



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2023

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### Oak Creek Budget Enhances Public Safety Staffing

*Oak Creek, Wisconsin:* Signaling unanimous approval, the Oak Creek Common Council adopted the 2024 Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets at its meeting on November 21, 2023. The 2024 City operating and finance plan commits to maintaining public services, and features a healthy annual capital improvement program. However, it is most unique in its significant investments in public safety staffing within Oak Creek's Police and Fire Departments.

"The City is in a phase of growth and change, and we actively manage this transformation. A key component involves examining our staffing and service delivery," highlighted Mayor Dan Bukiewicz. "We are fortunate to have an excellent City workforce, and our entire governing body takes immense pride in the public safety staffing plan we will implement in 2024. While we have been deliberating staffing and program enhancements over the past couple of budget cycles, our timing for the decision has proven to be excellent," Bukiewicz explained.

The plan calls for investments totaling around \$1.91M into the Police Department, which includes emergency dispatching, and into the Fire Department. Of that amount, nearly \$130,000 will go toward enhancing programs and opportunities to recruit younger adults into public safety fields.

Within the Police Department, the approved staffing plan calls for the addition of six Police Officers, one additional Detective, investments in the police aide program, and a new Dispatch Supervisor position. With this plan, the City will add at least one additional police officer and an extra patrol car on every shift, around the clock. For the third shift alone, as an example, that is a 20% overall increase in police patrol presence and also makes another officer available for any major incident.

"We are thrilled to have this investment and for the future of our Police Department and City," said Police Chief David Stecker. "Both (Fire) Chief Kressuk and I approached staffing conversations this budget in a new 'outcomes-based' way. Our elected officials could see exactly what residents and property owners would be getting in terms of additional resources on the road, as well as the strategic additions to our Detective Bureau and Dispatch Center."

Similarly, on the Fire/EMS side, Fire Chief Mike Kressuk notes, "This is not only about keeping up with an increasing call volume typically found in a growing City; but also, about adding resources to expand the

programs we know are making a positive impact in the community. This investment will allow us to enhance these important programs and services.”

The plan adds four additional Firefighter/Paramedic positions for the Fire Department, enhances the fire prevention program with another part-time inspector, and applies additional funds to the Cadet/Intern program. Kressuk states, “This plan gives us vital capacity in our operations and prevention programs. Additionally, the increased funding for our cadet/intern program will allow us to expand on a program that introduces high school students and young adults to a career in the fire service and provides us with a much-needed pool of potential candidates.”

The financial plan requires an exception to state property tax levy limits, and homeowners with a median property value of \$323,700 can expect an additional cost of about \$9.46 per month for these increased services. According to Mayor Bukiewicz, Oak Creek had never used this levy exception before, although around 94% of Wisconsin cities already use this funding strategy. “The Common Council considered this fact, as well as the community outcomes presented by the Chiefs. The staffing plan was a logical choice. Our residents and business owners consistently emphasize public safety in discussions about their tax dollars, and we’ve substantially enhanced safety services with a reasonable amount of taxpayer support,” explained Bukiewicz.

The challenge moving forward is filling the new vacant positions as the number of potential hires entering these fields of work has declined sharply across the nation. With record-low application pools, public safety leaders are turning to a combination of developing a youthful talent pipeline and attracting experienced staff “laterally” from other municipalities to meet service needs.

Both Departments have seen success with their respective next-generation staffing programs, reaching potential candidates early on in their career planning. “We now have additional positions to fill in a tough market, and that’s really the tie-in and strategy for having these budgetary dollars work together for the best community safety outcomes,” concluded Stecker.

Find more information and FAQs for the City of Oak Creek’s public safety staffing initiative on the city’s website, [oakcreekwi.gov/comms](https://oakcreekwi.gov/comms).

A full copy of the City of Oak Creek 2024 Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets can be found on the city’s website, [oakcreekwi.gov/budget](https://oakcreekwi.gov/budget).

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