

Time to Invest in Maple Bluff

By: Tim O'Brien, Village President



The Village of Maple Bluff Board is asking residents to consider an incremental investment in our community on the November 3rd ballot that would raise the village's taxing authority. Historically, Maple Bluff has provided high quality public services while being fiscally responsible. Today, the

village is faced with rising costs, restrictive levy limits, and depleted capital reserves. Without an increase in funding, Maple Bluff will be forced to make severe cuts to critical public services that you, as residents of our community, need to be aware of as you prepare to vote.

As background information, 70% of your property tax goes to fund the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), Madison Area Technical College (MATC), and Dane County while only 30% goes directly to support the Village of Maple Bluff. Presently, the Village of Maple Bluff provides higher quality public services at tax rates that are below, or near, those of our surrounding communities, including Madison.

However, Wisconsin state tax levy limits have severely restricted our revenues which haven't kept up with the rising cost of providing these services. Maple Bluff can't increase our revenues through growth like many communities because our village doesn't have undeveloped land to improve, which could raise the tax base. The village must rely on tax levy increases for any revenue additions to help keep up with rising costs, but revenues have fallen below inflation since 2004. Over the last decade, the Village Board has used all the fiscal tools at our disposal to meet our obligations while maintaining service levels. This year, the village board realized we can no longer meet current service needs with expected revenues and had to make some tough decisions.

To meet next year's budget and future budgets, the Village Board identified three options: 1) increase our tax levy through a referendum and maintain service levels; 2) raise debt and kick the financial consequences down the road; or 3) severely cut services to match our current revenues. The Village Board chose to seek a levy increase instead of elevating debt levels or severely reducing services.

We're asking to increase Maple Bluff's taxing authority so the village can provide our staff with the tools they need to meet today's challenges. Benefits to the village include fully staffed protective services (police, fire, and EMS) especially during high activity times, filling operational funding shortfalls, along with remaining competitive on staff wages and benefits. We have an outstanding team and they deserve to be compensated at market rates. These changes will help Maple Bluff maintain quality public services while being fiscally responsible.



We didn't come to this levy increase request lightly. The village staff and board has laid out a detailed plan on the proposed use of funds. Important parts of this plan were approved separately and unanimously by the Police Committee, Fire and EMS Committee, and Finance Committee. Finally, the entire Village Board voted unanimously in favor of the entire referendum.

If approved, the village tax levy would increase revenues by \$862,409. After factoring in the impact of lower village debt payments the increase would be \$695,517 for the 2021 budget. As a reference, a home valued at \$500,000 would see an annual tax increase of \$740, beginning with the tax bill issued in December 2020.

Between now and the November ballot we will have numerous communications about the details behind the referendum including two village town hall meetings. Also, several informational documents including a detailed outline of the proposed uses of the new funds are available on the village website www.villageofmaplebluff.com. I encourage you to learn more about referendum and its importance to the future of our village.

