



The Third Ward Neighborhood Association monthly meeting

October 12, 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Kevin Rosenberg, neighborhood chairman.

Present at the meeting via Zoom was Ann Ducay, Ryan Pleski, Dick Solberg, Nina Probst. Joining in progress were Jacqueline Roelant, Lissa Siedow.

Present in person were Kevin Rosenberg, Roger Gravrock, Jim Erickson, Bob Schwartz, Laura Buchholz, Eileen Immerman, Joanne Mellema, Laurie Norstedt, Susan Miller, Sharon Hildebrand, and Jake Wrasse, UW-EC Liaison. Chair Rosenberg asked for a volunteer secretary, Eileen volunteered.

The guests included Eau Claire Police Chief Matt Rokus, Alan Bertrang ECFD, city council president Terry Weld, Jill Christopherson and Larry Mgoba, both from City Council.

The September minutes were approved as written. The treasurer Sharon Hildebrand gave her report as follows: Total monies: \$3,214.59 with \$1633.06 in the General Fund and 1581.53 in the Demmler Garden Fund.

Jake Wrasse, our liaison from UWEC went first, and asked if there were any issues with homecoming weekend and no one had any. In addition he was congratulated on his marriage last Saturday. There was a question about the buildings and the schedule for new construction, most of that will be done next spring after the winter. Everything is on schedule. Jim Erickson expressed frustration and concern because the college students don't seem to be using the button at the crosswalk at Roosevelt and State. Jake will communicate this to administration so that it can be added to reminders that will go out to students in October.

The city Council, fire department and police department gave a **joint presentation on the Safety Referendum** coming up on November 8.

Referendum for November 8, 2022 Ballot: *"Under State Law, the increase in the levy of the City of Eau Claire for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2023, is limited to 2.62%, which results in a levy of \$46,742,188. Shall the City of Eau Claire be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2023, and on an ongoing basis, for the purpose of employing six (6) additional Firefighter/Paramedics, six (6) additional Police Officers, two (2) Civilian Community Service Officers, and one (1) Civilian Law Enforcement Associate to support Civilian 911 Dispatchers by a total of 2.5%, which results in a levy of \$47,942,188 and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$1,448,132 for each fiscal year going forward?"*

Police Chief Matt Rokus said there were three major reasons that concern him.

Calls are up 67% and include more serious and/or drug or child related offenses. With not being able to add staff due to budget constraints, the **Response Time** has increased to a level that concerns everyone. He gave an example of car accidents may have a 12-15 min. response time, which is unacceptable.

If you compare Eau Claire's population to other similar sized cities, (Wisconsin cities), we have a lower officer rate per 1000 persons than any of the other cities our size. Outside Wisconsin that number would be to add 23 more officers to our force.

See chart handed out on next page.

Compared to peer cities, **Eau Claire has the fewest sworn officers per 1,000 people and falls well below the state average.**



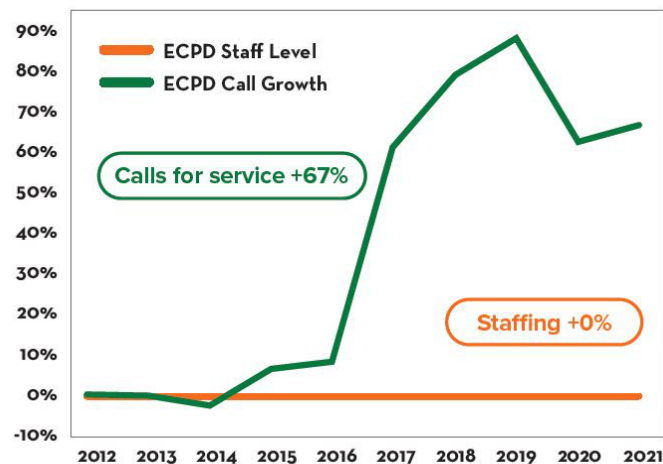
**For purposes of this chart, the population excludes the state university student body. If included, Eau Claire's average would have been even lower.*

***Denotes 2020 average*

Calls for service have risen 67% and there is more serious crime. Officers often have to prioritize what to respond to and they will always put concerns over children or a life being threatened before they will respond to other things. There are also more serious drug offenses.

CRITICAL NEED FOR POLICE STAFF

The Eau Claire Police Department responded to nearly 20,000 more calls in 2021 than it did in 2012, a **67% increase in calls for service in just 10 years**, while staffing levels have remained stagnant.



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Increasing response times due to officers being stretched by an increase in population and an increase in crime. Due to razor thin staffing and mandatory overtime he is starting to see an increase in **burnout** and his officers. They need 6 to 10 officers on to cover the city 24/7. It is very hard right now to cover illness, court appearances by officers that are mandatory, and time for vacations and other family events.

Since 2018 due to all of these above facts, **overtime has risen 450%** to provide the same needs for our city. Having more officers on would allow him to give officers time off and it would allow them to scale back mandatory overtime. Yes, mandatory overtime means they **MUST** work.

Two new community service officers would allow PD and Detectives to stay focused on their job and things like traffic control around a fire or initial response to an accident would be performed. In addition the single position in clerical would remove extra burdens on the 911 operators and allow certain functions to be handled in a more timely manner.



Due to budget constraints at the state level, and cities not allowed to add to their budgets without approval, the city must put this to referendum. Below is the impact per \$100,000 property value:
eg; an average home valued at \$350,000 in the Third Ward would have annual tax increase of ~\$79, which comes out to \$6.58/month.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT	
\$1,448,132 TOTAL INCREASE STARTING WITH DECEMBER 2022 BILLS	
ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED TAX INCREASE PER YEAR
\$100,000	\$22.55
\$200,000	\$45.10

Taxpayers will see an estimated property tax increase of \$45.10 annually on a home valued at \$200,000, starting with bills issued in December 2022.

ECFD Deputy Chief Alan Bertrang reported that the ECFD is stretched equally thin, as they have to respond to water rescue, scuba, high end low angle rescue, fire, HazMat, and EMT needs and ambulance runs.

Over the past decade, Eau Claire Fire & Rescue's staffing levels have decreased - even though the population has grown by almost 5% and calls for service have increased by 25%. Average response times for emergency calls have increased, as well.

In 2022, emergency response times have averaged to 5 minutes and 14 seconds -a nearly 12% increase since 2013.

In 2021, there were 151 instances of overlapping calls. High call volume, coupled with insufficient staffing, has impacted the Department's ability to react when multiple calls for service occur at once. Additional staffing would enable Eau Claire Fire & Rescue to meet current and future call volume and response time benchmarks.

He gave an example of Fire House #6 which should have 3 FD and 2 EMT, but right now, they are down to 3 total, which means when a fire event happens, all 3 need to go, leaving the ambulance un-covered and if there is a critical injury incident, another fire house farther away must cover it.

There was discussion and questions regarding the referendum.

Note: There are still public meetings for input on:

October 27 - 6pm -

Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, 1320 West Clairemont Avenue

November 2 - 5:30pm -

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library - Riverview Conf. Rm (third floor), 400 Eau Claire St.

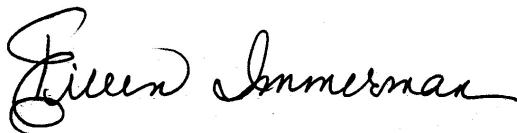
New business: Kevin Rosenberg announced he was stepping down as chairman, the only other nominee for chair was Susan Miller, and there were no further nominations for this position from the floor.

Roger Gravrock resigned. Kevin said he would stay on as vice chair. Sharon Hildebrand agreed to remain treasurer, and although we need a secretary to fill the position, Jacqueline Roelant agreed to fill in until we find a permanent one.

This slate of officers was approved along with Joanne Mellema as a new steering committee members.

The meeting was adjourned at ~ 8:40 PM

Respectfully submitted:



Eileen Immerman
for Secretary J. Roelant

In 2021, the department responded to 9,796 calls for service - **the highest number in its history.**

