



**JOHNSON CREEK**  
Crossroads With A Future

# The Creek

**News from the Crossroads**

September 2019

## PREPARING FOR THE 2020 BUDGET

**By: Village Administrator Kyle Ellefson**

As we gear up for budget season, we are getting a better picture of some of the numbers that will shape our budget, your property tax bill, and ultimately the service you receive as a resident of Johnson Creek. There are a lot of positive trends in our community as our assessed value is the largest it has ever been, the equalized value determined by the State of Wisconsin is the largest it has ever been, and our preliminary population estimate of 3,021 is the highest population we have ever had in the Village. But, even with positive news, there are challenges ahead as we work to maintain quality municipal services, keep pace with infrastructure and capital needs, and maintain a reasonable tax rate for the Village.

We continue to hear many questions regarding the recent revaluation of all properties in the Village and what impact that general increase across nearly all properties will have on property tax bills. While we do not yet know what our tax levy will be for next year, it is important to remember that an increase in property value alone does not guarantee you will receive an increased tax bill, since the property tax levy you are responsible for is a reflection of your property's value in proportion to the value of all properties throughout the Village. There are many factors to consider, but you can generally expect that if your property gained more in value than the average property, you will be responsible for a larger share of the property tax levy. If your property gained less in value than the average property, you are likely to be responsible for a smaller portion of the tax levy.

The Village is committed to reducing the mill rate to address the increase in value that came from the revaluation, but we are not certain what that number will be yet. Since the 2016 budget was adopted nearly 5 years ago, the tax rate for Village operations has not increased, actually decreasing slightly. In that same time, each of the other taxing jurisdictions collecting property taxes from your tax bill have had to increase their tax rate, with tax rate increases ranging from 1.2% to 8.9%.

While we have been able to achieve a flat tax rate for several years, we are facing some significant challenges for the 2020 budget year. To maintain our quality services and address staffing shortages and challenging market conditions, the Village Board dedicated significant resources to

improve wages for Emergency Medical Services employees in 2018 and 2019, increasing wages by more than 68% since 2017, and marking the third consecutive year the Board has increased EMT and Paramedic wages. The Fire Department also replaced a 20-year-old ambulance late in 2018, and the first loan payment due in the 2020 budget year will add more than \$23,000 in new annual debt service. Health insurance rates are not yet known, but we expect moderate increases, and there is a need to remain competitive with compensation in an employment market that is sometimes considered "full employment." On top of those other obligations, our garbage contractor has preliminarily requested a double digit increase in next year's rates to address the poor market for recyclers. In the end we must, and we will, find a way to address all of these challenges. If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to call or visit with me at Village Hall, reach out to your Village Board members, or attend one of our meetings.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT CHANGES



*Jim Wolf & Jeff Roemer*

After more than 50 years on the force, Jim Wolf's final day as fire chief was August 31st. Interim Fire Chief Jeff Roemer has been on the job since July 15th. "Jeff has started a smooth transition of knowing individual department members. As he becomes more familiar with the Village, he will also address the challenges the department continues to face. He will develop plans to lay the way for the new permanent chief who is a match for the department and community," said

Wolf.

"The transition has been going well," said Roemer. "I appreciate the time Jim and the Village have offered to go over all operations and personnel. I look forward to providing feedback and recommendations to the board and commission on ways to improve operations," Roemer continued.

"We thank Chief Wolf for his dedicated years of service to keep the residents and businesses of Johnson Creek safe," said Village Board President John L. Swisher. "We look forward to working with Chief Roemer and hearing recommendations to innovate operations," Swisher continued.

## NEW BUSINESSES IN JOHNSON CREEK

Business keeps booming in Johnson Creek, with several projects underway and several potential projects appearing on the horizon. First, construction of The View at Johnson Creek continues, with concrete for the project being poured, walls on one wing being erected, and roof trusses being installed. Eventually, this project will be home for up to 64 residents, and we are excited to see their continued



The View

investment as it addresses one of the needs identified in our Comprehensive Plan.

After nearly 50 years in Johnson Creek, JWR is also busy expanding their business with a new building located near North Watertown Street and Hartwig Boulevard. When their project is complete, this nearly 31,000 square foot building will be used to assemble equipment and trucks as well as store parts and equipment.



JWR

The Village Board and Village Administrator have also been busy negotiating new development agreements, executing existing agreements, and working with several potential developers to convert conceptual development plans into reality. Just in the past month, we have transferred three parcels on Wright Road to a developer and entered into an agreement with another company to transfer two parcels on Resort Drive for the purpose of building a light industrial building. We are also aware of some private commercial real estate transactions that may bring new buildings and businesses to our community. This is all great news as Johnson Creek continues to be a premier location for growth and commercial development. As details on these projects develop and become public, we will keep you updated.

## HEALTHY STEPPING IN THE VILLAGE

The program *Healthy-Steps* is now offered in Johnson Creek. *Healthy-Steps* is an international therapeutic exercise and movement program with music designed to help you thrive physically and emotionally. It improves overall wellness, range of motion, balance, strength and endurance, as well as emotional well-being and self-image.



The program is offered twice a week for six weeks through Fort HealthCare at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesdays in Fort Atkinson and 11:30 a.m. on Thursdays at the Johnson Creek Community Center for a minimal cost. If attendance increases in Johnson Creek, they would likely add a Tuesday session here as well. Interested folks are encouraged to stop in and participate in their first class for free. Open to all ages. Contact Fort HealthCare at 920-568-5299 for information.

## HELP WANTED: EMS PAY INCREASE

Increased compensation for EMTs and Paramedics adds to the other benefits of being a Johnson Creek Fire & EMS (JCFE) member. The fact is that, in a recent member survey, we learned that the overall majority of individuals said the primary reason for joining was "satisfaction in helping others."



But JCFE has recently added an additional benefit for members after the Johnson Creek Village Board authorized increased EMT and Paramedic compensation. Part of the decision is an effort to retain the professional EMS personnel on our team,

but also to recruit those interested in becoming an EMT. Of course, we encourage those who are already licensed EMT's and Paramedics to join us as well.

The recent compensation increase provides EMT's \$8 per hour, and Paramedics \$11 per hour during their scheduled shifts. In addition to that, both EMT's and Paramedics receive an additional \$12 per hour while on an emergency call. (Calls historically average 2 hours.)

JCFE does need to expand its Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) personnel numbers and encourages those interested in becoming an EMT to call or come and talk to us. We offer tuition

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## BACK-TO-SCHOOL SAFETY



It's that time of year again when parents and children across the country are preparing to go back to school. As a part of our commitment to safety, we'd like to help you prepare with these simple but important safety reminders:

- ◆ Be aware of and watch out for children near schools, bus stops, sidewalks, in the streets, in school parking lots, etc. and always follow speed limits and bus signals.
- ◆ Never text while driving and avoid using a cell phone unless it's completely hands-free while driving in a school zone.
- ◆ Make sure your child wears a helmet if riding their bicycle to school; they reduce the risk of head injury in an accident by 85%.
- ◆ Choose the safest route between home and school for your children to walk or ride their bike and practice it with them until they can demonstrate traffic safety awareness. Use the same route every day and never use shortcuts. Try to walk or bike with other students; there is strength in numbers.

Thank you for contributing to the safety of our community's children!



## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: JANE & MIKE JORDAN

When asked what drives them to give their time to the community, Jane and Mike Jordan both say, "It's how we're made."

The Indiana-native, but long-time Johnson Creek residents have deep roots in the Village.

The couple met in 1971 when both were showing their family pigs at the Indiana State Fair and celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary at the end of August. After high school, Mike enlisted in the Navy to take advantage of their education program to become an electronics tech. The couple spent two years in San Diego and then another two in Australia. "We were 380 miles to the closest town and we loved it out there," recalled Jane.

The couple moved to Johnson Creek in 1991 when Mike started working for White-Rodgers, a relay manufacturing company. What drew them to the area was the warm and welcoming small-town feel and great schools, while still being able to comfortably access both Milwaukee and Madison. Both their daughters, Becky and Nicole, served in FFA and are Johnson Creek High Schools grads. They continue to live nearby so Jane and Mike are now active and happy grandparents.



Swine Barn at Indiana State Fair

To become acclimated and meet more people in the community, Jane and Mike decided to get involved. "It's a part of how we are and how we were raised," recalled Mike. "We wanted to help in any way we could," Mike continued. And help they did.

Having a 10-year background at the Lucerne, Indiana volunteer fire department prior to moving here, Mike brought his talents and joined Johnson Creek's volunteer fire department from which he recently retired last year. His current employer, JWR, has roots with the fire department and supports employees who are on the department. "David and JWR are fire friendly so their employees can help in the community," said Mike. "They were really wonderful to us on the department," Mike continued.

Jane served the community as well with a term as school board president, and she was also an integral part of the fire department, ensuring firefighters on a call had food and beverages waiting for them to replenish their energy when battling blazes. This tradition started during a call to a large Dettmann Farm fire years ago.

You can also thank Jane and Mike for obtaining the bleachers at Fireman's Park. In the mid-1990s, the couple became aware the City of Watertown was no longer using the bleachers and made a deal with the city to obtain them for Johnson Creek's then-high school and Fireman's Park at no charge if they provided the labor. It proved to be a labor of love as Jane and Mike rallied the community to pitch in. Three months later, the bleachers were erected in Johnson Creek. "We did what was needed," recounted Mike. "We believed the best way to get to know people was to jump in, help, and make it happen," smiled Jane. "Jane and Mike are perfect examples of what makes Johnson Creek a special place to call home," said Village Board President John L. Swisher.



Jane and Mike Jordan

## HELP WANTED: EMS PAY INCREASE

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compensation after training, successfully acquiring an EMT license, and committing to a certain number of paid hours per month.

For those who don't live in the village or immediate response area, JCFE has housing - our "Ready House" - adjacent to the station to stay at during a shift. (A shift is usually 12 hours.) Those who do live in the village can be at home during their shifts.

So what could be better? Specialized training in a new field, reimbursement for the license training, newly expanded compensation, and flexible scheduling.

All of that is on top of the SATISFACTION OF HELPING OTHERS. Call 920.699.3456 or just come to Station 1 at 120 S Watertown Street during weekday business hours to learn more and to get an application.



Our JCFE team in action

## TOURISM UPDATES & EVENTS

Our *Be Unique in Johnson Creek* campaign continues to roll along with **Discover Wisconsin** film crews due to be in our area throughout the month,

included filming the Founder's Float (a fundraiser benefitting the Johnson Creek Historical Society) on September 14th. Check out our tourism website: [www.visitjohnsoncreek.org](http://www.visitjohnsoncreek.org) and our Facebook page for more information on this and all events.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 9/13: Milford Hills Fish Boil
- 9/14: Founder's Float
- 9/20: Johnson Creek High School Homecoming
- 10/25: Milford Hills Autumn Farm to Table
- 10/26 & 27: Earth, Wood, & Fire Artist Show
- 10/31: Trick or Treat at JC Premium Outlets
- 10/31: Trick or Treat in Johnson Creek (time TBD)



## LIBRARY UPDATES



Summer Learning Program (SLP) participation increased 13% this year! We had 137 adults, 55 teens, and 216 youth sign up for summer reading. The adults read 501 books, the teens read for 812 hours, and the youth read for 3,612 days! Everybody who reached the goal and returned their reading log was put into the grand prize drawing which occurred live on stage at the Fireman's Festival. We had hundreds of people attend dozens of programs throughout the summer including LEGO Club held outside, Hands On Science, and the Child Health and Safety Fair.



September 12 marks the one-year anniversary of the dedication for the remodeled children's area named after former director Luci Bledsoe. The library staff loves to see the children build forts with the brightly colored cushions, play with the new toys, and spend hours digging in the bins to find their new favorite books! The library and library board are deeply grateful to everyone who donated time and money to complete this project that has positively impacted families across the entire community.



## Village of Johnson Creek

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



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### SEPTEMBER COMPOST & BRUSH PICKUP DATES



#### Compost Pickup will be September 3 & 16

- Must be in biodegradable bags or open containers not weighing more than 35 lbs.

**ALL COMPOST & BRUSH MUST BE AT THE CURB BY 6:00AM!**

#### Brush Pickup will be September 9

- Place at the backside of the curb.
- Ends **MUST** face the flow of traffic.
- No branches/trunks over 8" diameter or stumps will be picked up.
- NOTE: the Village will not pick up brush left by contractors resulting from tree removal.



### LABOR DAY

Village Hall & Library will be closed September 2nd in observance of Labor Day



REMINDER: Garbage pick-up will be on Friday, September 6th due to the holiday.