

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Why does the village need a referendum to fund additional public safety services?**

Funding for public safety is shared between federal and state dollars and local property taxes. An increasing population often results in an increased need for public safety services; however, in recent years, the village's shared revenue funding has **decreased** by 29%, despite a population **increase** of 35%.



- **Why now? The economy isn't good, and inflation is hurting everyone. Do we really need the referendum on the April ballot?**

Howard Fire Rescue has been struggling to retain firefighters with the current paid-on-call staffing model. Despite serving a growing community, the Howard Fire Department currently is 26% understaffed. This has resulted in no firefighters in the station during the hours of 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. The on-call firefighters must respond from home before heading out to a call.

Additionally, the current paramedic contract expires at the end of 2023. With growing concerns about ambulance response times, now is the ideal time for Howard Fire Rescue to take over emergency medical services.

The referendum would allow Howard to have an enhanced 24/7 Fire Rescue Department and provide village-operated, fire-based paramedic services by adding seven full-time firefighter/paramedics to the department.

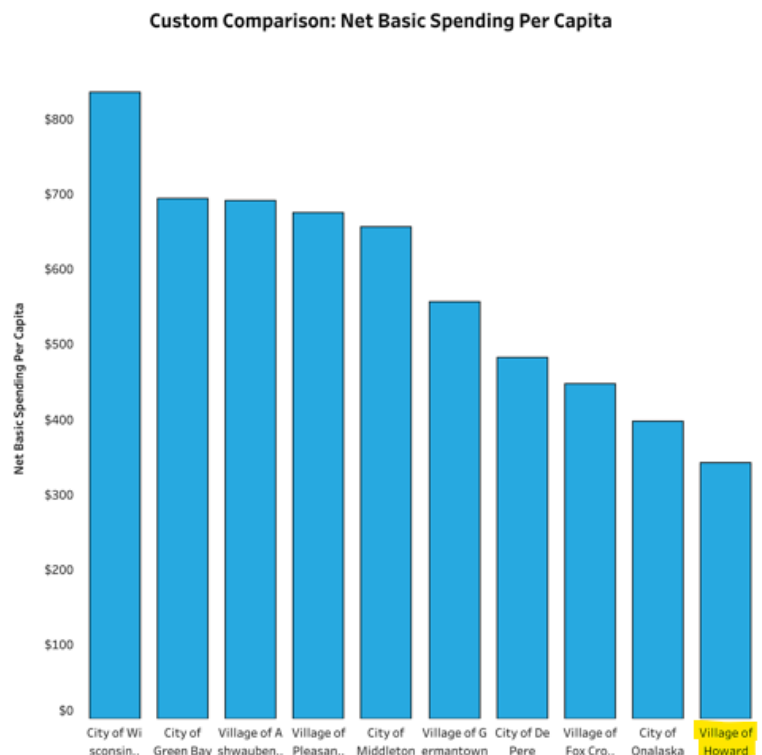
- **If the village would stop borrowing money to build apartments and fund developers, it would have enough money for police, fire, and ambulance services.**

While the village did take out loans for the Howard Commons apartments and the pavilion project, that debt does NOT impact your property taxes. The debt is part of the TIF District, and the apartment rents have more than paid for the debt payments to date. The pavilion project debt is and will be funded by the TIF, private sponsorships, and the future revenues the facility will earn (not general property taxes).

The village has provided financial incentives for projects when without the financial assistance, a project would not go forward. Sometimes the financial assistance is needed due to challenges the site has, such as poor soils, and sometimes it has been to fill a financial gap a project faces to make it more appealing. The village has not given any projects up-front monetary assistance. The Howard Village Board has been consistent that financial incentives should have limited risk to the village and in most cases only allow a developer or business the opportunity to recapture a portion of the new taxes they generate over a limited period.

- **Why can't the village just budget for the additional police, fire, and EMS services?**

The Village of Howard is very conservative on spending decisions for the annual budget and has been since the early 1990s. We boast one of the lowest tax rates for similar-sized communities in the entire state. One of the reasons for such a low tax rate is the contracting of police services with the Brown County Sheriff's Office, which dates to the 1970s. In the 2023 budget, the police services contract is almost \$1.9 million and a

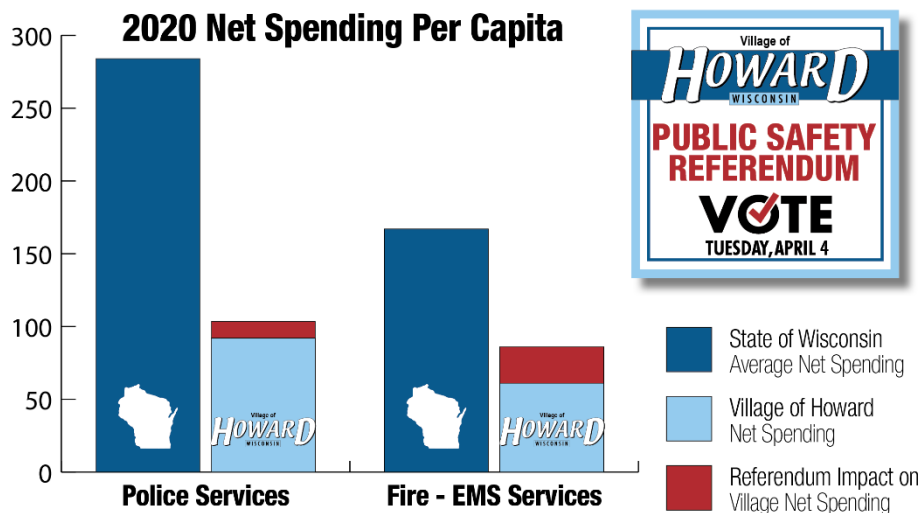


total of the police budget at \$2.0 million, compared to similar-sized communities with in-house police costs such as De Pere at \$5.4 million, Neenah at \$7.8 million, and Grand Chute at \$6.6 million. The village has found contracting for police services and garbage/recycling services save the taxpayers of Howard tremendous amounts annually.

o **Why can't the village contract with Green Bay Metro Fire Department for fire and EMS services?**

Green Bay does not have fire stations located close to Howard and therefore cannot simply extend service because they have extra capacity at a nearby station. The closest Green Bay station to Howard is located nearly 4 miles from Howard Fire Station #1. To serve Howard, another agency would staff the Howard station in the same way they staff their other stations. In 2020 Green Bay fire/paramedic service was at a cost of \$223 per capita. If the referendum were to pass, Howard will be providing fire/paramedic service to its residents at a much more reasonable \$90 per capita.

Additionally, because Howard is part of the Packerland Fire District with Suamico and Pulaski, Green Bay doesn't provide first alarm mutual aid to Howard. Suamico and Pulaski do, and vice versa. Howard Fire Rescue is more practically and regionally aligned with those departments than with GBFD.

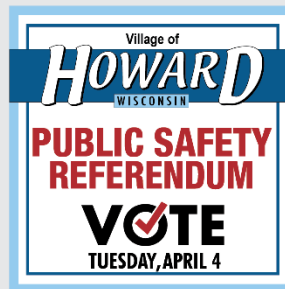


- **I'm upset about the recent revaluation, which already increased the amount of taxes I pay. Howard did a revaluation in 2019 and again in 2022. It's too much.**

By state law, reassessments are required whenever the total assessed value has a variance of 10% of the total equalized value of a municipality for three consecutive years. The Village of Howard had a total revaluation prepared in 1992, which was the first in 15 years. Taxpayers noticed huge increases in their property values that year causing lots of taxpayer questions and concerns, which our assessors dealt with during a weeklong open book session. The village board decided, at that time, as a matter of policy to have a market adjustment revaluation prepared every three years to allow for more fairness in property tax allocations to individual property owners.

Once an assessed value is determined on a home, business, or farm, generally the value remains unchanged until a revaluation is prepared. Preparing a revaluation once every 15 years creates inequities in property tax bills. In a perfect world, the property values would be adjusted to market values every year, but such a process is too costly. The policy of revaluing properties once every three years has proven to be a valuable tool in allocating property taxes to individual properties. The village has used excess funds on hand to pay for these market adjustments.


Revaluations do not create more tax levy for the village or the three overlapping taxing jurisdictions (Howard-Suamico School District, Brown County and NWTC). The tax levy is the amount of the shortfall in the annual budget needed to fund general government operations of the village. The state has mandated a tax levy limit that effectively only allows the village to increase the tax levy (and your property tax bills) by the amount of growth in the village and to allow the village to pay for new debt payments. The village did recently issue new debt to help cover the cost of reconstructing two sections of roads on Pinecrest and Evergreen roads in 2021 and 2022; this debt was added to the tax levy in the 2023 budget that affected tax bills issued in December 2022.



A Village of Howard community survey indicated that **SAFETY & LOW CRIME** are major reasons why respondents chose to live in the Village of Howard.

- **How will a successful referendum impact my property tax bill?**

The estimated tax impact is \$33.24 per \$100,000 of property value. The average assessed Howard home valued at \$289,000 would see an annual tax increase of \$96.05. The increase would be effective with the 2024 annual budget and would first appear on the tax bill mailed in December 2023.

	<b>\$100,000</b> Property Value	<b>\$200,000</b> Property Value	<b>\$300,000</b> Property Value
<b>Tax Impact of an Approved Referendum</b>	<b>\$33.24</b>	<b>\$66.48</b>	<b>\$99.72</b>

- **Why does the referendum seek permission to exceed the levy limit on an ongoing basis? Does this mean our taxes will continue to increase every year?**

The one-time levy increase will stay in place to maintain the expanded police, fire, and paramedic services in future years. If the increase were not ongoing, the added positions would need to be eliminated the very next year. That said, the village cannot raise taxes above the one-time continued increase without holding another referendum.

- **Where and when do I vote on the referendum?**

The referendum will appear on the April 4, 2023 ballot. To view a sample ballot, verify your voter registration status, request an absentee ballot, or find your polling location, visit [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov).

