



**JOHNSON CREEK**  
Crossroads With A Future

# The Creek

**News from the Crossroads**

January 2020

## REFLECTING ON 2019 & EXCITED FOR 2020

By John L. Swisher & Kyle L. Ellefson



As 2020 is coming quickly, this is a great opportunity to pause and reflect on what we've accomplished throughout 2019 and what opportunities and challenges lie ahead for us in the next year. First and foremost in many people's minds at this time of year is the property tax bill and the budget that dictates the amount of taxes we collect to fund village operations. As we've discussed in the past few newsletters, the Village Board was able to arrive

at a budget that continues the services we have, adds additional funds for public safety and community events, enhances our financial stability by funding a road maintenance reserve fund, and reduced the amount of tax dollars needed to fund the proposed budget. The property assessment revaluation has caused an unusual situation this year where nearly every property across the village had a change in value, and tax bills went up or down as a result of the change in property value relative to the overall rate of increase across the village. While some property tax bills were up, others were down. Across the entire village, the amount of new tax dollars collected in 2020 from new construction during 2018 is less than the rate of new construction, resulting in an overall reduction in the tax rate, even after adjusting for the revaluation.

As has been the trend we have seen over the past few years, another long-serving village staff member has reached the point when they can enjoy a well-deserved retirement. Fire Chief Jim Wolf retired this fall, capping a career of public service that spanned decades. Chief Wolf worked with the interim Fire Chief, Jeff Roemer, to ensure a smooth transition, and the Department continues to add new members every few months. Chief Roemer is also responsible for evaluating the overall Department to determine the best way to meet all of our fire and emergency medical service needs, and within the next few months the Village Board expects to see recommendations on completing the transition from Chief Wolf's retirement to Chief Roemer's interim role, and finally to the process for selecting the next Johnson Creek Fire Chief. The Village Board has maintained steadfast support for the Fire & EMS Department through significant wage increases and capital expenditures in the past two years, and we are all excited to see the Department continue to grow.

During 2019 the multi-year, multi-million dollar wastewater treatment plant came on line, with the project substantially complete on-time, and within budget. This is the largest infrastructure project we have undertaken in many years, and through solid planning and management, it went very well. 2020 will not be a year that the Village has such a large project, but we know there are larger projects on the horizon. As our community grows, so do the demands on our water system. We are not at the point right now where Well #4 needs to be constructed, or that we need to incorporate a second water tower, but we know that we creep closer to that tipping point each time we add new users to the system. These improvements will certainly add capacity to our

system, but will also add layers of protection by increasing the capacity for fire protection demands, establishing redundancy in the event of a well failure, and facilitating the routine maintenance shutdowns of our water towers.

2019 did not see major road projects in the village, but you will see some work in 2020 and beyond. In 2020, Jefferson Street will be milled and a new coat of asphalt will be laid to improve that Street for many years to come. The project will be partially funded by a Local Road Improvement Project grant that was available for a project of this size. We also mentioned the road maintenance reserve funds we established in the 2020 budget, and we anticipate seeing that maintenance begin in 2021 as we look to strategically treat roads that have aged or worn significantly, improving them to extend the time when they will need major improvements. Additionally, South Street and several connecting roads are on our radar to be addressed in the next few years. That area is one of the oldest remaining sections of infrastructure, and the improvements will be substantial in scope and cost, as nearly every piece of infrastructure will be replaced; the roadway, utilities and other infrastructure will be removed and replaced; and the entire area will be re-constructed to modern standards, which will last decades. We have applied for a Transportation Grant from the State of Wisconsin which could make a real difference in a project of this size, but even with a grant the village will almost certainly need to issue notes or bonds to fund this project.

In the past several years, and again in 2019, we conducted strategic planning sessions to lay out our plans for what capital projects and equipment will need replacement, when it should happen, and where the funding will come from. This plan is designed to position ourselves the best financially, while still meeting the needs of the community. In 2020, we will be exploring another aspect of strategic planning as we focus on our services and operations now and into the future. This planning will delve into our current level of service across programs and departments, the potential needs of our community as we continue to grow, how the village will meet those needs, when (year, population, TIF closure, etc.) the village will need to change or add capabilities to address those needs, and most importantly, how we expect to fund those services in a sustainable manner. For example, we expect the TIF Districts to be paid back ahead of schedule, possibly in 2022, which we hope will add tax revenue for the Village, allowing many of these projects and initiatives to happen without increasing the property tax rate. While the strategic planning is likely to be a challenging process, we also think it is incredibly important to manage the village proactively, with thoughtful plans and comprehensive understanding of our developing community.

We are excited for 2020, and if you have any questions, thoughts or concerns, please reach out to us.

*Happy New Year!*



## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: BOB & ARLENE HAUMSCHILD



Bob & Arlene Haumschild

"I have always had the calling to help people," said Arlene Haumschild as we sat with her husband Bob in their welcoming home that they've owned the last 43 years.

The couple have a long history of giving back to their community, including the couple's involvement

with their church, St. John's, where both are in charge of setting up funeral needs for families in their time of grief. Arlene also serves as a Stephen Minister and offers support and counseling for those in trauma situations. "We've always enjoyed helping people when they need it the most," said Bob. Both have also volunteered at the VFW for years, including Arlene's tenure as vice president.

Bob grew up in Johnson Creek on his family farm and remembers when the Village had only 360 people. He also has family ties to the old Hoffbrau Bar that was formerly in the Park Hotel. "My sister and brother-in-law owned it back in the late 1960s," Bob recalled. "Back then they had go-go dancers and it was always busy," he chuckled.

Bob served in the Army for six years including two tours in Vietnam. He then worked for the United States Postal Service for 35 years as a postal carrier before retiring in 1997. He always loved to learn and tinker so he continued working including time at Sears as a salesman, maintenance supervisor at the Johnson Creek Premium outlets, and at Schneider Printing before fully retiring in 2008 due to health issues. "I wanted to learn different things so I sought out projects I enjoyed," remarked Bob. "I think the secret to staying positive is you gotta stay active."

Arlene certainly embodies that same energy. She was born in Watertown but was raised on her family's farm in Lebanon.

Her family's home and farm were destroyed by a tornado on April 11, 1965. "It was Palm Sunday and I'll never forget it," recalled Arlene. "Luckily we were away from home at a family get together so no one was hurt."

Arlene worked for 25 years for the Eaton Corporation. While there she worked full time and earned her degree in professional communications and human resources from Alverno College. She then went to Watertown Hospital where she helped staff work on their soft skills before retiring in 2016.

"I love volunteering and being involved," said Arlene. Which explains her impressive list of community activism, including her two terms on the Johnson Creek School Board, her work with the Johnson Creek Library Board, and her 43 years on the American Legion Auxillary.

Bob and Arlene are also so proud of their family. Both their children, Angel and Brian, went to and graduated from Johnson Creek Schools. The couple is very active with their grandchildren and make the commitment to help their grandson Bryden, who has both Cystic Fibrosis and Cerebral Palsy, get to and from school in Burlington 4 days a week, every other week. "We've had that special bond with him since day one and wouldn't have it any other way," said Bob. And the couple visits Bob's brother, Don, every day for lunch. Don suffers from dementia, and lives at a nearby assisted living facility. "While it's difficult to see Don deteriorate, he has those moments of clarity that we celebrate," said Arlene. "We are all about family."

As for the changes they've seen in Johnson Creek over the years, the couple says they appreciate today's leadership is proactively anticipating what's needed not only now, but years from now. "Johnson Creek is planning for what's next," said Bob.

## GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Shaping the Future of  
**YOUR**  
Johnson Creek



The Village of Johnson Creek has been blessed with residents who have a love for our community and the desire to make it the wonderful place to live, work, and play that it is.

It's the time of year when many of us pause and reflect on what we're most thankful for. It's been easy for us to know what we're most thankful for—you! Our residents' generosity and commitment to our community are what makes Johnson Creek so unique. The investments of time, talent, and treasure of so many help ensure the continued success and growth of our community. We want to thank and remind such individuals of how important they are to the Village.

### Thelma Thomas

- Johnson Creek Poll worker/Chief Inspector
- Alternate/Citizen member of the Board of Review
- President of the American Legion Auxillary
- Bringing Christmas decorations and gifts to patients in the Madison VA Hospital

### Sally Albertz

- Member of Plan Commission
- Member of Tourism & Promotion Commission
- Treasurer of St. John's Lutheran Church Council
- Member of Zoning Board of Appeals

### CJ O'Neil

- Served on Village Board and numerous committees
- School Board member
- Girl Scout leader
- Johnson Creek Library Board member
- Member of Johnson Creek Friends of the Library

### Pat Giese

- Member of Johnson Creek Friends of the Library
- Member of Rock River Coalition
- Member of Sustain Jefferson
- Advocate for Johnson Creek Library programs and activities

## REWARDING JOBS WITH THE FIRE & EMT DEPARTMENTS AND NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Johnson Creek Fire & EMS Department, under the direction of Interim Fire Chief Jeff Roemer, is happy to announce



their new leadership team. Several members have been with the department over the past few years and have accepted the new positions to help promote the continued excellence to Village safety and wellbeing.

### JOHNSON CREEK FIRE & EMS LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Michael Stratmoen, Asst Chief of Fire Operations & Prevention
- Scott Wolf, Asst Chief of Training & Safety
- Paul Schoenherr, EMS Asst Chief
- Dylan Callas, Captain of Operations & Fire Prevention
- Courtney Salov, EMS Captain
- Brian Turner, EMS Captain

When asked what calls him to this leadership team, Scott Wolf, Assistant Chief of Training and Safety simply says, "I love this job because it allows me to help people." And above that, it's in his family history. "My dad was a firefighter with the City of Waukesha," Wolf recalled. "Growing up, hearing

all his stories, I knew I wanted to be a firefighter, too."

The structure of the Johnson Creek Fire Department is like many small towns across America where positions are part-time and on-call. The flexibility of these positions allows people who have the calling to help others find ways to fit it in their already busy schedules. For example, Wolf's full-time job is working as a fire fighter with the 115<sup>th</sup> Air Force base in Madison.

"Working with the Johnson Creek Fire Department is really a family environment," said Wolf. "We care not only for the Village, but also for each other. We are a team that wants to welcome more members to help serve the residents and visitors of Johnson Creek."

Paid part-time and on-call positions are available for EMT, paramedics, and firefighters. Johnson Creek also now offers training for firefighters to achieve their certificates. The Village also has a fully stocked and supplied ready house for EMS and firefighters to stay while on call to be comfortable.

Interested to join a flexible and family-friendly team to help serve others and promote safety? Please stop by the fire house and/or contact the Johnson Creek Fire & EMS Department directly at (920)699-3456 where team members will be happy to help.

## TOURISM UPDATE

### THANK YOU JOHNSON CREEK!



The Johnson Creek tourism department had a successful 2019! With marketing programs with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Channel 3000 in Madison, Spectrum media, and Discover Wisconsin, the Village's first-ever branding campaign, *Be Unique in Johnson Creek*, was shared across Wisconsin to potential visitors and future residents. Many thanks to all the wonderful residents and business owners who participated in all our marketing efforts to showcase how Johnson Creek is the perfect place to experience small-town charm with big ideas.

As we continue to promote the village in 2020, we look to all our residents as ambassadors to share what you love about Johnson Creek with your family and friends. Testimonies from residents speak volumes and with the recent collaboration from Christmas in the Village organizers, we know our residents' can-do spirit can make wonderful events happen!

Keep visiting our tourism Facebook page and website, [www.visitjohnsoncreek.org](http://www.visitjohnsoncreek.org), for information on all events.

### JANUARY EVENTS

**January 10:** Tyler Farr at the Gobbler Theater

**January 18:** Wine Dinner at Milford Hills

**January 18:** Ronnie Milsap at the Gobbler Theater

## ROOM TAX GRANTS UPDATE

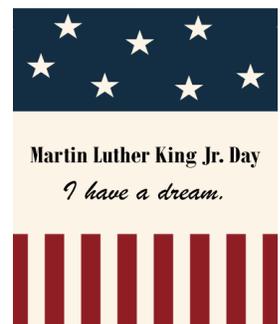
The Room Tax Tourism Grant Program was designed to enhance tourism within Johnson Creek, with a goal of increasing overnight stays at lodging facilities in the Village. The Johnson Creek Tourism Commission re-evaluated the effectiveness of the program, a made changes to create more opportunities for potential overnight stays in the Village for 2020, and to prioritize efforts that add stays during periods the hotel experiences a high inventory of rooms. The new grant guidelines and application may be found on our tourism website [www.visitjohnsoncreek.org](http://www.visitjohnsoncreek.org), as well as on our village website under the Department of Tourism & Economic Development at [www.johnsoncreekwi.org](http://www.johnsoncreekwi.org). If you have any questions, please contact Tourism Director Katie Newcomb.



## VILLAGE HALL & LIBRARY HOLIDAY HOURS

**Closed New Year's Day (Jan 1)**

**Closed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan 20)**



# YOUR LIBRARY UPDATES & NEWS

**NEW**

## The library now has a private study room available!

Individuals and small groups may reserve it for educational and civic uses, or anyone can drop in and use it when no one is scheduled. Get your taxes done using our Wi-Fi or study for your semester finals in peace!



Learn more about Medicare at our seminars on January 28 and 30 from 5:30pm – 6:30pm



A Novel Bunch  
book discussion group  
2020

Discuss a new book every month. Everyone is welcome! The library always has extra copies of the upcoming book, so pick up a copy today and join us on the third Thursday of every month 3:00pm – 4:00pm

## Spring programming resumes in January!

R.E.A.D. with a Dog is now the first Saturday of the month from 10 – 11am starting January 4th.



## BRILLIANT BABIES

Ages 0 - 2  
recommended for newborns to just walking  
no registration required - everybody welcome!

Brilliant Babies has added an evening session on Tuesdays from 4:30pm – 5:00pm.

Visit our website at [www.johnsoncreeklibrary.org](http://www.johnsoncreeklibrary.org) to see all of our great programs and their times!



## Village of Johnson Creek

[www.johnsoncreek-wi.us](http://www.johnsoncreek-wi.us)

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## 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