

# APRIL 7, 2026 REFERENDUM



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT?

The formal resolution requesting permission to exceed the state revenue limit will appear as follows on the April 7 ballot:

*"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the Village of Somers for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2027, is limited to 2.473%, which results in a levy of \$4,420,664. Shall the Village of Somers be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2027, for the purposes to hire and retain eight (8) additional firefighter / paramedic positions for the Somers Fire Department, and continuing to operate Fire & EMS Services, by a total of 29.407%, which results in a levy of \$5,720,664, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$1,300,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"*

A **"yes"** vote means the voter **is in favor** of \$1,300,000 of additional taxation by the Village of Somers through an ongoing increase in the annual property tax levy to pay for eight additional firefighters / paramedics at the Somers Fire Department. The increase in property taxes will continue after the FEMA SAFER grant expires.

A **"no"** vote means the voter **is not in favor** of \$1,300,000 of additional taxation to pay for eight additional firefighters / paramedic positions. The Somers Fire Department will not have funding for the eight additional positions after the FEMA SAFER grant expires. The Village would also struggle to fund its portion of the additional positions for the duration of the grant.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF VOTERS APPROVE THE REFERENDUM? WHAT WOULD THE PROPERTY TAX IMPACT BE?

If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters, a permanent \$1,300,000 increase to the property tax levy would allow the Village to fund **eight full-time Firefighter / Paramedics**, for a total of 21 Firefighter / Paramedics. Somers would be able to have **seven full-time staff on duty during each of its three shifts**, and it would **allow the use of all three ambulances at once** to respond to emergencies.

An approved referendum would result in an estimated \$115 property tax increase per \$100,000 in assessed property value. The average Somers home with an assessed value of \$355,000 is estimated to see a property tax increase of approximately \$405, starting with bills issued in December 2026.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF VOTERS REJECT THE REFERENDUM?

If the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the Village would not be able to increase the property tax levy to fund the additional positions.

Trustees would need to make a decision about how to fund its portion of costs for the duration of the SAFER grant, potentially pulling funding from reserves or borrowing. Without additional revenue, the Village would not have long-term funding to maintain the eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics, and the Village would likely experience additional strain as the community continues to grow.

### SO, WOULD THE VILLAGE ADD \$1,300,000 TO THE TAX LEVY EACH YEAR?

No. If approved by referendum, the Village would be able to permanently increase its property tax levy by \$1,300,000, starting with the 2027 budget and tax bills issued in December 2026.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT**

[www.somerswi.gov/public-safety](http://www.somerswi.gov/public-safety) or email questions to Fire Chief Ben Andersen at [bandersen@somerswi.gov](mailto:bandersen@somerswi.gov)

# SOMERS REFERENDUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WILL THIS RAISE MY PROPERTY TAXES BY 29%?

No. Your total property taxes fund the Village of Somers, the Kenosha Unified School District, Kenosha County, Gateway Technical College and the library. Less than one-third of your property tax bill goes to the Village; the referendum would impact just this slice.

An approved referendum would result in an estimated \$115 property tax increase per \$100,000 in assessed property value. The average Somers home with an assessed value of \$355,000 is estimated to see a property tax increase of approximately \$405, starting with bills issued in December 2026.

## WHY DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM TO RAISE THE TAX LEVY LIMIT?

State of Wisconsin statutes limit the amount of property taxes a municipality can collect each year to the percent increase in equalized value from net new construction. In order to exceed the levy limit, the municipality needs voter approval through a village-wide referendum.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES FACING THE FIRE DEPARTMENT?

Increasing the Fire Department's staff capacity is critical to meet growing community needs and provide timely service in emergencies. Somers has seen a significant increase in calls for service from 2015 to 2025. In 2025, the Somers Fire Department responded to **1,778 calls – a record high** – and received overlapping calls for service 728 times.

Demand for services is likely to continue increasing as additional housing units are completed in the future at Somers Creek, Savannah at Pike Creek, and other developments likely to come to light in the years ahead. This will further increase the number of residents in Somers – and demand for services – beyond those who have already moved into Savannah at Pike Creek, Lake of Somers Apartments and Pike Ridge Senior Apartments.

The Somers Fire & Rescue Department currently includes 13 full-time Firefighter / Paramedics, with at least four on duty at all times. One part-time employee is also assigned to work at Station 1 each day to help operate vehicles and respond to calls for service. Based on availability and level of need, responses are supported by additional part-time staff who are not fully certified and are not based in stations during shifts.

Limited staffing impacts service delivery. Based on current staffing levels, the Department can only guarantee operation of two ambulances at any given time – one from each station. Not all staff are paramedics, so patients can only receive the highest-level service when fully trained staff are available and an ambulance can be operated. By adding eight full-time, fully trained Firefighter / Paramedics, the Department can assign **additional staff to each shift, guarantee paramedic-level service and guarantee the deployment of all three ambulances at once** to meet growing community needs.

## WHY DON'T WE ADD TWO FIREFIGHTERS PER YEAR FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS?

The Village of Somers completed a Fire Department staffing study that identified **an immediate need for eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics based on demand for services**. Adding two firefighters per year is not enough to meet current needs – and we know demand will continue to increase as Somers grows.

Additionally, the Village cannot ask a referendum question that increases funding year over year. In order to increase revenue to fund two staff in 2026, two more in 2027, two more in 2028 and two more in 2029, the Village would need to go to referendum every year to seek approval for each increase.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT**

[www.somerswi.gov/public-safety](http://www.somerswi.gov/public-safety) or email questions to Fire Chief Ben Andersen at [bandersen@somerswi.gov](mailto:bandersen@somerswi.gov)

# SOMERS REFERENDUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHY DOESN'T THE SAFER GRANT THAT THE VILLAGE JUST RECEIVED SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

The Village and Somers Fire & Rescue Department have worked consistently to bring in outside funding to support public safety needs via grant application, but it has not been enough to fund additional full-time positions on staff.

In 2025, the Village applied for and received the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) SAFER grant. For three years, that grant will partially fund the eight additional positions needed. The Village is required to cover the remaining costs.

If the referendum is approved, the Village of Somers would be able to increase the property tax levy to meet this federal requirement, cover the costs of equipment, vehicles and related operational expenses and fund the additional staff long-term.

If the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the Village would not be able to increase the property tax levy to fund the additional positions.

Trustees would need to make a decision about how to fund its portion of costs for the duration of the SAFER grant, potentially pulling funding from reserves or borrowing.

Without additional revenue, the Village would not have long-term funding to maintain the eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics, and the Village would likely experience additional strain as the community continues to grow.

## WHY DID THE VILLAGE ACCEPT THE SAFER GRANT IF WE DON'T HAVE EXISTING FUNDING TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GRANT?

The Village accepted federal dollars to help reduce the burden on local taxpayers immediately. At the time the grant was accepted, the Village Board had already begun discussions about a likely referendum and saw a referendum as the potential solution to both long-term funding needs and the federal requirements tied to the grant. If the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the Village would not be able to increase the property tax levy to fund the additional positions.

Trustees would need to make a decision about how to fund its portion of costs for the duration of the SAFER grant, potentially pulling funding from reserves or borrowing. Without additional revenue, the Village would not have long-term funding to maintain the eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics, and the Village would likely experience additional strain as the community continues to grow.

In addition to funding eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics, if the referendum is approved, the Village will be able to purchase equipment and other costs related to Fire Department operations.

## IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS, WHAT HAPPENS TO FUNDS NOT NEEDED FOR STAFF DUE TO THE GRANT?

In addition to funding the Village's portion of the eight additional full-time Firefighter / Paramedics needed, if the referendum is approved, the Village will be able to purchase equipment and other costs related to Fire Department operations.

## WHAT WORK DID THE VILLAGE DO BEFORE DECIDING TO GO TO REFERENDUM?

In the fall, the Village released a report outlining the challenges they are facing, potential solutions and the limited funding options available. In part, that report describes how property tax levies are limited by state law. Municipalities are permitted to increase property taxes only up to the amount necessary to repay loans, by an amount tied to increases to a municipality's equalized value from "net new construction," or if approved by voters via referendum.

The Village then worked with third-party, independent survey firm Community Perceptions to administer and analyze a survey sent to all households, which demonstrated that **53% of respondents support the Village pursuing a referendum to help fund additional full-time Fire and Rescue staff.**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT

[www.somerswi.gov/public-safety](http://www.somerswi.gov/public-safety) or email questions to Fire Chief Ben Andersen at [bandersen@somerswi.gov](mailto:bandersen@somerswi.gov)

# SOMERS REFERENDUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT FUNDING OPTIONS OTHER THAN A REFERENDUM HAVE BEEN EXPLORED? ARE THERE THINGS WE CAN CUT?

The Village has explored additional funding sources and potential budget cuts.

External funding was secured through the federal SAFER grant, though that funding is temporary and incomplete. As with all municipalities in the State of Wisconsin, Somers relies on two primary funding sources: property taxes and shared revenue. Few additional revenue sources exist, including revenue generated by fees like a “wheel tax”, which is not enough to fund the additional full-time staff we need.

Cuts are not feasible. Given that public safety services represent approximately 59% of the general fund budget, funding for other essential operations is limited and many non-public safety services are state-mandated. That leaves limited options for budget reductions, potentially including:

- **Liability insurance** (up to approximately \$230,000)
- **Road maintenance and other public works expenses** (up to approximately \$125,000)
- **Street lights** (up to approximately \$24,000)
- **Recreation** (up to approximately \$11,000)
- **Animal control** (up to approximately \$10,000)

Cuts would reduce the availability and quality of the other essential services residents receive.

## I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUMS RECENTLY. WHY IS THIS A TOPIC IN THE NEWS?

Somers is not alone in experiencing funding or public safety staffing challenges. As we've seen in recent years, many communities across the state have faced similar challenges and have sought property tax levy increases via referendum in order to address public safety needs.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE OR ASK QUESTIONS?

Additional information about the Village's April 2026 referendum can be found online at [somers.org/public-safety/](https://www.somers.org/public-safety/). Starting in March, staff will be hosting in-person town halls to share more information about the referendum and answer questions. Sessions will be held on the following dates at Village Hall (7511 12th St.):

- **Thursday, March 5 at 5:30 p.m.**
- **Saturday, March 28 at 2:30 p.m.**
- **Tuesday, March 31 at 5:30 p.m.**

The Village will also share information through outreach to local media and mailers. You can also email Fire Chief Ben Andersen at [bandersen@somerswi.gov](mailto:bandersen@somerswi.gov) with any questions or feedback.

## WHEN AND WHERE DO I VOTE?

Somers voters can cast their vote in one of three ways: through absentee ballots, in-person absentee voting, or in-person voting on election day – **April 7, 2026**.

Polling places will be open 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. on election day. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable voter ID in order to vote. All polling places are accessible to elderly and disabled voters.

Additional voting information, including about polling places and requesting an absentee ballot, can be found on [myvote.wi.gov](https://myvote.wi.gov)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT

[www.somerswi.gov/public-safety](https://www.somerswi.gov/public-safety) or email questions to Fire Chief Ben Andersen at [bandersen@somerswi.gov](mailto:bandersen@somerswi.gov)