

Meeting Date: November 11, 2019

**Recommendation:**

That the Board review the attached DRAFT letter and Survey that I believe should be sent to Village Residents before we take action effectively ending our relationship with the Town.

**Background:**

We have all experienced first hand the ego, pride, mistrust, and closed nature of doing business with the Town on a personal level at this point. Each of us has been lied about, slandered, and threatened in some way, either individually or as an organization. Each of us has been stopped while eating out in public, or while with our families by someone that has a preconception about what “the Village is doing to the Town”.

I believe that we govern with the consent of the governed. I believe that we listen to our residents. I believe that we formulate public policy by doing our best to inform our own residents about both the opportunities and challenges that we face, and by asking them to be our counsel in making decisions that impact all of us. In short, I believe we are the “good guys” and that we hold to the ideals of truth, justice, professionalism, excellence, and the American Way.

I believe that we have been dealing with a form of Totalitarian Dictatorship, and that for us to take action in response to what the Town has decided, regardless of how senseless we may think it to be, that we should not stoop to the level of decision making that the Town Government has in effectively ignoring the will of our own people, many of whom consider Town residents to be friends and neighbors.

I have been asking people randomly how we should proceed. What I have learned is that most do not support giving the Town a free ride any longer, but also don't feel great about the idea of cutting them off without giving substantial notice, and an opportunity to compensate for the things that they use.

I beseech each of you to consider a vote to send the attached letter and survey (or some modified version) to our own citizens, and to decide the fate of the relationship of the Town after we've had the opportunity to seek the input from our residents. I feel confident that they'll come to the same conclusion that we have, but it is important that they be a part of this historic decision.

**Financial Impact:**

None

Submitted by,  
Zeke Jackson  
Village Administrator

November 11, 2019

Respected Residents,

We believe that the Village and Town of Waterford have more in common than just a name. Our kids go to the same schools. We use the same library. We go to the same churches. In addition to being good neighbors, the Village and Town have worked together to provide both our residents with directly shared services including Police, Fire, EMS, Fire Hydrants, Library, and a joint Chamber of Commerce. Our neighbors are represented by elected officials that, at the moment, we're having a very hard time dealing with.

The Village chose to do a bottom up analysis of all our financial arrangements in 2017. Banks, Contracts, and Intergovernmental Agreements were all analyzed, and we made several changes to many existing agreements. In reviewing our various intergovernmental relationships, we found that some were rather one sided. Each of the items listed below are services or assets that both communities use, as well as what each community contributes to the use.

Service	Village Taxpayer Cost (per year)	Town Taxpayer Cost (per year)
Fire Hydrants	\$340,000	\$0
Village Fire/EMS	\$507,000	\$170,000
Waterford Library	\$290,000	\$145,774
Waterford Area Chamber	\$85,000	\$1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,222,000</b>	<b>\$317,274</b>

It should be noted that the Village has a "true cost" contract for police services with the Town and pays approximately \$540,000 annually to the Town for that police service.

The Town and Village had scheduled two joint meetings (7/22 & 8/26) that were both cancelled by the Town. Holding its' own meeting on 8/26 the Town Board voted to cancel the Village Fire and EMS contracts. Leaders from the Village and Town of Waterford held a joint meeting on 9/4 to discuss Public Safety and Boundary Agreements. At the joint meeting, the Village again discussed options with the Town Board related to continuing Fire and EMS coverage to the residents of the Southern end of the Town that we have served for many years.

The Village Board voted to extend our existing contract terms through the end of 2020 in order for the Town and Village Boards to have ample time to work out more substantial longer-term agreements. The Town Board indicated that they would reconsider their earlier decision to end the present Village of Waterford EMS and Fire service. The Town Board voted on 9/18 at their meeting in a 3-2 Vote to NOT reconsider having the Village as a service provider.

We respect the decision of the Town Board, and, based on notification we've received from the Town, will end our Fire and EMS service to the Town on December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year.

We aren't interested in ego, turf, or pride. We are interested in getting our residents, and that of our neighbors, the most professional service, at the lowest possible cost. Sharing services helps the Village and Town to lower the cost of delivering service, because the cost of the service is shared by more people. It's also PART of why we enjoy having the Town provide police services by contract to the Village; it's just more cost effective.

We believe democracy works best when meetings are open, the public is informed, and is engaged in the decision-making process. This letter is to our residents with the intent of helping our Board make some very difficult decisions in the months ahead, simply put, how should we treat our neighbors?

I'm going to have to take you down the rabbit hole. What you've read in the papers or seen on the news or heard from your neighbors is the tip of the iceberg. I never thought I would confront the egos that I have encountered in this job in my career. I never ever thought anyone would ever make a decision in public safety that, I believed, amounted to patient neglect. I have many pages of documentation available at Village Hall for anyone that desires to learn more that are part of the public record that I will be glad to share. All you must do is ask.

Financially, we believe that our relationship with the Town is very one sided, and that our taxpayers receive little to no value from “mutual aid” or “automatic aid” that we receive through what is supposed to be mutually beneficial. The neighboring fire companies simply do not train, nor hold to, the same national standards that our department does. We follow NIMS, FEMA, NFPA, and OSHA standards when we train and in the field. They follow those standards sometimes, and in others engage in what might be thought of as “cultural firefighting standards” based on their many years of service to their respective communities.

From a risk management perspective, we expose ourselves to significant litigation risk by having our department respond to calls in the Town and in Rochester, and with the expiration of the service contract with the Town, we will be taking on this exposure with no compensation for that risk. On at least three occasions, we have responded and put the fire out before either Tichigan or Rochester Fire Companies have arrived on the scene with a single fire engine. Should we take on the risk of a lawsuit that our taxpayers would be responsible for when on a neighbor’s fire scene when we receive relatively little in the way of aid from either Tichigan or Rochester?

We have been asked to stand down from paramedic calls, with both Tichigan and Rochester fire company commanders preferring to call in other EMT level departments, or paramedics from even further away. This includes instances in which I believe were most definitely not in the patient’s best interests from the reports I have read. A 3-year-old seizing child should not have to wait over 18 minutes for an EMT from FURTHER away, simply because the incident commander in the neighboring company doesn’t “like” our department, and declined an offer of help from our paramedics. A couple involved in a motorcycle accident at highway speed, gurgling blood, should not have to wait for a Mukwonago paramedic when we have one offering to help. I can only speculate as to motive, as I just don’t understand why anyone would make those types of command decisions. This should be about patient safety. In saving lives, minutes matter. Money earned from runs should matter less than getting patients the best care that can be managed between all our communities. This means we should ALL be calling the closest staffed ambulance. We are neighbors, we should be helping one another, not complaining about “run jumping”. I somehow doubt that a jury of 12 would find the excuse of “run jumping” as adequate to excuse poor patient care, or needless suffering only so you could prevent a closer department from servicing a patient. Are these patients our problem?

It’s not just the risk of having a patient or homeowner sue us. We have had one workman’s comp claim in the last 12 months to one of our firefighters based on a neighboring fire company incident commander breaking crew integrity and sending one of our officers into a building alone (not standard), resulting in an injury. Should our employees be exposed to workplace injury risk from outside incident commanders not following standards?

Our Residents spend \$340,000 to keep our hydrants serviced and available when needed. Rochester and Tichigan have never compensated us for their use. Should we be compensated?

The Town sanitary district failed to treat their sewage, resulting in \$630,000 in damages to our shared wastewater treatment plant in 2019. Should our residents pay for their neglect through increased sewer rates?

While we have other areas that the Board may choose to act upon, the area of public safety was reported to us in our 2019 Stake Holder Survey as our community’s highest priority. The question we have is: Should the public safety of neighboring communities come at a cost to our taxpayers? It’s a big decision, and one we need your help to make.

Please take a moment to complete the attached survey. We will use the information we obtain to make decisions that will impact these communities for generations to come. We thank you for your time and input.

At your service, I am,

Zeke Jackson,  
Village Administrator

By Order of the Village of Waterford Village Board



2019 Neighbor Relationship Survey

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Please take a few minutes to share your opinion. All answers will remain completely confidential and anonymous- no personal information will be shared.

1. First, think about our Neighbors in Town Government and rate them on the following attributes, using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "Poor" and 5 means "Excellent"

	"Poor"	1	2	3	4	5	"Excellent"
Has leaders that are trustworthy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Offers services that are well managed		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is cooperative with your Village		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pays their "fair share"		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is open to citizen ideas and involvement		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has excellent Fire/EMS Service		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communicates well with public		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has its citizens best interest at heart		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2. Rate the statements on how favorable (1 being "least favorable") you believe them:

	1	2	3	4	5
We should maintain mutual aid for fire and EMS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should allow free access to our hydrants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should insist on high standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should take care of ourselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We should stop worrying about our neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We should go help our neighbors, regardless of the risk: Yes No

We should go help our neighbors, but insist on them maintaining national standards in order to minimize our risk: Yes No

We should be compensated for helping our neighbors: Yes No

We should compensate our neighbors when they help us: Yes No

If we can manage on our own, we don't feel we need our neighbors: Yes No

If our neighbors can't manage on their own, we should help them regardless of their willingness to compensate us or for receiving reciprocal help from them: Yes No

We should continue to extend offers to help to our neighbors: Yes No

We should ask our neighbors for help, even if we don't need it: Yes No

Our neighbors are poorly represented by the Town Board: Yes No

Our Village Board poorly represents you to your neighbors: Yes No

Our Village Board is wrong in how they've handled your neighbors: Yes No

Our Village Board should stop trying to deal with Tom Hincz: Yes No

Our public safety professionals should not be asked to go into situations where standards are not followed: Yes No

Our Village Board should stop trying to deal with the present Town Board: Yes No

Our Fire and EMS services should be offered for free to anyone that wants it: Yes No

Our Fire and EMS services should be offered for a fee to any private household or business that wants it in a neighboring community: Yes No

**Thank you** for your help in making some difficult decisions. Your opinion is important to us in making decisions about the future of our community, and our relationships with our neighbors. Please return this survey to Village Hall, or mail to 123 N River St, Waterford WI 53185 by **(Insert date)**