

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2023 VILLAGE OF PARK RIDGE

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VILLAGE HALL: 24 CRESTWOOD DRIVE, STEVENS POINT, WI 54481
OFFICE OF VILLAGE CLERK / TREASURER: 715-343-1590
OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY – THURSDAY 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM



Photo courtesy Tori Jennings

REFERENDUM APRIL 4



Village of Park Ridge voters will have an important Referendum question on their April 4 election ballot this spring, asking residents to approve an increase of \$130,000 annually in the property tax levy *“for the purpose of supporting the increasing costs of contracted services, Village operations, enhanced fire protection, and capital improvement debt service.”*

Why do we need a Referendum to increase the tax levy?

Since 2006, the state has imposed levy limits on municipalities to slow the growth of local property taxes. Then in 2011, the law was amended to link the allowable levy increase exclusively to any increases in property values due to new construction. In addition, these limitations were accompanied by reductions in state aid to municipalities. For communities like Park Ridge that are landlocked and have limited potential for growth and new construction, this has made it nearly impossible for municipal budgets to keep up with inflation. By law, the only way a municipality may exceed its levy limit is by Referendum. There is an excellent article about the impact of levy limits at: <https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1804-growing-divide.pdf>

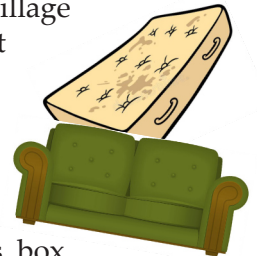
How is the Village budget determined and what are the sources of revenue?

Park Ridge’s annual budget is developed in September and October with input from citizens through public hearings. Expenses and revenues are typically calculated based on previous years as well as projections for the coming year. Over 80% of the Village’s revenue comes from property taxes. Revenues listed in the 2023 budget are: General Property Taxes - \$201,415.00 (82.99%); Intergovernmental Revenues - \$30,481.00 (12.56%); License Fees - \$2,500.00 (1.03%); Public Charges for Services - \$300.00 (.12%); Cable Franchise Fees - \$7,000.00 (2.88%); Miscellaneous Revenues - \$1,000.00 (.41%).

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Large item pick-up Thursday, April 20

This is the time for Village residents to clean out the basement and garage, and dispose of those non-recyclable items such as furniture, carpeting, mattresses, box springs, etc. All items to be picked up must be placed at the end of the driveway or street-side by 8 a.m. on Thursday, April 20th. No appliances, building/demolition materials, electronics, tires or toxic materials (paint thinners, pesticides, fertilizers, insecticides, etc.) will be picked up. There will be only one “run” by Harter’s through the Village, so items put out later in the day will not be picked up. Don’t miss this opportunity to dispose of non-recyclable items which is offered only once/year! To arrange for an individual large item pick-up throughout the year please contact Harters: 715-253-2619. ■



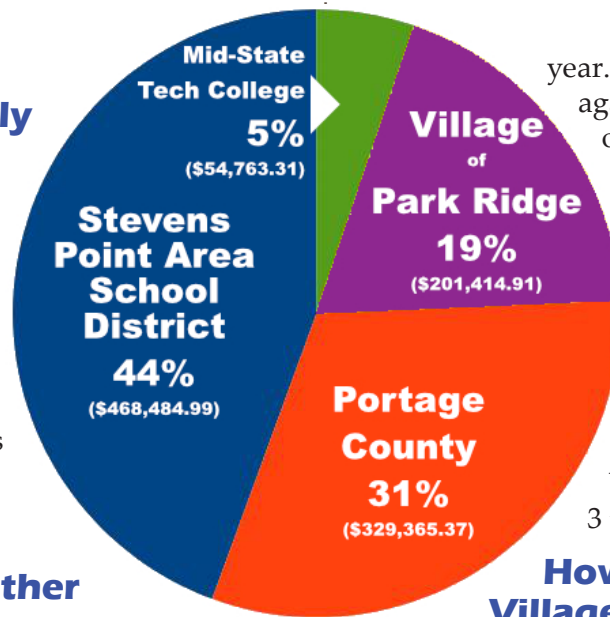
Village-wide Rummage Sale

Its that time of year again. The Park Ridge Rummage Sale, coordinated by Village residents, will take place on **Saturday, May 13th**, 8 am – 2 pm. There will be a scheduled pick-up of items not sold in the sale. Details to come later. If you have any questions, please contact Charm Fournier at charm@fourniers.org. ■

(continued from 1 - Referendum)

How much of my property taxes actually go to support the Village?

A relatively small percentage – about 19% – of your property tax goes to support Village operations and services. The pie chart below shows the current breakdown of where Village property taxes go:



year. Assuming the Village will again receive about \$40,000 from other revenue sources, that would result in total revenue of about \$273,000. Projected expenses for the 2024 budget, however, are expected to be over \$350,000. The Village board believes the additional \$130,000 in annual revenue requested in this Referendum is adequate for supporting Village operations over the next 3 to 5 years.

How do Park Ridge taxes compare with other municipalities?

Park Ridge property taxes are among the lowest in Portage County (lower half) despite the fact that the Village’s median household income (\$72,813) was over 23% higher than the County’s as a whole (\$58,853). The Village’s current “mill rate” is \$17.48, which compares favorably with the City of Stevens Point (\$25.89), Village of Amherst (\$24.69), Village of Junction City (\$21.24), Village of Rosholt (\$20.09), Town of Eau Pleine (\$20.04), Town of Dewey (\$19.49), Village of Amherst Junction (\$18.50), and Town of Hull (\$17.97) among others. It should be noted that only \$3.34 of the Village’s \$17.48 mill rate (19%) goes to support the Village budget.

How about using the Village’s reserve funds?

Since 2020, the Village has already been drawing from its reserve funds just to meet the budget. Three years ago, there was about \$174,000 in undesignated reserves and \$25,000 in designated reserves. Today there is only \$104,000 in undesignated reserves and \$20,500 in designated reserves. Reserves are typically intended to meet both planned and unplanned capital expenses. Using reserve funds for normal operational expenses is simply not sustainable.

Why does the Village need more revenue?

Primarily to keep up with inflation, which has averaged 2.44% over the last 25 years, but jumped to 4.7% in 2021 and 8% in 2022. This has had a huge impact on Village expenses. For example, *since 2016 the cost for garbage and recycling has increased 38%, and snowplowing has increased 58%. The cost for fire protection in 2023 increased by nearly \$50,000 (see below). Compensation for our clerk/treasurer position has increased by 37% since 2016* while still lagging behind other municipalities in the County. In addition, this year the Village has budgeted \$30,000 to hire an engineering consultant to create a plan for improving Village streets and adding hydrants for improved fire protection, addressing a priority issue that residents identified in the Village’s 2022 Strategic Plan. The Department of Revenue has projected that the Village’s 2023 allowable levy limit – the revenue the Village receives from property tax – will be \$233,098 next

Can the Village cut staff to reduce the budget?

No. Park Ridge has fewer employees than any municipality in the County. Beyond the modest compensation paid to Village trustees, our school crossing guard, Village Hall maintenance worker, and our poll workers, the Village employs only one staff member who has significant weekly hours: our clerk/treasurer, which is a part-time position averaging about 35 hours per week with few benefits. The Village operates primarily through contracted services. Examples of services supported by our local Village levy include garbage and recycling (Harter’s), snowplowing (Zblewski Brothers), and fire protection/EMR (Stevens Point Fire Department). Some services such as law enforcement, ambulance/EMS, animal control, and tax collection are supported by the County tax levy.

Could the Village cut costs by keeping its own fire department rather than contracting for the service?

No, quite the contrary. A study of the Park Ridge Fire Department conducted by

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McMahon Associates in June 2022 concluded, “In addition to the recruitment and retention challenges, the Village is also faced with the need to make significant capital investments in the fire station and the department’s fire apparatus. Annual debt payments for these purchases are expected to be approximately \$150,000. The Village does not have money allocated in its current budget for these expenses. This would be new debt.” Based in part on McMahon’s recommendations, the Village board decided unanimously to contract fire protection and EMR services with the Stevens Point Fire Department, initially saving the Village about \$50,000 per year. McMahon’s 18-page report can be viewed at: <https://vi.parkridge.wi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Park-Ridge-Fire-Department-Organizational-Analysis-2.pdf>

Does the Village have a plan for the future and does the Referendum support that plan?

Yes. Thanks to input and volunteer efforts from its residents, the Village completed two major planning documents in 2022: the state-mandated Comprehensive Plan and its first-ever Strategic Plan. Both plans recommend increased investment in infrastructure with calls to: “1) improve and maintain streets and complementary infrastructure over time; 2) ensure and protect the Village’s water supply; and, 3) enhance capacity to fund village government functions, including capital improvements and routine maintenance.”

Infrastructure improvements will almost certainly require the Village to incur some long-term debt and the Referendum, if approved, will enhance the Village’s ability to service that debt. Our hope is the Village will qualify for state and federal grants to help minimize the debt service for the infrastructure projects.

Link to Strategic Plan: <https://vi.parkridge.wi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Village-of-Park-Ridge-Strategic-Plan-DRAFT-June-2022.pdf>

Link to Comprehensive Plan: <https://www.co.portage.wi.us/departments/planning-zoning/planning-section/comprehensive-planning/village-of-park-ridge>

If the Referendum is approved by voters, will my property tax increase?

Yes. Based on the Village’s current total equalized valuation of \$69,520,900 and projected figures from

the Department of Revenue, the proposed levy increase of \$130,000 per year will result in a total levy of \$363,098. This would bring the Village’s share of the property tax mill rate to \$5.22, an increase of about \$1.87, or \$187 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation.

If the Referendum is approved, how will this benefit Village residents?

The added revenue will allow the Village to meet the increased costs of critical services – especially fire protection, garbage and recycling, snowplowing and our clerk/treasurer position – while positioning the Village well for accomplishing the goals its residents set forth in the Strategic Plan, including taking on future debt to pay for badly needed infrastructure improvements. It will also allow the Village to avoid drawing from its reserves to pay for ongoing operational costs.

What happens if the Referendum fails?

With few options to cut expenses, the Village would be forced to draw significantly from its reserves to continue operating as an independent municipality. It is likely those reserves would be exhausted in only a few years. ■

Your Village trustees hope the previous mailing, this newsletter and the Referendum Q&A Sessions held on March 15 and 20 have provided the background and facts you will need to make an informed decision on April 4th. Trustees hope that you will...



Your Village Trustees:

Barb Friedrich | 715-572-1563

Dan Holloway | 715-459-2882

Steve Menzel (President) | 715-341-7882

Kristin Paulson | 715-209-7417

Gordon Renfert | 715-252-9139

Building Permits

Many Village property owners may be considering building projects this spring and summer. Here are some general guidelines:



A permit IS REQUIRED to change or add structures:

- Enlarging a concrete or asphalt slab.
- Replacing windows with larger windows.
- Changing a roofline when repairing a roof.
- Changing a screened patio into one that is weatherproof, heated or has electrical outlets.
- Replacing an existing furnace, air conditioner or water heater if: changing from gas to electric or vice versa; or changing the location of electrical, plumbing or ventilation to the new unit.
- Installation of a new fence or repairing/replacing more than 40% of an existing fence's length.
- Replacing doors with new, wider ones.
- Building a new interior wall or moving a wall when doing siding.
- Building any new structure (Ordinance 11.13)
- Anytime electrical, plumbing, or HVAC systems are modified or added to.

Permits must be obtained before work begins and displayed so they are visible from the street. Failure to obtain a permit may result in additional fees and fines. Always remember to adhere to setback requirements for all structures or additions.

NO PERMIT is required to replace or repair existing structures—

- Repairing a cracked concrete or asphalt slab in the same area as before.
- Replacing old windows with new ones of the same size.
- Replacing siding or roofing with no changes made to the structure or roofline.
- Replacing patio screens with new screens.
- Replacing an existing furnace, air conditioner or water heater with the same type without any electrical, plumbing or ventilation changes.
- Repairing or replacing less than 40% of an existing fence's length. Replacing doors with new ones of the same size.

For permits or more information, contact: Jim Zepp, Village Building Inspector, at jzepp55@gmail.com or 715-310-3156. ■

Reminders to pet owners

- Please clean up after your pets. Do not leave animal droppings in another resident's yard. (Ord. 10.03, sect. 13)
- Please do not allow your cats (or other pets) to roam off your premises. The leash law applies to cats, too! (Ord. 10.03, sect. 7)
- Noisy animals or fowl are prohibited in the Village. (Ord. 10.05, sect. 10) ■



Phishing in the Village?

In recent months a number of Village residents have received emails from people seemingly attempting to impersonate Village officials (trustees or employees), presumably as part of a phishing scam to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers.

The email sender(s) has typically replaced their name with the name of a Village official so it appears the message is coming from the Village official.



If the message is unexpected or looks suspicious or unusual, recipients are advised to avoid responding or clicking on any links in the message, and delete the message. One way to confirm whether it is a legitimate email is to check the sender's actual email address, which usually is a Gmail address not associated with the Village (Village officials use email addresses ending in “@vi.parkridge.wi.gov”).

Unfortunately there isn't a good way of blocking these sorts of phishing emails because they originate from registered Gmail users, and it would not be practical to block all incoming messages from Gmail accounts. ■

Yard Waste

The Village has an agreement with the City of Stevens Point to allow Village residents to drop off yard waste – leaves, grass clippings, plant stalks, flowers, twigs/sticks, and brush up to 6” diameter – at the City’s drop-off site at the City Garage near Bukolt Park, 100 Sixth Avenue. Please visit the website for a list of hours.



<https://stevenspoint.com/368/Drop-Off>. ■

Recycle / Reuse

For all your recycling and solid waste disposal questions, contact the Portage County Solid Waste Department at 715-343-6297 or visit their website at: <https://www.co.portage.wi.us/departement/solid-waste>.

The Portage County Transfer Facility & Recycling site is located at 600 Moore Road, east of I-39 off of County Hwy B in Plover. Turn north onto Apache Drive. Stop at the scale speaker and the attendant will direct you from there. When done, weigh out and go to the scale office in the MRF (Material Recovery Facility) to make payment. The facility is open Mon-Fri 7:30 am – 3:00 pm and Sat 7:30 am – 10:30 am. Arrive at least 30 minutes before closing. Fees vary and some restrictions apply, so call 715-343-6297 for more information. Rates for Residential, Commercial and Construction/ Demolition: \$20 minimum charge for any load of 560 lbs. or less. Loads weighing more than 560 lbs. are subject to a standard rate of \$70.10 per ton. ■

Want to stay connected? Sign up for:

• Village notifications

Want to keep up with what's happening in Village Hall? Sign up to receive notifications from the Village website for postings relating to Village board and committee meetings, agendas, minutes, meeting packets, news and notices. To subscribe, go to: <https://vi.parkridge.wi.gov/subscribe-to-updates> ■

• Community Alert

To receive emergency notifications from the Village of Park Ridge please sign up for Community Alert at: <https://portagecountycommunityalert.bbcportal.com> Click "Sign Me Up"; provide your contact information and subscribe to receive your preferred types of messages; Download the "Blackboard MyConnect" app. ■

Mark your calendar...

- April 20 - Large Item Pickup
- May 13 - Village-wide Rummage Sale



Burning regulations

Per Village Ordinance, the Fire Chief, Fire Inspector, any appointed Fire Officer, or Law Enforcement Officer may order and/or cause to be extinguished any fire that may, in their singular opinion, be threatening the safety of persons or property in the Village. Non-compliance with regulations or orders of a Fire Department Official may result in a citation.



- Burning hours: Tuesday - Friday 4 pm – 9 pm and Saturday noon – 9 pm
- Size of piles: No larger than 4'x4'x3'
- Fire location: No burning shall take place in any street right-of-way. Approved burning shall take place 30 ft. or more from any structure, flammable liquid, or other material which constitutes a potential fire hazard.

Wind regulation: No burning shall take place when the wind velocity exceeds 9 MPH as indicated by a credible source or during periods when either the Fire Chief or the Department of Natural Resources has issued a burning ban.

Fire prevention: ALL fires must be attended at all times, by a responsible person equipped with either an operable garden hose or fire extinguisher. All fires must be extinguished before such a person leaves the site. Fully extinguished means no heat can be felt emitting from the remains of the fire.

Please contact the Stevens Point Fire Department at 715-344-1833 with any questions. ■



Alleys and areas near stop signs: keep clear

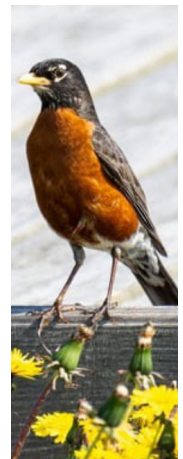
- Please keep the alleys mowed and open to emergency vehicles.
- The alleys may also be used by all residences that are located on an alley. However, please do not block any alley entrances or exits.
- If you have a stop sign on your property, it is your responsibility to cut back any branches that prevent a clear vision of the stop sign. Village Ordinance 10.08, Section V states: "No shrub, hedge or other growth exceeding thirty-six (36) inches in height above street grade shall be permitted in any clear vision triangle extending 25 feet from any street corner within the Village. Trees that are located in a clear vision triangle shall be kept trimmed so that the lowest branches projecting over the public street or right-of-way provide a clearance of not less than sixteen (16) feet." ■



Village of Park Ridge
 24 Crestwood Dr.
 Stevens Point, WI 54481
<https://vi.parkridge.wi.gov>

Village Board and Staff Contact Information

President:	Steve Menzel	smenzel@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-341-7882
Trustees:	Barbara Freidrich	bfriedrich@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-572-1563
	Daniel Holloway	dholloway@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-459-2882
	Gord Renfert	grenfert@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-252-9139
	Kristin Paulson	kpaulson@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-209-7417
	Clerk/Treasurer:	Shanna Behrend	clerk@vi.parkridge.wi.gov
Fire Chief (SPFD):	JB Moody	Non-Emergency	715-344-1833
		Emergency	911
Building Inspector:	Jim Zepp	jzepp55@gmail.com	715-310-3156
Zoning Administrator:	J.D. Manville	jadeco@charter.net	715-498-1111
Diggers Hotline:	John Kraft	krafty605@charter.net	715-498-7700
Crossing Guard:	Lois Miller	clerk@vi.parkridge.wi.gov	715-343-1590



Volunteers Wanted

Please consider serving your Village by volunteering your time for one of the following:

- **Zoning Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals** - chair and alternate members needed.
- **Ordinance updating** - we need two good proofreaders to update/reconcile our Village Ordinance binder.
- **School crossing guard alternates** needed - paid positions
- **Election Inspectors (Poll Workers)** - paid positions

Please contact the Village Clerk at clerk@vi.parkridge.wi.gov to volunteer. ■