

EMS Service Referendum

The City of Portage

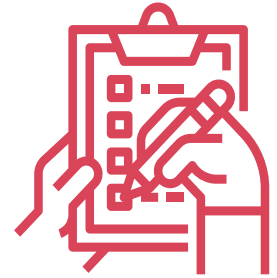


VOTE FEBRUARY 20, 2024

The City of Portage faces a need to invest in EMS service either through a referendum to increase the property tax level or significant budget cuts from other City services. With this investment, the City recommends creating a locally controlled, fire-based EMS service as the most cost-effective model for services.

The City has an opportunity to build the EMS system it needs for the community. **Voters will be asked on February 20, 2024** whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levy, beginning with bills issued in December 2024, to cover the cost of EMS services. If approved, the City would create a fire-based EMS service model:

- 14 cross trained firefighter / EMT / paramedics
- Education and training for personnel who are not already cross-trained
- Three new ambulances
- Fire station remodel to serve increased staffing and new EMS capabilities.



WHY REFERENDUM?

1 Today, the City of Portage is faced with paying high fees for third-party EMS services that provide limited opportunities for local control. The City unexpectedly received significant invoices from Aspirus, its third-party provider, for ambulance service. Challenged by these unexpected costs, and a lack of control in optimizing service to residents, the Portage Fire Department has considered alternate service models, while seeking to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

2 The City has an opportunity to build a fire-based EMS service that will ensure full control over efficiencies and effectiveness, designing and implementing the best EMS services to meet the needs of our community.

3 Because of state-imposed levy limits, Portage must gain approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund EMS services.

BENEFITS OF A FIRE-BASED EMS SERVICE

A feasibility study demonstrated that the City of Portage could establish a cost-effective fire-based EMS system to serve the City and neighboring communities by cross-training firefighter / EMT / paramedics and owning and operating three ambulances.

The proposed fire-based EMS model, operating out of the centralized location of the City's fire department, would:



Increase paramedic coverage and **improve** response times



Increase the number of ambulances available each day



Improve fire response times

Under the proposed model, 14 new personnel would join the department's existing staff of seven. All personnel would be cross-trained leading to a total of 21 firefighter / EMT / paramedics to serve the City.

Taking EMS service "in-house" as part of the fire department also gives the City complete control over the system and how best to serve residents. A fire-based EMS model will also bolster our fire response through the addition of cross-trained staff that can serve both the EMS and fire-related needs of our community. This level of control and adaptability is rarely available through partnerships with third-party providers.



Questions? Visit www.portagewi.gov/referendum to learn more.



**IF A MAJORITY
VOTE "YES"**

If the referendum passes, the Portage Fire Department will go from a full-time staff of 7 firefighters to a full-time staff of 21 cross-trained firefighter / EMT / paramedics. In addition, increased staffing will enable Portage Fire Department to operate 3 ambulances — rather than the current 1.5 ambulances operated by a third party — restoring us to the level of service our community is accustomed to.


If Portage residents approve the referendum, the tax levy in 2024 — and each year going forward — would increase by approximately \$1,482,272 to create a locally controlled, fire-based EMS service.

+3
AMBULANCES

+14
CROSS-TRAINED
FIREFIGHTER / EMTS /
PARAMEDICS

PLUS
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
FOR PERSONNEL NOT ALREADY
CROSS TRAINED

FIRE STATION REMODEL TO
SERVE INCREASED STAFFING
AND NEW EMS CAPABILITIES



If approved, taxpayers will see a property tax increase of an estimated \$152 annually, or about \$2.92 per week, on a home valued at \$100,000, starting with the bills issued in Dec. 2024.

| EMS SERVICE REFERENDUM | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| \$1,482,272 TOTAL INCREASE | | |
| PROPERTY VALUE | ESTIMATED TAX INCREASE | |
| | PER YEAR | PER WEEK |
| \$100,000 | \$152 | \$2.92 |
| \$200,000 | \$304 | \$5.85 |

**IF A MAJORITY
VOTE "NO"**

A rejection of the referendum would not be the equivalent of maintaining the status quo of emergency services. If the referendum is not passed, significant budget cuts will be required to fund EMS service. While specific cuts have not been determined, it would require cuts equivalent to the combined budgets of snow plowing services, road maintenance, library programming, parks and recreation programming and maintenance, taxi and airport services, brush and large item pick-up.

If the referendum does not pass, specific details on budget cuts will be determined by the City Council.

VOTE FEBRUARY 20, 2024

IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING:

Early voting available at the City Clerk's Office Monday – Friday; Feb. 6 - Feb. 16 from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

BY ABSENTEE BALLOT:

Deadline to submit application for mailed absentee ballot: Feb. 16 by 5:00 p.m.

ON ELECTION DAY:

Polling places open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID in order to vote.

Voting information can be found on the City's website at www.portagewi.gov/election-info or myvote.wi.gov.



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