

## **SOMERS CREDIT WORTHINESS REBOUNDS**

### **BONDS REFINANCED**

#### **\$339,000 SAVINGS FOR TAXPAYERS**

On June 7, 2017, Moody's Investors Service upgraded to A3 from Baa1 the general obligation unlimited tax rating of the Village of Somers, Wisconsin. The most discernable impact of Moody's upgrade rating is the ability to obtain more favorable interest rates in the bond markets as the Village borrows for development, infrastructure, and capital improvement projects. This was clearly evident when the Trustees authorized the refinancing of \$5.3 million in general obligation bonds on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at an interest rate of 2.02%. The maturity date of the bonds remained the same. The refinancing is expected to generate a hefty \$339,000 in present value interest savings for Somers taxpayers.

*(Continued on page 7 )*

## **SOMERS FINANCIAL CONDITION**

### **IMPROVES SHARPLY**

The audited December 31, 2016 financial statements confirm Somers new financial policies have proven to be successful. The Village's general fund balance catapulted to \$2,198,078 as of December 31, 2016, up sharply from (\$490,788.00) in 2013.

When the new seven member Village Board was elected in 2015, following the Town's residents vote to incorporate 73% of the Town into a Village, the Board established new financial policies relating to capitalization, debt management, and fund balance reserves. This is the first time in Somers history formal financial policies were created by a Board and implemented by the Staff.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## **Somers 52nd Annual July 4th Parade and Ice Cream Social**

**Parade begins 2:00 PM on July 4, 2017**

**Ice Cream Social follows parade**

*(Turn to page 2 for important details)*



# SOMERS JULY 4TH PARADE AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL



## Parade Time and Location—Everyone Invited!

The Somers Parade starts at 2:00 PM at the intersections of Highways E and H, ending on Highway E at Somers Elementary School. The parade is approximately 1-1/2 hours long. Grab your lawn chair, hat, sunglasses and join us for this family-friendly event!



## Free Ice Cream Social - Time and Location

Immediately following the parade, a free ice cream social will be held, courtesy of Festival Foods on Highway 31 in Somers, in the auditorium of the Village/Town Hall. All are welcome!



## Free Parking

- Somers Elementary School (corner of Highways E and EA)
- Village/Town Hall parking lot



## Road Closed on Parade Route Starts at 12:30 PM

Beginning 12:30 PM, Highway E will be temporarily closed on the parade route between Highway H at Shoreland Lutheran High School and Highway EA at Somers Elementary School. Only emergency vehicles and parade entrants will be allowed to enter. Traffic will be directed in these areas.



## Bridge Out—Highway E closed just West of Highway 31 (Green Bay Road)

The bridge on Highway E just west of Highway 31 is closed and under construction. If you are driving to Somers on Highway 31, please use Highway L (Lichter Road) or Highway A as an alternate route. Turn on Highway EA and continue to Somers Elementary School to the free parking areas.



## Toilet (ADA Approved) Locations

- Somers Elementary School parking lot
- Neumiller Woods (west of railroad tracks)
- Fire Station and Village/Town Hall

# HAVE FUN THIS SUMMER—IN SOMERS!



**NEW!** Biergarten at Petrifying Springs Park opened Memorial Day. Located at the park's south entrance.



Petrifying Springs Golf Course. Created in 1936. Mature trees with beautiful rolling landscape. Hwy A Somers.



Petrifying Springs Park. The oldest and most popular park in Kenosha County. Entrance on Highways JR or A.



Miles of scenic biking and hiking trails throughout the countryside of Somers and Kenosha County.



Picnic pavilions for families at the Veterans Memorial in Somers Memorial Park. All welcome! Hwy E.



Hawthorn Hollow nature sanctuary and historical buildings open to the public. Hwy 31 Somers.



Watch 360 youth play softball during the summer at Somers Memorial Park, Hwy E.



Summer fun and exercise at playgrounds for kids of all ages. Somers and Kenosha County parks.



Abundance of local road side stands selling seasonal produce from berries to sweet corn to pumpkins.



## **"HEY MOM, I CAUGHT A FLY BALL!" KIDS LOVE THE NEW LED FIELD LIGHTS**



The crane arrived on the morning of May 16th to install new LED lights and poles, replacing 40-year old equipment at the softball field at Somers Memorial Park. The 360 youth registered for the Somers 2017 softball leagues will now have a better chance of catching those outfield fly balls! Somers extends a big thank you for the generous \$10,000 donation from Festival Foods which was allocated toward the \$120,000 cost of the new field lights.



## **Somers 2017 Road Projects Update**

Bids for Somers 2017 road projects were received and publically opened and read at the Village/Town Hall on June 20th. The Village Trustees will approve the contractor at the following Board meeting and request the projects to proceed this summer. One million dollars have been budgeted between 2016 and 2017 for Somers Town and Village road replacement or resurfacing. The Board recognizes Town and Village roads have been long neglected and are committed to budget annually until all have been upgraded to appropriate standards.



## **13TH AVENUE PIKE RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND STREAMBANK REVETMENT PROJECT**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Southeast Region/Kenosha County has scheduled replacement of the 13th Avenue Pike River bridge in 2019. It is rated structurally deficient with a sufficiency rating of 32.1, has an NBI rating of 4 for the deck, and has extensive cracking and spalling. The bridge was built in the 1930's.

The project qualifies for federal and state funding under the 2015-2020 Local Bridge Program. The 80% government funding cap for all project phases is \$800,000.00. The Village of Somers will provide the remaining 20% and any funds in excess of the \$800,000. The project has a total estimated cost of \$1,005,000.

The Streambank Project will be completed by the Village of Somers Public Works Department. It will restore and stabilize the eroded streambank at the 13th Avenue bridge location. Engineering specifications for the project are currently in process. Upon completion, plans will be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who will review, approve, and issue appropriate permits. The bridge and streambank are separate projects.

## NEW TURNOUT GEAR FOR SOMERS FIREFIGHTERS

When a fire alarm is received at the Somers Fire & Rescue Department, the goal of firefighters is to “suit up” in turnout gear within TWO MINUTES!

Firefighters must be prepared to address emergencies immediately upon arriving on scene. That means all the turnout suits are meticulously organized and ready to go when a call is received. Training and practicing the “suit up” drill is an ongoing important activity for all of our Somers firefighters. Turnout gear protects the firefighter and must meet the National Fire Protection Association’s standards set in place to reduce safety risks and potential hazards.

Somers recently replaced aging turnout gear with a large percentage of it being paid for by a grant from the federal government. The Somers Fire & Rescue Department received several helmets, turnout coats, pants, and boots. The new gear is more comfortable to wear and the leather boots include replaceable heels and soles to help prolong the life of the boots. All new gear is compliant with the NFPA standards.



## FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

### SOMERS PROPERTY OWNERS IN FLOODPLAIN MAY BE ELIGIBLE

The National Flood Insurance Program aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners, and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations.

The Village of Somers is moving forward in the process of receiving approval to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Once approved, residents may be eligible to purchase flood insurance from the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program).

On April 27, 2017, the Village of Somers submitted its application package to FEMA where it is currently in process. Somers expects to receive approval from FEMA in fall or early winter 2017. Flood insurance from the NFIP is only available with communities who have received approval to participate in this program. Those who own property in a floodplain are encouraged to contact their insurance agent.

## VILLAGE BOARD PASSES “DARK STORE” RESOLUTION POTENTIAL TAX SHIFT TO HOMEOWNERS

The “Dark Store” strategy is a tax loophole in the assessment law being used by big box retailers and other national chains to lower the amount they pay in property taxes. The loophole shifts a significant share of the tax burden from box retailers to homeowners, agriculture, and small business just to maintain the same services.

Many municipalities across Wisconsin have adopted a Dark Store resolution urging Governor Walker and the Legislature to close the loophole that causes property tax burdens to shift from national chains to residential taxpayers. If passed, Somers residents and remaining commercial and agricultural taxpayers would see an increase on their tax bill for County of Kenosha, Gateway, Library and Somers tax entities for the same services.

On June 13, 2017, the Village Board passed Resolution #17-012 in support of the proposed legislation of closing this Dark Store loophole. We encourage all residents to contact their representative to make your opinions known.

## DEVELOPMENT IN PROCESS SOMERS WELCOMES NEW BUSINESSES



Burger King received site plan approval from the Village Plan Commission on June 12, 2017 to build a new facility on the corner of 35th Street and Highway 31 east of Sam's Club and Wal-Mart. Developer agreements and documents have been submitted for review. It is expected construction will begin late summer of 2017.

Kwik Trip is currently under construction just east of the Festival Food Store on Highway 31 north of Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, and the new Bear Development apartment complex. Kwik Trip expects to open this fall.

Bridgestone/Firestone is finalizing land acquisition after it received site plan approval from both the Somers Plan Commission and Village Board.

### VILLAGE COURT STATISTICS

A total of 264 violations (average 44 per month) were written by the Village of Somers Deputy from December 1, 2016 – May 30, 2017. Total revenue of \$12,699.70 has been collected for the 264 violations.

The top ten offenses are:

1. Operate motor vehicle without insurance
2. Non-registration of auto, etc.
3. Speed zone and posted limits
4. Operating after suspension
5. Fail to stop at stop sign
6. Operate after revocation/suspension of registration
7. Automobile following too closely
8. Operate motor vehicle without proof of insurance
9. Operate without valid license
10. Vehicle operator fail to wear seat belt



### ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

The Village Board authorized the non-profit organization, Root-Pike WIN, to serve as agent to find grant funds for the Somers Neumiller and Gitzlaff Parks because local funding is not readily available for projects. For Neumiller Woods, a trail creation and restoration project will provide better, long-term access to

an area of Somers that has some rare, pre-settlement conditions to experience. For Gitzlaff Park, there is a unique opportunity to bring back some of the pre-settlement wetlands, which help minimize the effects of fast moving, erosive, and polluted storm water. Wetlands are nature's pool filter and the Gitzlaff Park would be the first Somers' wetland restoration project identified in the Pike River Watershed Restoration Plan. The application process to those grants will begin in June, 2017.



### CARTHAGE INTERN STUDENTS HELP WITH GIS MAPPING

Somers is transitioning its hard copy mapping of the utility district and public works infrastructure to a Global Imaging system (GIS) with the help of a joint venture between the Kenosha County Division of Land Information, Somers Public Works, and Carthage College students who served as interns during their spring 2017 semester. Students electronically collected data of the Somers Utility infrastructure such as the location, design parameters, and depth of sewer manhole covers, location of storm sewers, and depth of sewer mains. Students learned to use the Trimble R1 and R2 geographic positioning equipment on loan from Kenosha County. We look forward to continuing this intern partnership with Carthage in the future. *(Photo by Trimble)*



## SOMERS CREDIT WORTHINESS REBOUNDS-BOND REFINANCED (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



The Moody's rating increase is very good news for Somers.

Historically, Somers maintained a consistent A2/Aa3 bond rating until March 2013 when Somers was downgraded to Baa1. A second downgrade of Baa2, Moody's lowest investment grade rating, followed in 2015. The downgrading was the result of persistently negative reserve levels. In fiscal year 2011, nearly the entire Town's fund balance was depleted to assist in the financing of a town hall expansion and purchase two fire trucks. Reserves fell and expenditures came in over budget.

Shortly after being elected in 2015, the new Village Board established and implemented new financial policies which contributed to the rating upgrade. The June 7, 2017 rating upgrade is considered to be one of the most important financial goals achieved by the Village Board.

According to Moody's report, here are the key factors that led up to the rating upgrade:

1. Incorporation in 2015—removed susceptibility to annexations. Village gained control of borders and zoning which gives flexibility for economic development
2. Improved financial performance—sustained structural balances and the replenishing of reserves
3. Presence of UW-Parkside and Carthage College
4. Interstate access to Milwaukee and Chicago with expectations of the local economy to remain stable
5. Demographic profile is above average with medium family income at an above average 120.3% of the U.S.

## SOMERS FINANCIAL CONDITION IMPROVES SHARPLY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

### Fund Balance Policy—GOAL ACHIEVED

The \$2,198,078 general fund balance as of December 31, 2016 is the result of implementing a Fund Balance Reserve policy goal of maintaining the fund at a level that addresses unforeseeable emergencies as well as protecting the Village's credit worthiness. This goal took several years to achieve. In 2013, the general fund balance was (\$490,788.00) resulting from depleted reserves and expenditures over budget. Revenues from development fees and permits from the \$362 million of long term development that moved to Somers after Incorporation in 2015 has contributed to the turn around.

### Capitalization Policy—GOAL ACHIEVED

The Capitalization Policy establishes time frames and plans for replacing aging Village assets (equipment, trucks, computers, and roads) instead of creating budget stress by reacting to repair and replacement emergencies on a year-to-year basis. Starting with the 2016 budget, the Village Board adopted a Capital Improvement Budget which earmarks and budgets specific improvements annually. For example, Somers will budget \$500,000 annually for roads and streets in order to catch up on resurfacing and reconstruction that were deferred over the years. Other projects funded in 2016 include replacing the 40-year old softball lights, financial management software, a new global imaging system, ambulance, public works trucks, and water and sanitary sewer upgrades.

### Debt Management—GOAL ACHIEVED

The third financial policy impacting Somers healthy financial condition is a new Debt Management Policy. The policy improves quality of decisions, outlines guidelines for debt structure, and demonstrates a commitment to long-term capital and financial planning.

## SOMERS-PARIS-KENOSHA INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT PROCESS ADVANCES FORWARD

The Village of Somers, Town of Paris, City of Kenosha, and the Kenosha Water Utility have agreed to end boundary, water, and sewer battles by entering into an Agreement that defines permanent boundaries in addition to making water and sewer services available along the I-94 growth corridor. Attorneys have completed the documents which have been distributed to all parties. The next step includes a preliminary review by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Public hearings will be scheduled and it is anticipated that all parties will adopt the Agreement.

## FIRE & RESCUE STATISTICS

January 1, 2017—June 1, 2017

**FIRE:** Total of 135 calls

1. Car accidents—required for all car accidents in Somers
2. Fire emergency
3. Ordinance violations
4. Mutual aide
5. Gas leaks, hazardous material spills, fire alarms, water rescue

**RESCUE:** 1,402 calls

1. Home medical emergency
2. Car accident
3. Medical emergency at a business
4. Injuries in public places
5. Mutual aide, emergency transport from doctor offices, and transfer patients to Flight for Life

The Village and Town of Somers "Connecting With Your Community" newsletter is published by the Village/Town of Somers for public education and informational purposes. This newsletter is distributed to the residents via the U.S. Postal Service.

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## SOMERS FIRE & RESCUE

**A LEADER  
IN KENOSHA COUNTY**

Within Kenosha County, individual smaller fire and rescue departments have come together to establish specially trained teams to respond to fire and emergency calls requiring unique skills and equipment. No problem is too big or too small for these teams! They are readily available with appropriate equipment and trained staff for calls relating to trench collapse, high angle rope rescue, structural collapse and confined space, hazardous materials for chemical spills, dive rescue for water related emergencies, fire investigation task force, and a memorial team to assist with firefighter funerals.

The Somers Fire & Rescue Department has members on all of these teams. In addition, Captain Strom serves as the team leader for hazardous materials, Lt. Andersen serves as team leader for dive rescue, and Chief Wilkinson is the Chief's liaison for the memorial team.

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR VILLAGE PRESIDENT GEORGE STONER

I am pleased to announce the following important milestones that have been achieved by the Village Board for the benefit of the taxpayers of Somers: financial strength, substantial quality development, and a green light forever to obtain water and sewer based on an agreement with the City of Kenosha, Kenosha Water Utility, and the Town of Paris. The successes outlined in this newsletter are the result of the Board taking on specific responsibilities and working as a team with the goal of achieving the Village's objectives. As your President, I focus on relationship building with contractors, developers, and elected officials to bring in new business and develop new infrastructure. Trustees Geersten and Otsby focus on financial and administrative policies and oversee the Village's financial condition, debt management, and audit functions. Trustee Aupperle serves as the liaison with the Fire & Rescue Department, and Trustee Cardinali serves as the liaison with the Parks Committee, Recreation Programs, and Parade Committee. Trustee Sinnen is the liaison with our Building Inspection Department, and Trustee Heinisch liaisons with the Public Works. The entire Board has a pulse on the Village activities, both outside and inside Village Hall.

We are honored to be elected and serve the community of Somers. Education, jobs, low cost of government, and an abundance of natural resources—we have it all in Somers, and we love it here! — George Stoner, President

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TOWN CHAIRMAN MARK MOLINARO

The Town of Somers Board continues to work diligently alongside the Village Board to the betterment of all of Somers. The cooperative efforts continue to reap many successes that have proven to be beneficial to all residents of Somers. As we settle into a shared approach toward road repairs, capital improvements, and the overall operating budget, the financial position of Somers has improved significantly.

I could not be more pleased with the increase in the cash reserves and improved bond rating for the Village as the importance of both with regard to the Town cannot be overstated. The Town will continue to exist until 2035. This timeframe is significant in that our cooperation with the Village Board is critical to continuing to keep our taxes in check and the level of services as robust as they are. The date is also important to note because the Town continues to need our residents to be engaged and heard. I urge each Town resident to be part of the process. There are opportunities to serve on various boards and committees. Please contact me if you are interested. —Mark Molinaro, Chairman