Memorandum

To: Village of DeForest Village Board of Trustees

From: Bill Chang, Village Administrator

Re: Budget Engagement Comments and Staff Response

Date: September 26, 2024

For the 2025 Budget preparation process, Staff initiated two additional efforts to engage residents and businesses. The following are comments from each of the engagements.

Budget Listening Sessions. Staff held budget listening sessions on July 11th and July 18th. The sessions started with a short presentation on the budget process and explained where tax dollars are going. The presentation also explained the assessment process. The following are comments from both the session and staff's response.

Budget Listening Sessions	Date of Session	Staff Response
Concern over the never-ending increase to assessment values. Participant asked if there as any relief that can be provided.	11-Jul-24	* Staff as engaged Associated Appraisals to shift village wide evaluations from every year to every other year. In a fast moving housing market it is important for the Village's financial records to keep up with the market. This continues the Villages preference to have smaller impacts through shorter incremental changes versus larger impacts over longer periods of no change.
Concern over flooding on Jefferson Street and the culverts on the school side being too small to allow for flow of stormwater onto school fields.	11-Jul-24	* Village staff and engineering continue to review flood mitigation options for the Village.
Participant recently moved to DeForest and enjoys the amenities and events. Commented that continued increase in taxes is challenges and was one of the reasons from moving from her prior community.	18-Jul-24	* Staff strive to balance the spending needs of the village with growth and service demands. The strategic plan adopted in 2023 provides a roadmap to help decision maker grow the village responsibly.

Engage DeForest. Staff created a page on the Village's Engage DeForest website to provide information to the public during the budgeting process. The information include schedule of meetings, budget presentations, and information of taxes. The website also provided venue for

visitors/residents to post comments regarding the budget. The following are comments submitted on the website and staff's response.

Engage DeForest - Budget Comments	Date of Posting	Staff Response
I'd like to see several things to continue into 2025: river and habitat restoration, crisis intervention and other police trainings for all officers, bountiful/diverse library services, revolving loan program especially for small businesses and affordable housing, and probably other things that I am not thinking about right now. New things that I would like the Board and staff to consider for 2025 budget: alternative/renewable energy and some kind of mass transit option. The City of Hudson recently started a ride share program. I think a grant is helping to pay for it. It would be helpful for seniors and people with disabilities in particular. Not sure if this is a budget question or not... Is there a way village residents (specifically adults) can either access the high school track or have a track installed in a park? I don't think it needs to be as fancy as the high school track, but just some kind of loop (1/10 or 1/4 mile). Thanks.	20-Jun-24	* Streambank Restoration ($200,000) and habitat restoration ($53,866) are budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan. This is a 5-year plan and Staff continue to pursue grants in addition to allocated funds/debt service. * The Police Department budget has proposed $14,270 for training * Staff is engaged with UniverCity Alliance to explore a sustainability plan. One of the subject areas will be to review the Village's use of electricity and the cost of doing so. * Staff have had preliminary discussions with area businesses and the Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization regarding public transportation. Any solution will require significant investment and long-term planning. * Improvements to the parks and discussions for facility sharing for recreation opportunities should be first addressed with the particular department. * CDA currently offers revolving loan funds from small businesses and affordable housing. Village Board is set to discuss affordable housing strategy and potential funding sources.
Since Deforest is a bedroom community it would be nice to expand on transit options. There are also extremely limited options for transit for the elderly and disabled. Compared to neighboring communities we have no beating	21-Jun-24	* Staff have had preliminary discussions with area businesses and the Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization regarding public transportation. Any solution will require significant investment and long-term planning.

heart- our central business district is dismal at best. We are sorely lacking in terms of community festivities.		
after the frenzy that went into banning mountain bikes everywhere I hope you put some effort into building a trail somewhere in the village. You wouldn't tell the football team to go drive to another town to practice since there are pitches elsewhere so why treat the mountain bikers differently	21-Jun-24	* The Village recently executed an agreement to acquire 16 acres for a special use park. It is intended to utilize this space for mountain bike trails and will be planned as such. The details of the plan will be considered in the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, which is currently under review.
I hope the board will aim for 0% increase in taxes. Residents are tightening their belts to make their money stretch in this economy and higher inflation and can't afford to pay more in taxes. Please consider wants vs needs when looking at every line item in the budget.	21-Jun-24	* The Village's new construction increased 4.98% from 2023 to 2024 (WI DOR). The Village's population grew from 11,674 to 12,164, which is 4.2%. The Consumer Price Index is hovering around 3% from year to year. The new net construction should bring some relief since it will add more tax base, however additional residents and businesses will also require additional services. Members of the community have come to expect a high level of service from the Village and the Village's strategic plan intends for the Village to provide services that make it a desirable community to live, work, play, and recreate. In a market where the price of doing business continue to increase, the Village will continue to budget responsibly.
Please consider having recycling pickup every week. Windsor has this - DeForest should be encouraging more recycling not prohibiting it. If one truly recycles all possible items, the cans are overflowing by 2 weeks. *** This comment received secondary support***	22-Jun-24	* The service cost to add recycling pick-up every week to the current contract will be approximately $200,000 annually. Since the Village currently budgets the cost of waste and recycling as an expenditure in its general fund, increasing expenditure by this amount may require an increase to property taxes, which will impact current budgeting requirements (Expenditure Restraint and Levy Limits). Note that different community's budget and invoice garbage and recycling services differently. For example, some communities bill the service as a fee directly to the customer instead of putting it on the taxes. To change to this type of billing, the Village would have to reduce its tax levy by the same amount. Alternatively additional recycling bins are offered by the carrier at additional cost to the customer.

Would love to see more street lights on North Towne Road. With the increased traffic due to schools, sports events and road flow, there need additional lighting especially on the north part from Hwy V to Vinburn. More foot traffic there as well and in the winter months is dark so early so additional lights would help. People passing on Hwy 51 can see there is a town here	22-Jun-24	* Orders for additional lighting structures are processed through Alliant Energy. The installation cost for a new light pole is expected to be XXXX. The costs are then generally annualized into the Village monthly electric bill. It is expected that a run from Kwik Trip to Vinburn would require approximately 17 light posts(1 for every 300 feet, total 5,000 feet) for one side of North Towne Road.
I would like to see sidewalks so my kids won't have to walk in the roads to school. Or we could decrease the length restrictions so they could get a bus stop. That plan needs to be addressed. 5 and 6 year old kids shouldn't be walking down the road to school in modern day society	26-Jun-24	* The Village requires sidewalk in new developments and implements safe routes to schools. Adding sidewalks to existing roads and neighborhoods is challenging since they usually come at a higher cost due to existing infrastructure, vegetation, or other structures blocking the area where a sidewalk makes the most sense. There are also often differing positions from the neighborhood whether to add a sidewalk or not. In order to implement a program for more sidewalks in existing neighborhoods, different groups will need to come together, and the Village Board will need to hold steady on a plan of action. There have been mixed results with past attempts to add sidewalks or walking paths to existing roads/neighborhoods.
We need more affordable programs and classes for our youth. The offerings being offered by the parks are rec for our students are slim at best. We need activities that interest our school age children to help guide them and not get into trouble. Offerings also need to stop catering to soccer moms and be offered at times where working parents can get them to activities instead of being left out as they have no way to get to there as the activity is being offered before 5pm on a weekday.	2-Jul-24	* The growth of recreation programs has been limited by the expenditure restraint program. This program limits the amount a budget can grow year over year. For 2025, staff is proposing to shift recreation programming costs to a special revenue fund where the revenues generated can be directed to the costs of the program. This allows for the Village to adjust recreation programing based on demand and be independent of the restrictions within the general fund.