating the personnel policy manual into plain language and creating total compensation statements.
- **Merit Bonus Program Results and Feedback** Preliminary results from the merit bonus program's second cycle show that about 95% of staff are rated at "consistently meeting" (Green) or "consistently exceeding" (Teal) expectations, with a few in the "needs assistance" category (Yellow) and a couple in the highest rating (Blue). Feedback on the new performance-based system, which replaced a flat General Wage Adjustment (GWA) raise, has been mixed due to the amount of processing and conversations involved. The current merit program ensures that employees rated Green or higher receive a better raise (Green is 3.1%) than the GWA negotiated with the union (3%), which was a board directive.
- **IT Department Focus Areas** The IT department, consisting of four full-time staff and one unfilled part-time GIS position, focuses primarily on internal services but is expanding external services. Major goals for 2026 include improving the difficult-to-use 311 system, which they are looking to replace with a more user-friendly system, and upgrading their Security Operations Center (SOC) services for 24/7 network monitoring. They are also replacing their 25-year-old phone system and are heavily involved in the fire station remodel, dealing with all wired systems. The village is considered proactive and satisfied with its current network security.
- **311 System Replacement Timeline** The current 311 system is about four years old, and its problems include map malfunctions, difficulties with address entry, and failure to notify users when file attachments cause submissions to fail. IT is



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looking at two replacement systems used by neighboring communities, and their goal is to roll out the public-facing side of the new 311 system within a couple of months. The new system will integrate 311 with code enforcement, permitting, licensing, and internal help desk ticketing.

- **Communications Department Initiatives and Staffing** The Communications department, currently a two-person operation, plans to continue core tasks like managing the website, news magazine, and weekly e-news, and supporting active committees and events. Due to an existing full workload and new special assignments, the department is seeking to add staff to handle the growing demand for communications. Planned projects include restarting the branding initiative and a full redesign of the website, which is expected to take many months.
- **Communications Funding and Projects** The department's operating expenses are projected to increase by around \$80,000, partially due to a \$45,000 to \$50,000 allocation for a new mural program. Other new projects include continuing the Vision and Vibe festival and expanding social media presence to fulfill the Mayor's request for more public outreach. A significant portion of the events and the mural program funding comes from the convention tourism budget, rather than the general fund. The concept of the mural program is to have professional artwork on business sides to bring more people to town and add character.
- **Improving Public Communication** Staff expressed a need for improved communication regarding construction projects, advocating for proactive updates via social media or other avenues to reduce public frustration. Larry noted the challenge of ensuring people see the news produced by the village, especially with the lack of a traditional local newspaper, and the difficulty of competing with instant, though sometimes inaccurate, social media posts. An upcoming admin finance committee meeting will discuss current communication efforts, social media strategy, and media training.
- **Community Development Department** The Community Development department has 11 full-time employees and is currently looking to hire two positions, including a new part-time code enforcement officer, due to the aging of the village requiring more attention. A significant increase in operating expenses is



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due to \$750,000 budgeted for "whatif" scenarios related to upfront consultant costs for the One North Cass project and \$150,000 for the comprehensive plan. The department processes over 1,500 permits, handles 3,300 reviews and inspections, and manages over 700 code enforcement cases annually, with 50 cases going to local adjudication.

- **Planning and Zoning Initiatives** The detail of the work of the planning and zoning department, noting that while the number of variances processed is low (20-30), the two planners provide stellar customer service, assisting residents and developers daily. The department is also administering the downtown incentive program and processing FOYAs. Major future efforts include rezoning properties based on the new zoning ordinance and the new downtown and public zoning districts developed in 2026.
- **System Implementation and Improvement** The village is working to implement a 311 system, tailored to their needs, and a refined online permitting system. It was noted that the new village manager and IT department have been receptive to criticisms of current programs and are looking at a better system to move most operations online and eliminate paper. The focus on efficiency and better informing the public is aided by an extra part-timer in code enforcement.
- **Code Enforcement Approach and Resources** Code enforcement aims to treat all cases systemically and fairly, allowing a reasonable time for remedies. They acknowledged that many residents face financial limitations for repairs and try to be sensitive to that while maintaining standards. They noted that historically, the village has not had many resources for resident assistance but is working on improving referrals, primarily through the county, and encouraged local organizations to find resources for those trying to "age in place".
- **Structural Integrity and Housing Challenges** Highlighted that code enforcement sometimes deals with severe issues, such as a structural collapse requiring fire department intervention for safety. They also observed that many older homes, especially in the older part of downtown, are reaching the end of their lifespan due to age and water issues, requiring significant work that goes beyond temporary fixes. Code enforcement sometimes motivates residents to seek



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better solutions or consider moving if the property cannot be adequately maintained.

- **Public Works Staffing and Core Services** The Public Works department's status, noting three current vacancies, including one filled forestry position and promising interviews for the underground division, with efforts underway to quickly fill the street division vacancy before winter. They are requesting three new hire positions: two in forestry, partially or fully offset by cost savings, and one in underground to increase efforts in storm sewer cleaning and maintenance. The department's core services include providing safe water, maintaining streets, managing the natural environment, and supporting community events.
- **Public Works Infrastructure and Technology Initiatives** The department introduced Greg Olrich, the new Village Engineer, who will provide technical support for storm water projects, improve customer service, execute the ambitious Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and head up technology efforts for GIS and asset management. Leveraging asset management will help focus resources for maximum resident benefit. A water system focus includes annual 1% system replacement to increase reliability, as well as mandated lead service line replacements starting in 2027, with efforts underway for a voluntary replacement program and SRF funding application.
- **Sidewalk and Storm Sewer Maintenance** Public Works will focus heavily on sidewalk projects in 2026, driven by board and resident feedback, safe routes to school, and infrastructure budget principles. Thanks to Melissa Brendle's efforts, in-house capacity has increased for quicker response to specific concerns, while contractor programs will be geographically focused to lower costs. Regarding storm sewer maintenance, the goal is to get through the entire system once every five years, and the additional underground position will help increase that frequency by enabling a fully staffed "back door truck" to jet sewers faster.
- **Fire Department Staffing and Increased Call Volume** The Fire Department is ticking towards 80 part-time staff but has several on leaves of absence or injuries. They are anticipating a significant increase in run volume due to new medical buildings opening, citing the DY building on Ogden that increased calls



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from 68 to 83 already, and expecting 80 to 100 new additional calls per year from the new medical center on Blackhawk. This anticipated increase necessitates making the third ambulance more available.

- **New Full-Time Training Officer Position** The Fire Department is proposing a new full-time command level Training Officer position. This role is vital for maintaining ISO1 status and CFAI accreditation, ensuring compliance with state and national training standards, and enhancing operational readiness and risk reduction. The position will also support retention and morale through professional development and position the department for future staff growth and leadership succession.
- **Fire Station Relocation and Temporary Housing Plan** DC Frank provided an update on the new fire station, including a preliminary budget presentation by Leopardo Construction scheduled for the December 11th Public Works Committee meeting. The fire department expects to move out of Station 183 by May 1st, with temporary locations established. Tower 183 will move to the north side station with temporary bunk rooms, while administration and fire prevention will go to the old water department. Engine 183 and Medic 183 will remain on the south side, housed in a temporary firehouse constructed by Public Works at 325 South Wilmet, ensuring continuous fire and EMS coverage south of the tracks.
- **Collaboration and Cost Savings for Temporary Firehouse** DC Frank highlighted the cooperative effort with Public Works to build a structure they can both use long-term, which avoided the high cost of renting temporary facilities for \$700,000 for 15 months. Weekly meetings have been scheduled until May to manage the budget and address small problems quickly. The department plans to use two cargo containers on site for equipment storage during demolition and construction. A news release will be issued to keep the public informed of the plans and the upcoming December 11th meeting.
- **Police Department Staffing and Administrative Workload** The Police Department is currently six people short of its allocated 47 staff, which is noted as an "all-time high". Administrative staff, including detectives, handle about 150 cases annually, and the records division manages court case requests and an increased



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volume of FOYAs, which have more than doubled due to body-worn cameras. The patrol division handles over 20,000 service calls and 7,000 traffic stops annually.

- **Police Department Budget Breakdown and DEA Funds** The Police Department's budget is 81% personnel costs, which includes pensions. Operating costs account for 10% of the budget, with 35% of that covering the dispatch center. Capital expenditures are 9% of the total budget and include funds from the DEA fund and the vehicle replacement plan. The DEA fund, 6% of the total budget, is composed of seized, non-tax funds, offering savings but subject to strict federal use restrictions.
- **Proposed Downtown License Plate Readers (LPRs)** The Police Department proposed adding LPR cameras downtown, expanding on the eight current LPRs located primarily at village entryways. They noted that the cameras are crucial for about 20,000 hits annually, assisting with warrants, stalking cases, orders of protection, thefts, robberies, and tracking burglary crews. The cameras are small, discreet, and only trigger on license plates, not pedestrians. The Chief clarified that the cameras are not monitored 24/7; they operate on an alert basis, and all searches are logged and subject to a strict audit process to ensure proper use. The Board expressed comfort with the minimal cost and technology for safety and crime prevention.
- **Planning for Future Success** Outlining a theme of "planning for success," including the development of a new comprehensive plan, downtown plan, strategic plan, and a branding marketing plan. A significant initiative is proactively hiring a consultant for full-time planning and analysis in the fire department to prepare for a potential future conversion to a full-time department in the next five or six years. They also included a large budget item for land purchases, categorized as a "what if" fund, to allow the village to be nimble and act on opportunities for economic development or storm water retention efforts.
- **Professional Development and Staff Training** The budget for 2026 anticipates over 35,000 hours of staff training. Police and fire personnel are projected to receive over 300 hours per person, while Village Hall and Public Works staff receive 41 hours, which was noted is still an impressive number, comparable to the 40 hours required to maintain a CPA license. Training is essential for



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maintaining certifications, compliance with mandates like the Safety Act, and professional development across all departments.

- **Facility and Safety Improvements** Facility improvements are necessary as village hall approaches 25 years and the north end police and fire station nears 30 years. Noteworthy improvements include the Public Works cold storage building on the south end, which will initially house fire and ambulance equipment during the fire station rebuilding. This new metal clear span building will not be climate-controlled but will prevent diesel in vehicles from freezing. Safety programs for next year include improvements to fire bunker gear and additional LPRs and new police officer hires.
- **Sidewalk and Roadway Investment** The village is making a significant investment in the sidewalk program for next year, doubling efforts like the "safe step" initiative. They are utilizing more monies from the Commission on Tourism for these infrastructure efforts. New sidewalk connections will be constructed at 59th and Richmond and Westview Hill School to fill gaps and improve pedestrian access to schools and civic facilities. Roadway construction is budgeted at \$1.9 million, primarily targeting De Moine next year.
- **One North Project and Funding Challenges** The One North development includes a \$2 million estimate to move the ComEd transmission line, planned for spring or summer, which is hoped to be the high-end cost. The Burlington road reconstruction, also part of the One North plan, is being funded by Central TIF funds, which are currently low and require borrowing from the Long Range Planning Fund. Although the TIF will eventually be reimbursed, it will take until around 2032 or 2033 to be made whole.
- **Storm Water and Water System Strategy** Storm water initiatives include the hiring of additional underground employees, alley work, and storm sewer extensions across various parts of town. Director Ries and the Mayor mentioned upcoming discussions about storm water requirements for development and revisiting a grant opportunity with DuPage County for Lake Charles. Water system improvements are targeting 1% of water main replacement annually in neighborhoods like North Park, Chicago, and Willard. This consistency is



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achievable due to the water rate increases approved by the board last year, providing the necessary revenue for this enterprise fund.

- **System Efficiency and Customer Experience** Water system improvements continue with the North Water Tower construction. Annual water main leak detection is outsourced to ensure system efficiency and prevent the loss of purchased water. The department is also increasing efforts in drinking water sampling due to new federal requirements. To improve the overall resident experience, the village is lowering the telecommunications tax from 6% to 5%, continuing the DIP program, and adding ADA compliance software for the website.
- **Unfunded Projects and Resource Allocation** Director Ries discussed projects that were not included in the current budget, primarily due to limited resources, as they do not have "blank checks or or you know, money tree in the backyard". They noted that some departmental requests for staff were funded, prioritizing positions expected to provide the greatest impact to the village, while unfunded projects were considered secondary requests or capital projects postponed due to resource constraints, including time and available staff for construction. Projects that were pushed back, possibly to the 2027 budget, include SA Lyon and Warwick sidewalk engineering, WET sidewalk construction, Dallas Quincy, farm industry lighting, and improvements to 39 East Burlington.
- **Cannabis Sales Tax and Revenue** Staff confirmed that sales tax revenue from the two cannabis dealerships in town is included in the budget. They clarified that the village receives two types of cannabis taxes: a direct group or bundle tied to the local establishments and a small shared portion from the state, which is estimated to be a small amount, possibly around \$20,000.
- **Next Steps for Budget Approval** The next step in the budget process is to bring it back before the board next week, a week from the meeting date, with time dedicated at the police committee meeting for continuing the conversation and addressing any board questions. The budget will then be on the actual board agenda for passage at 6 PM, and board members were encouraged to email Allan with any questions beforehand so he can prepare answers for the committee meeting.



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- **Acknowledgment of Budget Efforts and Adjournment** Mayor Nero thanked Allen and all departments for their "tremendous amount of work" in putting the budget together, emphasizing that it was the village's "biggest budget ever". Following the discussion, a motion was entertained and passed to adjourn the meeting after what was acknowledged as a very efficient, little over three-hour session.

Please note that these minutes were prepared by Gemini AI