

VILLAGE OF PLEASANT PRAIRIE

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING OPTIONS AUGUST 2021

PREPARED BY:

Nathan Thiel, Village Administrator

Craig Roepke, Chief of Fire & Rescue,
Village of Pleasant Prairie

David Smetana, Chief of Police, Village
of Pleasant Prairie





Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department Overview

The Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department (PPFR) provides fire suppression, basic and advanced emergency medical services (EMS), and specialized rescue services to the 21,250 residents and 494 businesses of the Village of Pleasant Prairie within the Village's 33.64 square miles, in addition to providing shared specialized services to individuals and organizations throughout Kenosha County.

While emergency response is its primary duty, PPFR is also responsible for a variety of non-emergency activities including: state-mandated fire prevention inspections, fire investigations, public education efforts, smoke detector installations, training, vehicle and facility maintenance, and other ancillary activities.

All personnel within Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue are cross-trained as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or paramedics. EMS services provided by PPFR include:

- Basic Life Support (BLS): Basic care including CPR, bleeding control, treatment of shock and poisoning, stabilization of traumatic injuries, first aid and other basic skills provided by firefighters who have been trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).
- Advanced Life Support (ALS - Paramedic): Sophisticated pre-hospital emergency care and transport using invasive life-saving procedures, such as intravenous fluids, administration of medications and advanced airway procedures. These services differ from basic life support services in that they may involve the use of drugs or invasive skills that must be performed by firefighters who have been trained as paramedics (firemedics), which is a more advanced form of emergency medical training.

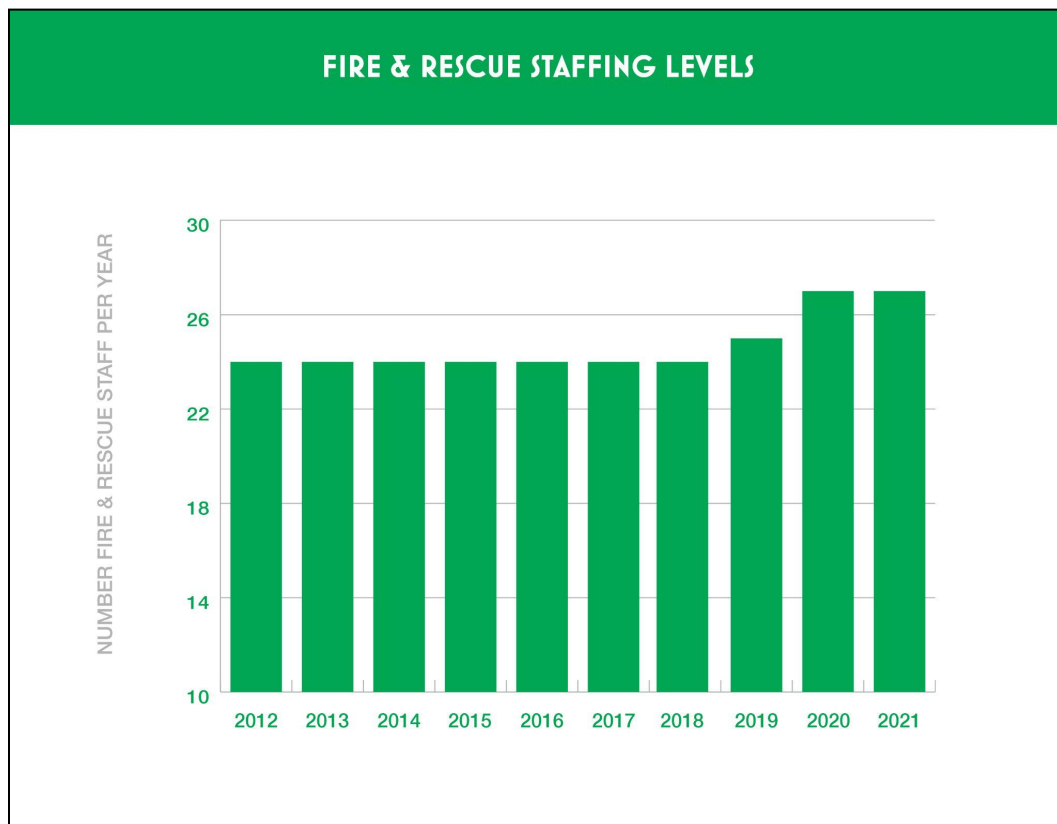
In addition to providing services for the Village of Pleasant Prairie, PPFR is also a key member of the Kenosha County HAZMAT Team. Upon request, the HAZMAT Team will respond to the scene of a hazardous materials incident within and outside of Kenosha County lines. All members of the Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department are specially trained to operate at HAZMAT incidents and are certified at the Hazardous Material Technician or Operations level. They are also certified as Highway Emergency Responders and Railcar Specialists.

In addition to acting as members of the County's HAZMAT Team, PPFR also supports the Kenosha County Specialized Response Team (KCSRT), performing high-risk, low-frequency technical rescues at incidents throughout Kenosha County and around the region.

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Staffing Model

The Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department currently includes 27 full-time employees, including firemedics (firefighter / paramedics), one Fire Chief, two Chief Officers and one administrative staff person.



Between 2012 and 2020, full-time staffing at the Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department was stagnant before receiving a modest bump in 2020.

Part-Time Fire Staff

While the number of part-time staff at PPFR varies over time, all part-time staff members are required to have earned the State of Wisconsin Firefighter I and EMT-Basic certifications, and typically work up to 28 hours each week.

Full-Time Firemedics

Each full-time PPFR firemedic has received more than 1,200 hours of basic training, and has earned State of Wisconsin Firefighter II and Paramedic certifications. In addition, all full-time firemedics are trained or certified in the following disciplines:

- NFPA 1670 Trench, Rope, Confined Space, Structural Collapse Operations
- HAZMAT Technician
- WI Certified Motor Pump Operator (MPO)

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- WI Certified Aerial Operator
- Rescue Task Force (RTF) and Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) training
- Surface Water & ICE Rescue
- Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Suppression

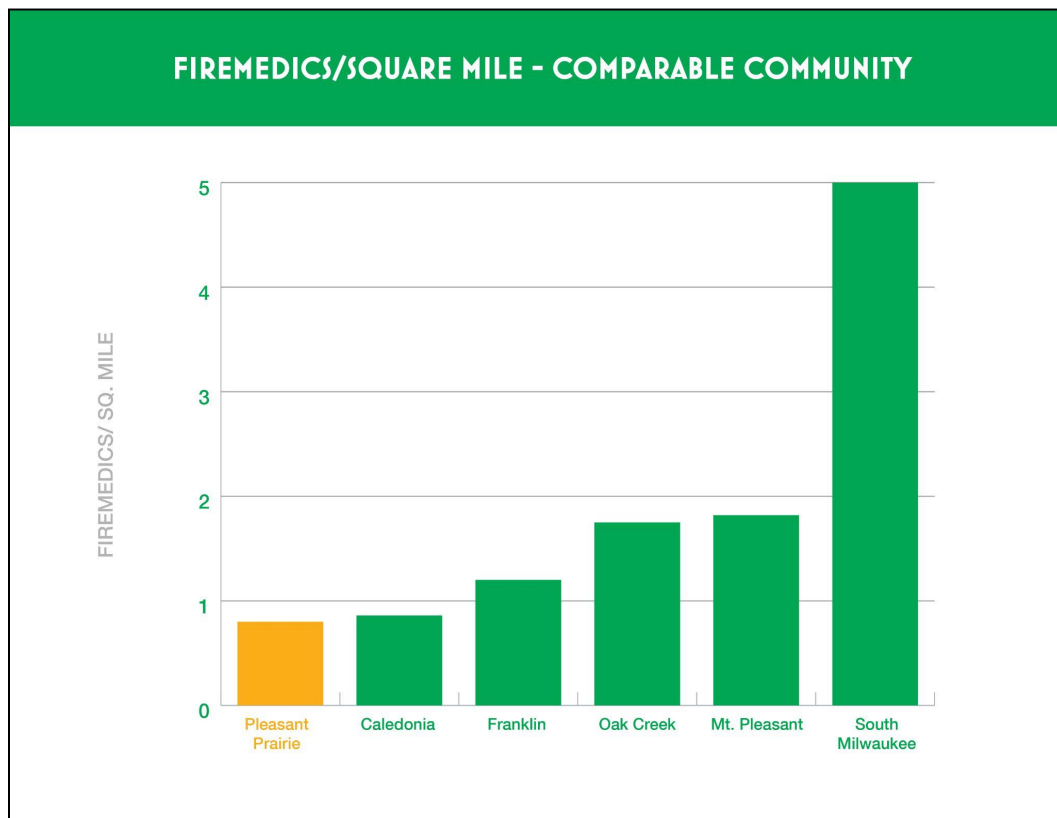
Many members continue training and certify in the following:

- WI Certified Inspector
- WI Certified Emergency Service Instructor
- Tactical EMS Operator (TEMS) with local law enforcement
- Fire Investigation Task Force County member

Fire & Rescue Staffing Levels

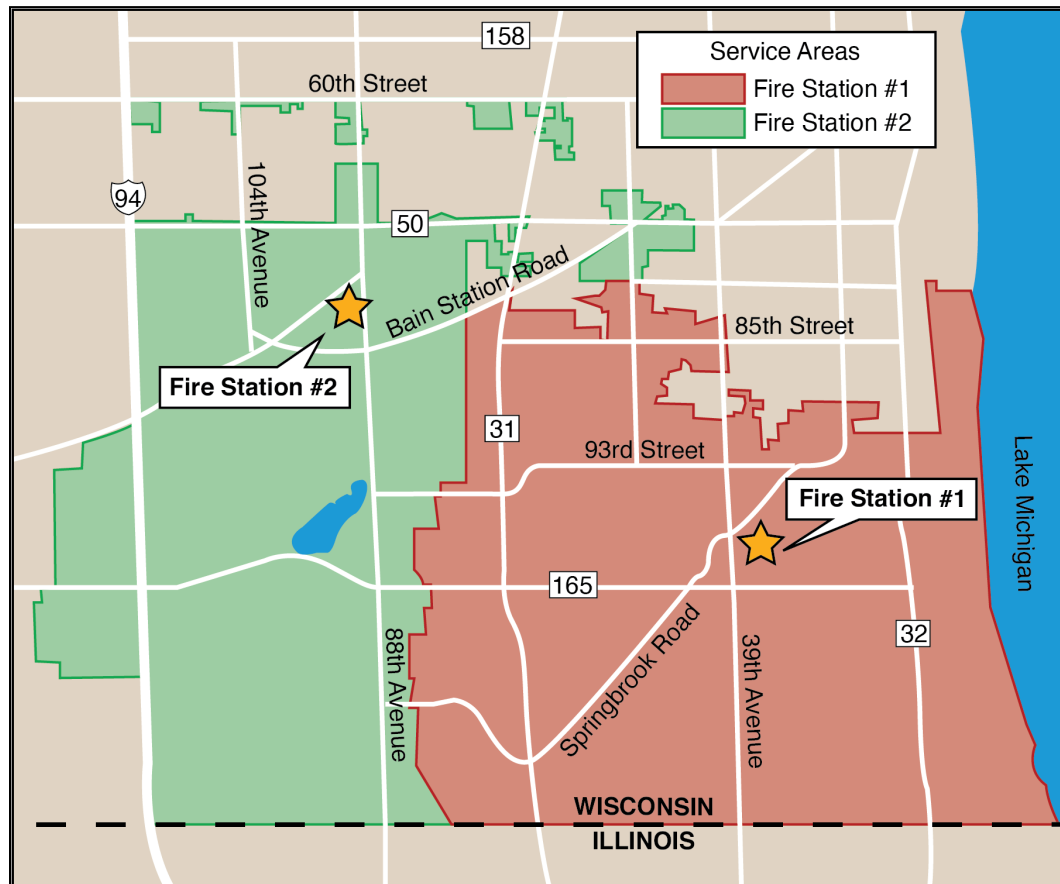
All PPFR personnel are trained to provide the highest skilled response and continuously strive to improve upon the All-Hazards approach to providing rescue services.

The Village of Pleasant Prairie has budgeted for 27 full-time PPFR employees who currently split three 24 hour shifts, with 3-5 personnel working together. This staffing level means that PPFR has just 0.8 employees on staff per square mile of service area, the lowest staffing to service area ratio in the region, as compared to similar communities.



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Staff is distributed among the Village's two fire stations, serving the Village's 33.33 square miles and a small area under contract, totaling a coverage area of 34 square miles.



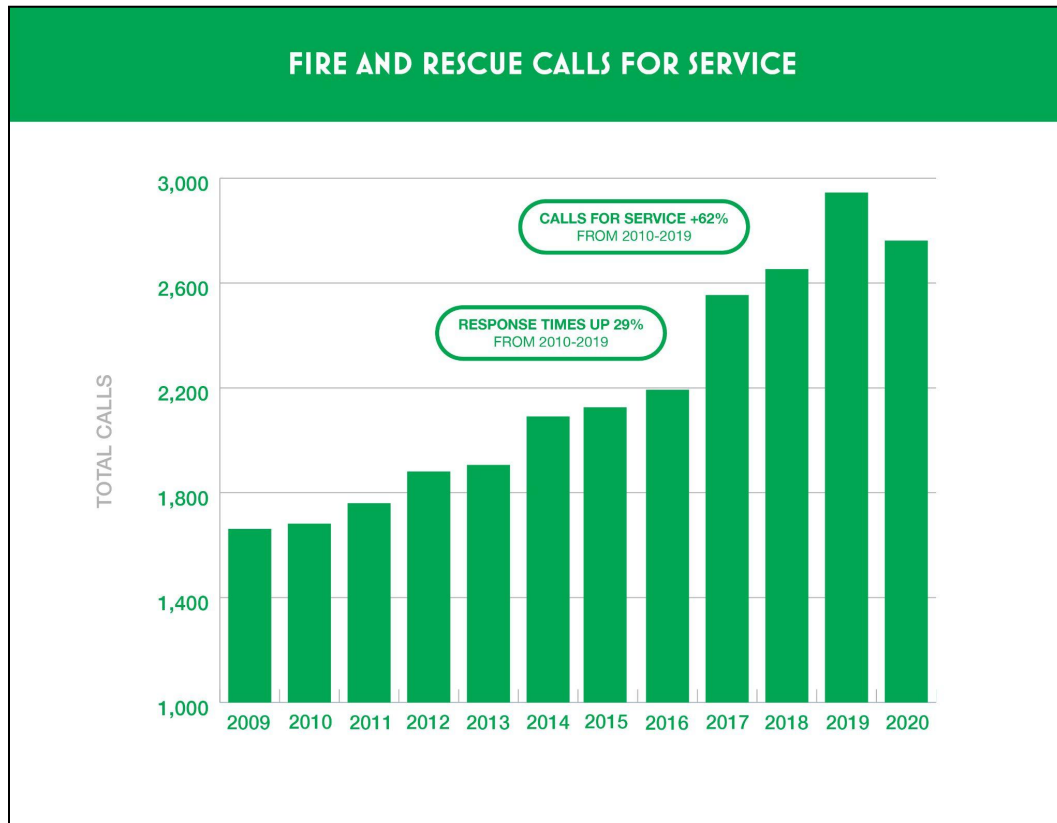
Fire Station #1 (3801 Springbrook Road): Station #1 was built in 2015 and contains all the latest fire station technology. It currently is staffed with three personnel daily, but has the capability to support additional personnel. An office for one PPFR Assistant Chiefs is located here.

Fire Station #2 (8044 88th Avenue): Station #2 serves as the headquarters for the PPFR. It contains the administrative offices for the Fire Chief, one Assistant Fire Chief, and the Administrative Assistant. Space is limited within the office area and there is very limited potential for expansion. Future expansion needs would be for a Fire Prevention office, Public Education office and a small conference room to meet with contractors and vendors. Station #2 also houses daily operational staff. It has a minimum of three and up to six personnel assigned to it 24 hours a day. However, it was not originally built to house full-time personnel. Although it has had modifications to accommodate the full-time staff, it still lacks adequate space for them. The station could be renovated to include the needs of personnel. The station would have ample room for all the personnel if the administrative offices were relocated from the station.

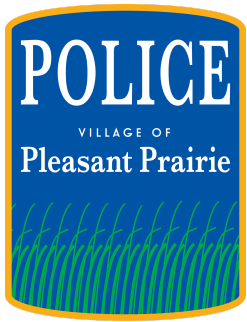
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Growth in Calls for Service and Increased Response Times

In 2010, PPFR responded to 1,812 calls for service and response times averaged 4 minutes and 45 seconds. In 2019, Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue responded to 2,945 total calls for service, up 62% since 2010, and response times grew to 6 minutes and 9 seconds.



It is important to note that **nearly 40% of PPFR's calls for service overlap with other calls for service**, meaning that PPFR must respond to several incidents at once - incidents that are spread throughout the more than 33 square mile service area. This demand spreads firemedics thin across the Village, and reduces PPFR's ability to respond as subsequent calls for service are received.



Pleasant Prairie Police Department Overview

The Pleasant Prairie Police Department (PPPD) responds to emergency calls requiring police presence, and provides services to enhance safety and security for the 21,250 residents of the Village of Pleasant Prairie covering a total area of 33.64 square miles, in addition to partnering with other local law enforcement agencies to provide specialized services throughout Kenosha County.

PPPD is the only Kenosha County Department to hold full accreditation from the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group (WILEAG), and is one of just 10% of departments across the State of Wisconsin to hold this level of accreditation.

The department maintains personnel trained in the following specialty areas:

- Accident Investigation and Reconstruction
- Crime Scene Investigation/Physical Evidence
- Latent Fingerprint Identification
- Arson Investigation
- Death Investigation
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault
- Police Canine Unit
- Police Honor Guard
- Police Firearms Instructors
- Defensive & Arrest Training Instructors
- Forensic Computer Analysis

The range of these services is expanding as the community's need for social services related to drugs and alcohol, as well as mental health issues, increases.

In addition to responding to emergency calls and providing services to enhance safety and security in the Village of Pleasant Prairie, the PPPD is also part of the City of Kenosha Special Investigations Unit and the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department Crisis Negotiation Unit. The Special Investigations Unit agreement between Pleasant Prairie and Kenosha works to coordinate enforcement efforts, disrupt illegal use and abuse of controlled substances and remove illegal weapons from the community. Upon request, Crisis Negotiation Unit members communicate with individuals in crisis who have caused - or imminently threaten to cause - violence in attempts to diffuse emotionally charged situations with the goal of a peaceful surrender.

Police Department Staffing Model

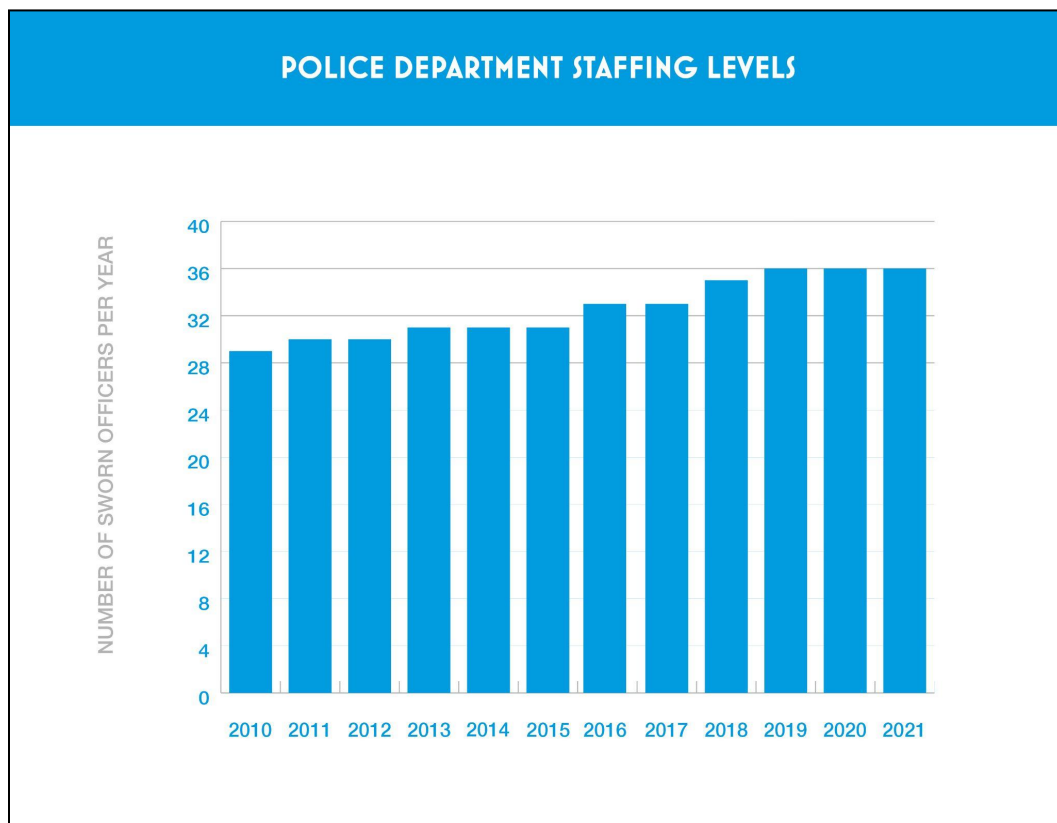
The Village of Pleasant Prairie has budgeted for 36 sworn police officers, plus eleven non-sworn clerical and dispatch personnel. Dispatch personnel provide emergency and non-emergency communications services to the police, fire and emergency medical services, as well as the Public Works Department.

PPPD deploys three primary patrol shifts daily. The patrol function is supervised by a Captain of Patrol with a Lieutenant on Second Shift Patrol and sergeants serving as supervisors on each First, Second and Third Shifts. In addition to the three primary shifts, the department deploys a canine unit during hours of peak activity. The Administrative functions of the agency are supervised by a Captain of Operations.

In addition to patrolling, PPPD dispatches officers in a variety of situations including but not limited to crime, theft, motor vehicle accidents, suspicious activities, disturbances, trespassing, alcohol and drug activities, and mental health issues.

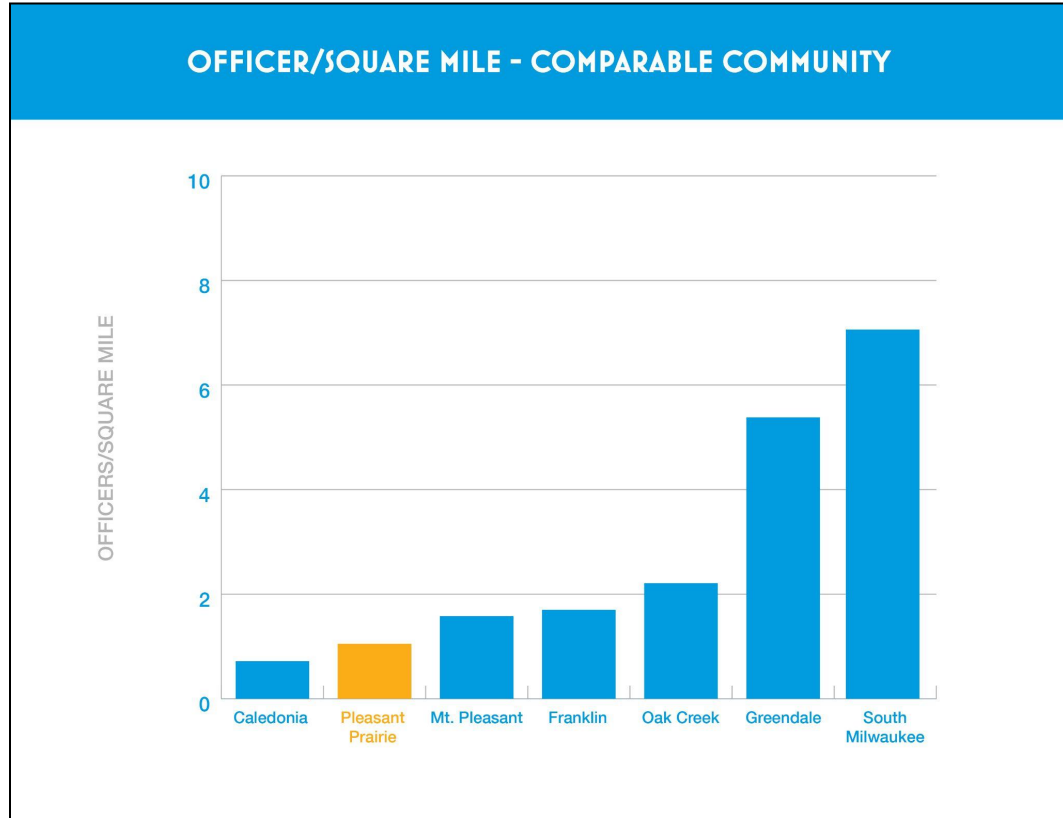
Staffing Levels

There are shifts when just 3 PPPD officers are on patrol covering a service area of more than 33 square miles.



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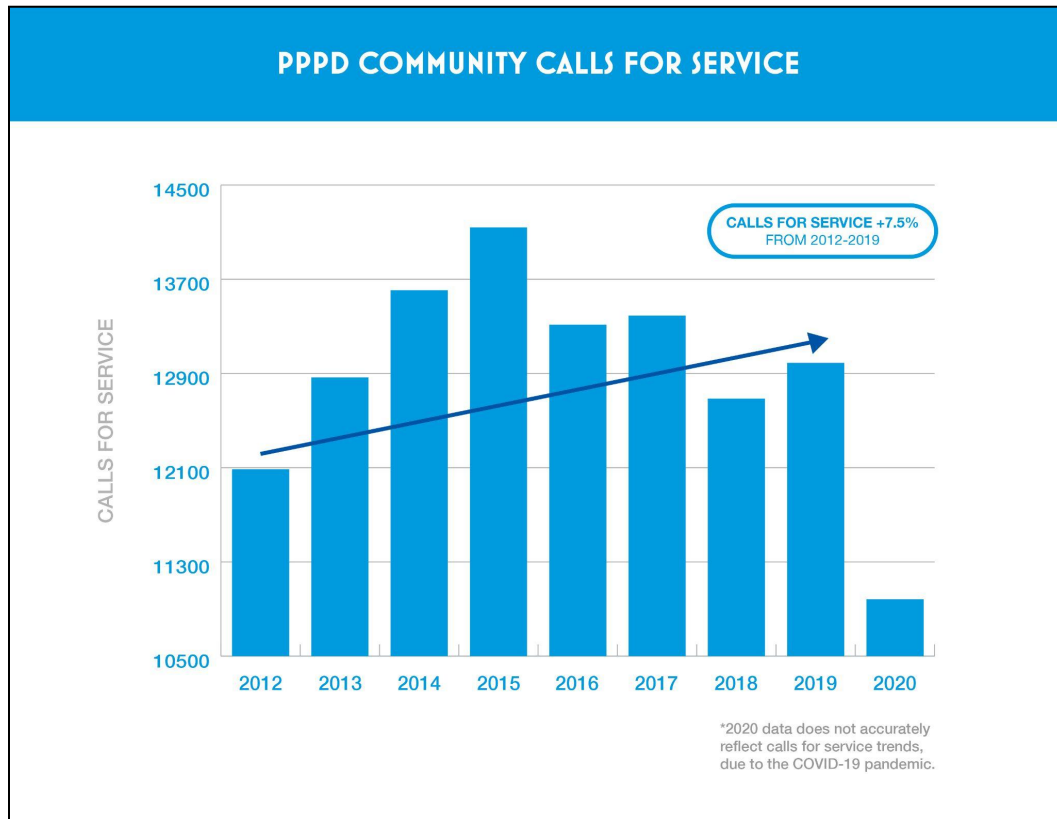
This staffing level means that PPPD has just 1.05 officers on staff per square mile of service area, one of the lowest staffing-to-service area ratios in the region, as compared to similar communities.



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Growth in Calls for Service and Increased Complexity of Calls

While staffing levels are comparatively low and stagnant, calls for service to the Pleasant Prairie Police Department have increased over time. Between 2012 and 2019, the department saw a 7.5% increase in calls from members of the community in need of service.



This growth in calls for service from community members does not account for the more than 8,600 additional calls that Pleasant Prairie Police Officers initiate, on average, each year. Those additional officer-initiated calls are critical to ensuring the safety of the community, especially in instances when a resident or bystander may not notice something is wrong, like when a garage door is found open at night, and include incidents like traffic stops that do not require a call from a community member to provide service.

Increasingly Complex Calls for Service

Both the ratio of officers per square mile and call volume are important factors to consider when determining staffing needs, however, the amount of time officers spend responding to calls and the time required to fulfill the department's other responsibilities must also be taken into account.

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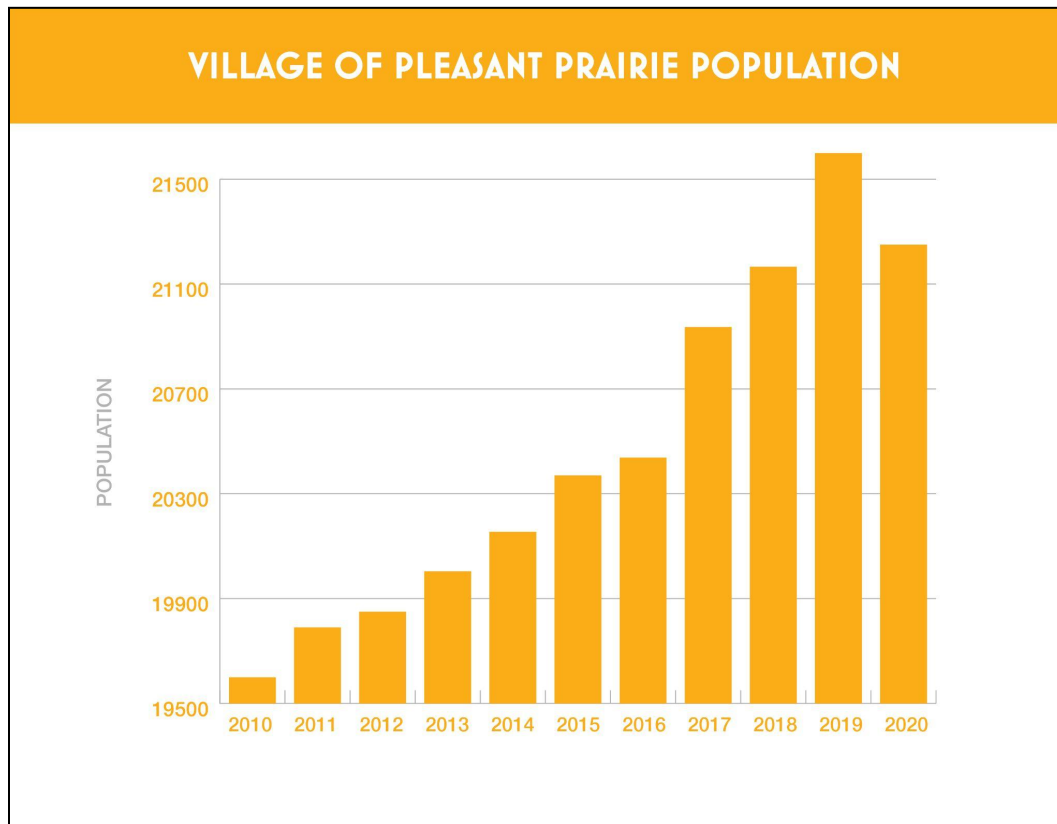
For example, in recent years police officers have responded to heroin overdoses on a more regular basis, and the increase in burglaries and thefts in Pleasant Prairie is also tied to the opioid epidemic as many drug users resort to these crimes to pay for drugs.¹ The complexity of these incidents requires officers to spend more time on the scene and inhibits their ability to respond to additional calls as they come in.

¹ Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse – [Wisconsin's Heroin Epidemic: Strategies and Solutions](#) (Page 6)

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A Changing Village of Pleasant Prairie

In 2010, the Village of Pleasant Prairie's population was 19,719 residents. Based on the 2020 census, that number grew to 21,250 individuals: approximately an 7.8% increase in just one decade.



During the same decade, the Village has also continued to experience commercial and industrial growth at LakeView Corporate Park, PrairieWood Corporate Park, the Prairie Ridge Commercial Development Area and other commercial and industrial areas in the Village.

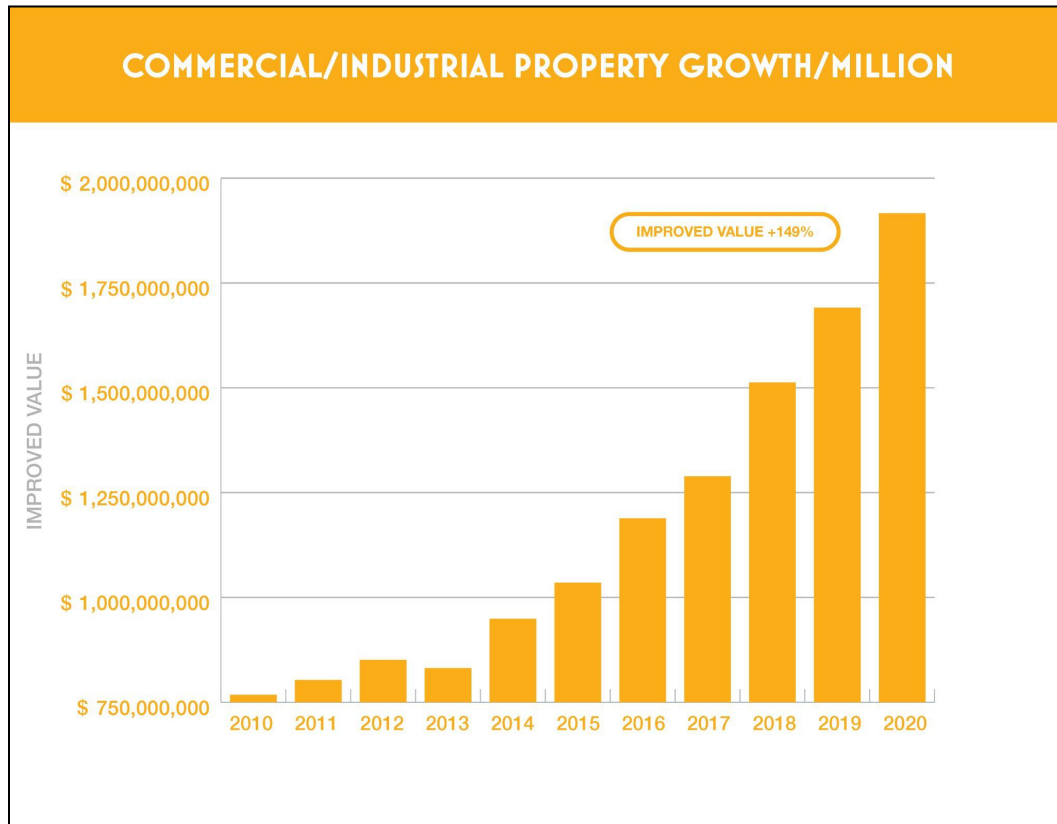
As of July 2021, there is more than 19 million square feet of commercial development in Pleasant Prairie - space that enables employment for 16,456 people.² This represents an increase of almost 2,000 employees since September 2018.³

² Village of Pleasant Prairie: 2021 Square Footage and Employment Data

³ McGrath Fire & Rescue Department Review & Assessment: Summary of Commercial/Industrial Development in the Village (Page 32)

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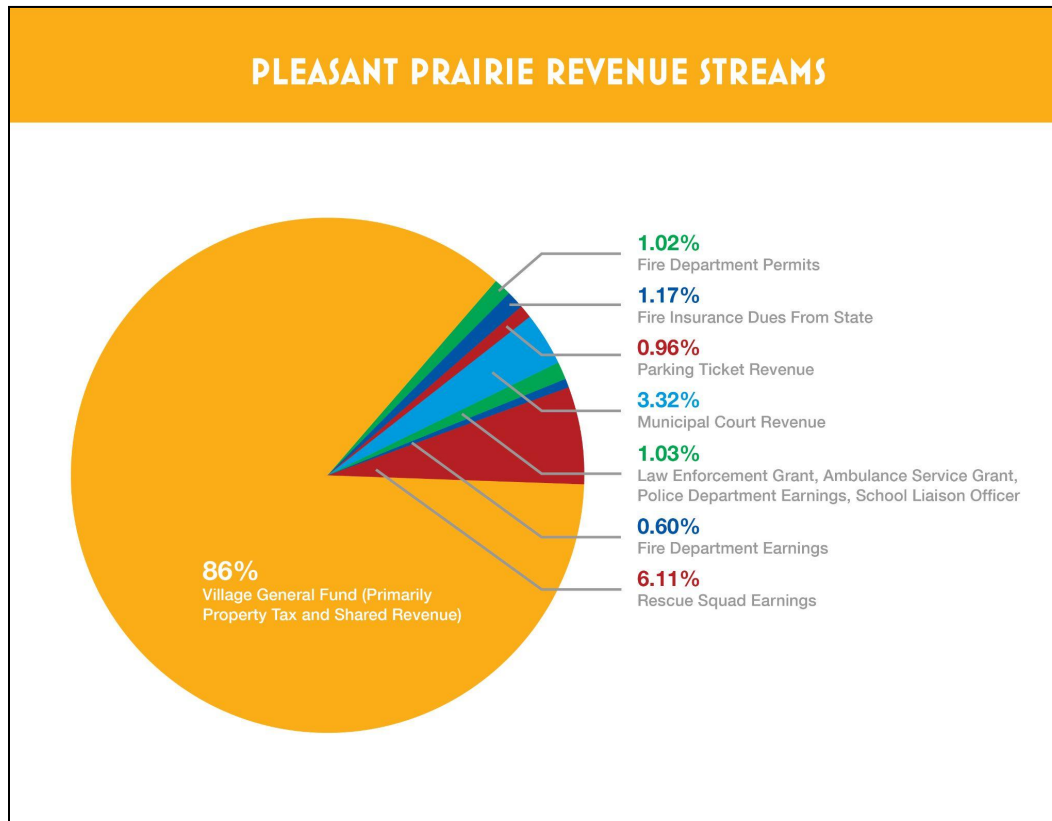
Over the past decade, the improved value of businesses in the Village has increased 149%. As a result, property taxes paid by businesses in Pleasant Prairie to support Village-funded services grew from \$3,436,340 in 2020 to \$9,780,198 in 2020.



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PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING OVERVIEW

The Village of Pleasant Prairie's public safety departments are funded through a mix of revenue from the Village's property tax levy, fees and ticket revenue, and grants. Operating budgets for public safety have remained flat over the last two years, despite the need for additional personnel.



Because these combined revenue streams have been stagnant, and the Village's budget has been impacted by state levy limits⁴ and state legislation⁵ that restricts other revenue sources, Pleasant Prairie has been unable to increase its staffing levels to rise up to meet the challenges it faces.

⁴ 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 restricts the amount of local room tax revenue that municipalities can spend on operating expenses. <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/related/acts/55>

⁵ 2017 AB 386 / SB 292 known as the "Dark Store" tax loophole that lowers the amount of property taxes big box retailers pay in property taxes and shifts that tax to other property owners. <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/proposals/ab386.pdf>

CHALLENGE

As population continues to grow and development continues to increase, the demand on Village public safety services has increased, including with a 62% increase in calls from 2010 - 2019 to the Fire & Rescue Department and a 7.5% increase in community calls from 2012 - 2019 to the Police Department. In addition to an increase in calls, the type of cases that the Police Department is encountering are more complex.

The fundamental challenge facing the Village of Pleasant Prairie as it seeks to maintain its successful and accredited public safety programs is that its **staffing levels have not kept pace with the growing demands for the services** driven by this growth in population and increase in development.

Department leaders, Village staff and external experts, including the McGrath Consulting Group, have assessed the needs of Pleasant Prairie and concluded that the following measures are necessary in order to bring public safety capabilities up to appropriate levels as compared to the demands, size, makeup and population of the community:

- Hiring **12 additional firemedics**;
- Adding a **third fire station**; and
- Hiring **4 additional police officers**.

Bolstering public safety departments in this way would require an additional \$1.6 million in the Village's safety budget to fund each additional staff member. (Note: the cost to develop an additional fire station has already been budgeted for.)

Today, compared to its peer communities, the Village of Pleasant Prairie Police Department and Fire & Rescue Department rank last or nearly last in staffing levels as compared to the size of the service areas they are responsible for. To meet the growing demands of the growing Pleasant Prairie community on its public safety departments, the Village will require more funding than is currently available.

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POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo

Over time, if the Village does not identify funding to hire additional fire and police personnel, the existing challenges will create more strain on the departments.

Maintaining the status quo would likely compound the current stressors on Pleasant Prairie's public safety services in the years to come as population and development trends continue. Maintaining the status quo would also likely increase response times.

Both the Police and Fire & Rescue Departments' primary sources of funding comes from property tax and shared revenue from the state, sources that have remained flat for the past five years.⁶ The State of Wisconsin sets limits on property taxes and the State requires a referendum to exceed that set levy limit.

If the Village does not identify new funding sources, and must keep staffing levels the same as they are today, the result will be:

Impact on public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased ALS response times, as PPFR is forced to rely more heavily on surrounding municipalities, including Kenosha, for assistance.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ It is estimated that the City of Kenosha's Fire Department can take up to 11 minutes longer to respond to calls based on the distance from the Village.• Continued impacts on quality and timeliness of service from PPPD and PPFR due to continued low staffing levels.• Continued / increased challenges for PPPD officers during third shift, which is already often understaffed and unable to proactively police the community.
Impact on municipal budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further dilution of quality services as the Village's budget is stretched further.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ The natural progression is to place a hold on reinvesting on items like parks, new technology and street maintenance to support day-to-day operation demands.• Capital expenses will remain the same.
Impact on taxpayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Property taxes would remain the same but the quality of fire, EMS and police services would be lower as the need for services continues to rise.

⁶ [Pleasant Prairie Public Safety Revenues & Expenditures, 2010 - 2021](#)

Option 2: Budget Cuts and Service Reductions

Another alternative is for the Village of Pleasant Prairie to identify other areas of the Village budget that can be removed or reduced to free up funding for additional police and fire & rescue services.

The Village of Pleasant Prairie operates with a lean and efficient budget and has made past adjustments to enable public safety services to continue effectively.

Because public safety is one of the most important services the Village provides, it represents a significant portion of the Village budget. To free up resources from other areas to accommodate the additional needs in public safety would not provide sufficient resources and would require cuts to services that would be deeply felt by residents, visitors, business owners and employees in the Village.

Examples of the type of services that would need to be cut in order to fund the required additional public safety services could include a combination of:

- Reductions in park maintenance and landscaping, eliminating mowing services and other maintenance on common space to save approximately \$200,000;
- Cutting snow plowing services and other public works efforts to save approximately \$100,000;
- Discontinuing local emergency dispatch services and instead paying into a shared service to save approximately \$100,000; and/or
- Reductions in non-mandated streets paving programs to save another approximately \$400,000.

These cuts would likely strain the community and have the following impacts:

Impact on public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reductions in the services and staffing listed above would allow the Village to reallocate budget resources to PPFR and PPPD.
Impact on municipal budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making staffing and/or service reductions would allow the City to reallocate budget resources to PPFR and PPPD.
Impact on taxpayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reallocations in the budget would not result in an increase in local municipal property taxes.• The budget cuts in other service areas would negatively impact the quality of services Pleasant Prairie provides for residents and resident quality of life.

Option 3: Identify additional sources of revenue

If Pleasant Prairie wants to ensure that the level of fire, EMS, police and other village services continue to uphold the standard that Village residents are accustomed to, the Village will need to raise additional revenue.

As state law limits the ways municipalities can raise revenue, there are only three options available: (1) approval by voters through a referendum to exceed the state-imposed property tax levy limits; (2) a Village-wide wheel tax on vehicles registered in Pleasant Prairie; and (3) a new utility service charge for Village infrastructure.

Property Tax Levy Increase:

The State of Wisconsin limits the amount of property taxes a municipality can collect each year. In order to exceed that levy limit, the municipality needs voter approval through a Village-wide referendum. That could be completed through a referendum during the Spring 2022 General Election, which, if approved, would provide additional funding starting with the 2023 budget.

- To increase public safety services to an appropriate level for the Village of Pleasant Prairie, the Village must hire four additional police officers and 12 additional firemedics and would need a total of \$1.6 million to do so.
 - Based on 2021 re-evaluations, the Village mill rate in 2023 will decrease to \$4.23 compared to the current \$4.64, reducing the financial impact of a property tax levy increase due to public safety costs.
 - This means that, if a referendum is passed for \$1.6 million, the median home valued at \$296,500 in 2023 would be asked to pay just \$124.52 more in property taxes - about \$10 more per month - to ensure adequate public safety services.

Municipal Wheel Tax:

Wisconsin law allows municipalities to collect an annual municipal vehicle registration fee ("wheel tax"). The fee applies to vehicles kept in the municipality or county with automobile registration. Note that these fees would be in addition to the State of Wisconsin's \$85 annual fee to renew automobile plates. Cities and counties throughout Wisconsin use wheel taxes to make up for lost state revenue.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation collects wheel tax fees for the municipality, retains an administrative fee of \$0.17 per vehicle application and sends the rest to the municipality. The wheel tax is collected at the time of first registration and at each registration renewal.

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There are 16,490 eligible vehicles (automobiles, trucks and motorcycles) registered in the Village of Pleasant Prairie. To fully fund the required public safety staffing, the Village would need to charge a \$97 per year wheel tax⁷.

Utility Service Charge:

In order for the Village of Pleasant Prairie to raise additional revenue through an increased utility service charge it would need to develop a mechanism by which to determine the rate of each residents' use of Village infrastructure.

Adjustments to the Village budget based on additional sources of revenue may have the following impacts:

Impact on public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The level of fire rescue and EMS services would increase with additional public safety staff to meet the growing need in the Village.• Hiring additional police officers would allow for additional police coverage for residents, the possibility of additional community service programs and enhanced law enforcement coverage.
Impact on municipal budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Village would have the revenue needed to support an appropriate level of public safety services for a Village with the demands, size and makeup of Pleasant Prairie.• The Village could have funding to hire four additional police officers and 12 additional fireline staff.• The Village would not need to make additional budget cuts.
Impact on taxpayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Property taxes would increase to meet the current and growing need for public safety services.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ In 2023 the median home valued at \$296,500 would be asked to pay \$124.52 more per year.• Alternatively, vehicle owners would be charged an \$97 municipal wheel tax, in addition to the annual registration fee, for each vehicle registered in Pleasant Prairie.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Unlike property tax, the wheel tax is not tax deductible for residents.

⁷ Wheel tax revenue can only be used to fund road and other transportation related improvements. With this funding, however, the Village would be able to reallocate existing General Funds currently used for that purpose towards public safety.

Option 4: Partner with surrounding communities

Several municipalities in Southeastern Wisconsin have consolidated public safety services in what is known as a “shared services” or “mutual aid” model. The Village of Pleasant Prairie collaborates with neighboring agencies, leveraging this model of shared services to ensure that the residents and businesses in Pleasant Prairie have timely and quality access to public safety services.

Shared Fire & Rescue Services

While PPFR is able to provide shared services to neighboring communities in some instances, it more often receives mutual aid from other communities. Pleasant Prairie received mutual aid 120 times in 2018 and only provided mutual aid to a neighboring community 57 times during that same year.

Shared Police Services

PPPD participates on several County-wide policing teams that provide specialized investigative and enforcement services throughout the region, including on teams dedicated to investigating opioid abuse, sexual assault and the abuse of elders. Participation on these teams ensures that PPPD’s forces are multiplied through the training and support of neighboring departments.

In Pleasant Prairie, the reality is that these shared services are not just necessary in specialized areas: current challenges necessitate PPPD and PPFR request assistance from neighboring departments in response to routine calls for service. Those neighboring departments, many of whom are also experiencing staffing challenges, are not always available to step in and fill the gaps created by understaffed Village public safety departments.

While the Village can and will continue to explore deeper collaboration with other municipalities, there is not currently a viable collaboration model that would meet the full public safety staffing requirements for the Village’s current and future needs.