



JOHNSON CREEK
Crossroads With A Future

The Creek

News from the Crossroads

Dec 2019

2020 BUDGET ADOPTED, TAX RATE

by Kyle L. Ellefson



The 2020 Budget was an interesting process that began with the possibility of a small tax rate increase as we projected several large budget expenses coming in 2020, but ended up with small service increases, the establishment of a reserve fund for future infrastructure projects, and ultimately a cut in the property tax rate.

The Village Board established early budget goals based on the preliminary information they had, and their goals included maintaining a reasonable tax rate, ensuring we maintain our level of services and amenities, and emphasizing compensation to retain our valuable employees and reward them for the work they do.

Garbage and recycling fees initially seemed as though they would seriously impair the 2020 budget, and we struggled for months negotiating a variety of alternatives with our provider. After we were not successful in finding common ground on contract terms, we were able to identify another solution that allowed the village to realize some significant fee reductions.

Village President John Swisher said, "When we suddenly had thousands of dollars of expenses eliminated from the budget, it was a priority to not simply find new ways to spend those dollars, but instead to suggest a way we could produce thousands of dollars in tax cuts for Village taxpayers, establish an ongoing reserve for recurring infrastructure improvements, increase Village funding for our Public Library, and provide funds that help the community. I think the Village Board took a serious look at the plan and found that it was a great way to accomplish several goals that ultimately reduce the overall property tax burden, provide consistent funds for infrastructure maintenance and improvement, and provides opportunities to improve the community for everyone."

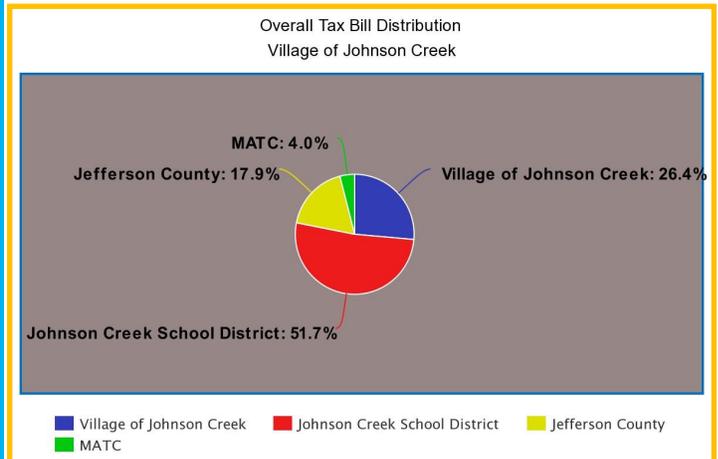
In the end, the Village Board adopted a budget that maintained all services, funded a general wage increase as well as the targeted increases for Emergency Medical Services staff, increased patrol hours for the Police Department, updated sign regulations, and enhanced our capital reserve program to proactively fund ongoing infrastructure maintenance efforts.

Building on the trend from 2018, Johnson Creek reached several all-time highs in several key measurements during 2019. Our population is now estimated at 3,021 residents, our equalized value (the value of all taxable property in the Village) is more than \$372 million, and new construction

alone exceeded \$6 million. I am anticipating another solid year for new construction and equalized value growth in 2020, as we have several commercial projects and a significant number of new homes being added to the tax roll for the first time next year.

Each budget year, it seems like I write about the mill rate for the coming year, and how the Village Board was able to hold the tax rate steady or reduce it, and I am proud to say that for the 5th year in a row the Village Board has either held steady or cut the property tax rate. Keeping the tax rate flat can be incredibly difficult, and cutting even more so, but Johnson Creek's solid fiscal management has resulted in Johnson Creek's tax levy remaining the lowest-tax rate City or Village in Jefferson County, which it has been for years.

While we may not be able to maintain a flat or decreasing tax rate forever, noting the large gap between our rate and the next lowest tax rate among other Cities and Villages, it appears our rate will remain the lowest for the foreseeable future. I will also note that the Village tax rate is only a portion of your tax bill, and each taxing jurisdiction (Local School District, Technical College, and County) establishes their own tax levy and then passes that information on to the Village to incorporate into your tax bill. Your local leadership is only responsible for the Village's portion of the tax bill.



This chart provides a snapshot of the overall tax bill distribution for each of Johnson Creek's taxing jurisdictions.

State levy limits prevent local property taxes to grow beyond the percentage of new buildings built in that community the year before. The Village's tax levy in the 2020 budget is \$1,405,131, an increase of \$19,468, or 1.4%, over the 2019 budget. That increase is less than the state-imposed allowable rate for net new construction in the Village last year, so on the whole we are decreasing the overall tax burden across the community.

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: ABBI & BEN CRAVEN



Abbi & Ben Craven at Village Hall

When Abbi Craven first contacted the Village to see if her husband, Ben, could be considered for our Resident Spotlight feature, she shared their story of recently buying their first home in Johnson Creek, how they were high school sweethearts who

graduated from Eagle/Palmyra in 2012, and how Ben recently surprised her by coming home early from his Afghanistan deployment. She listed his military accomplishments, which included his five-year career with the United States Air Force and now with the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

When we heard their story, we knew we needed to share it in a unique way. So we contacted Abbi and our plan to surprise Ben on Veterans Day began.

THE PLAN. Abbi told Ben they were selected as our Resident Spotlight featured couple and were scheduled to be interviewed at Village Hall on November 11.

We at the Village scripted a proclamation for Ben, secured the time during a committee meeting, and began reaching out to media. The proclamation highlighted Ben's military service, including tours in Jordan, Korea, as well as his most recent deployment in Afghanistan.

When Ben and Abbi arrived at Village Hall, they were interviewed and then asked to take a photo in the board room as with any resident spotlight feature. Although this time, a group including our board of trustees, Abbi's parents, and members of the media, were waiting to surprise Ben. "I was totally surprised," said Ben.

THEIR STORY. The couple officially met in middle school, but didn't start dating until senior year of high school. They married in 2013 and moved to Columbia, South Carolina where Ben was stationed with the Air Force. Since moving back to Wisconsin in 2017, Ben and Abbi have been busy

making plans for the future, including buying their first home here in 2018. When Ben was recently deployed, their Johnson Creek neighbors, Tricia and Rich, helped Abbi by offering to help mow her lawn and shovel her driveway. Their kids, who go to Lakeside Lutheran, organized care packages to send to Ben. "I loved getting those packages because they were filled with so many great treats," said Ben.

"I so appreciate our wonderful neighbors," said Abbi. "They were always ready to help me with anything. And the Village was so great to work with to help me with this surprise. We love living here," said Abbi.

Ben agrees and loves the location, "You really can't beat living here. You're close enough to both Milwaukee and Madison, the schools are great, and the cost of living is affordable."



Ben & Abbi with F-16 & Santa

The couple plans to continue their studies at Madison College before transferring on to the UW System. With Ben's electrical work within the Air Force, and working on F-16s, he plans to finish his electrical engineering degree at UW-Madison. "While each F-16

has over 15 miles of electrical wiring, my real desire is to incorporate design with electronics," Ben shared.

Abbi's love of art started at an early age and was reinforced during high school when she was a teacher's aide for art. "I always knew I wanted to teach art," said Abbi. "I had wonderful mentors and look forward to graduating from UW-Whitewater so I can share my knowledge and make connections with art with kids," Abbi continued.



Ben surprising Abbi in Oct

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW: PROPERTY TAX PAYMENTS



1. Tax bills, water bills, and dog licenses **MUST** be paid by *separate checks*.
2. Receipts are automatically issued for *in-person payments* at Village Hall only.
3. If paying by mail, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a receipt.
4. Checks from mortgage companies made payable to the Village and the property owner(s) **MUST** be signed by all parties before being presented to the Village for Payment.
5. Payment locations:

Village Hall 125 Depot Street: Mondays-Fridays 8am – 4pm
(Closed Dec. 24 and 25 & closed at noon on Dec. 31)

Premier Bank 100 Grell Lane: Call (920)699-6900 for hours.

Premier Bank can only accept payments made for the exact amount of the tax bill.

NOTE: Credit card payments can be made at Village Hall, online at www.govpaynow.com, or by calling 1-866-370-9574. A processing fee of 2.65% of the transaction amount is charged by GovPayNet for online payments, and a slightly higher processing fee is applied for payments by phone. If paying online, you will need to enter Pay Location Code **a000tp** and your **tax parcel number** from your tax bill.



Wisconsin is unique amongst all other states when it comes to reliance on property taxes as the single source of locally-generated revenues. Since 2005, budgets throughout the state have been feeling the pressure of ever-tightening state-imposed budget limits, state aids that have not increased (often not even keeping up with inflation), and limitations on property tax increases.

State levy limits prevent local property taxes from growing beyond the percentage of new buildings built in that community the year before, known as "Net New Construction". Small rural communities tend to struggle most to attract new residents and businesses, and this has resulted in 9 out of 10 communities across the state seeing increases less than the rate of inflation for the past several years. This in turn means tighter budgets and cutbacks in areas like street repairs, snow plowing, police, and fire protection.

These limits, in the absence of growth, create significant challenges for many communities. Take for example the City of Clintonville, WI which lies about 30 miles outside of Appleton. Like Johnson Creek, it's a nice Wisconsin community of great people with a population of approximately 4,000. Unfortunately, because their growth has been very slow, they have sometimes struggled to continue even routine services and infrastructure

maintenance. Communities like this have serious conversations about reducing services, eliminating employees, and borrowing just to make ends meet.

Johnson Creek is fortunate that we do not have those issues because of our robust growth, among the fastest growing communities in the region. By example, between the years 2000 and 2010, Johnson Creek's population rose by 70%, and we have added hundreds of new residents since then. Commercial growth has also been a staple of our community, with millions of dollars in new commercial development happening in the past decade.

This growth has allowed us to avoid tax rate increases for the past 5 years, and allowed the Village Board to reduce the tax rate in at least 3 out of those 5 years. Considering the tax rate that funds Village operations, we have the lowest municipal mill rate of any Village or City in Jefferson County; and we collect the least amount of property tax per resident as well.

And while growth is important, our Plan Commission and Village Board remain vigilant in evaluating new developments to ensure they do not detract from our small town charm and character, which makes us the community we are. As always, if you have any questions, concerns or thoughts about the Village of Johnson Creek, please contact me or Village Administrator Kyle Ellefson.

TOURISM UPDATE



The Tourism Department had a wonderful 2019! Our *Be Unique in Johnson Creek* campaign was our first marketing and branding campaign for the Village and we had huge success! We'd like to thank everyone who helped share their

stories, spaces, and time to help tell the story of why Johnson Creek is not only a unique and fun place to visit, but also to work and live, on all our advertising outlets: the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Jefferson County Tourism Council, Channel 3's Buzzed Into Madison, and Spectrum Media.

You may have seen all our fun outtake photos on Facebook from various media filming, including Discover Wisconsin. Our Johnson Creek episode will air at the end of April 2020. We will be sharing more information on our community airing party, so stay tuned to our newsletter and tourism Facebook pages for more information!

NEW IN 2020: Our tourism marketing grant program is getting an update. We will still be offering grants to qualifying groups/events, but have updated our guidelines and application. You can find both soon on our tourism website, www.visitjohnsoncreek.org, as well as the Village website, www.johnsoncreek-wi.us.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to popularity, Healthy-Steps will now be offering two 1-hour sessions per week in Johnson Creek in 2020.



LOCATION: Johnson Creek Community Center
DATES/TIMES: TBD (Watch for details to come!)

The Healthy-Steps program improves overall wellness, range-of-motion, balance, strength, endurance, as well as emotional well-being and self-image. For all ages and abilities!

Nov 30-Dec 1: Christmas In The Village*

*Visit www.visitjohnsoncreek.org for a full event listing

Dec 7: the Wizards of Winter at the Gobbler

Dec 14: Joe Diffie at the Gobbler

VILLAGE HALL HOLIDAY HOURS

Closed December 24 & 25

Closing early at 12:00pm (noon) December 31



YOUR LIBRARY UPDATES & NEWS

Are you looking to free up space on your shelves for this year's Christmas gifts?

The library always accepts donations of gently used books, DVDs, and CDs! These donations are used to help fill in gaps in the library collection due to lost or damaged items, to give out as prizes during the Summer Learning Program, and to sell at the Friends of the Library's annual book sale.

Donated materials can be for children, teens, and adults. Please drop off your donations during normal business hours and let the library staff know if you need help carrying things inside. All donations are tax deductible!



FUN FACT: The library added 238 donated items to the collection this year, including 109 DVDs/Blu-rays, 111 books, puzzles, and a Wii gaming console!

Holiday Hours

CLOSED: December 24 & 25

CLOSING EARLY:

2:00pm December 31



Children's programming will resume the first full week in January



Village of Johnson Creek

www.johnsoncreek-wi.us

PRSR STD

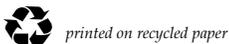
U.S. Postage

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Johnson Creek, WI

53038

Permit No. 10



IMPORTANT WINTER REMINDERS



WINTER PARKING

If there is an accumulation of 1" or more of snow: vehicles cannot be parked, stopped or left on any Village streets or alleys from 2:30am – 7:00am the following day or until the streets or alleys have been cleared edge to edge of the pavement, whichever occurs later. Violators may be cited or towed.



SIDEWALKS

Within 48 hours after each snowfall or accumulation of ice: property owners are responsible for removing snow and ice from all sidewalks fronting or abutting their property regardless of the lot being occupied or vacant. Violations may result in the Village removing snow and ice at the property owner's expense (\$150/hr).



PREVENTING FROZEN PIPES

- Keep heat set above 50°F
- Apply heating tape or extra insulation to water supply pipes
- Seal cracks and holes in walls and floors to eliminate cold air
- Keep water moving through the pipes by allowing a small trickle of water to run