

Somers Fire Department brings birthday smiles

Before the Safer-at-Home order was lifted, the Somers Fire Department offered to drive by homes of residents celebrating birthdays.

While confined, triplets Kaelyn, Tyler and Brianne Bencs all turned 21, a life milestone they had to celebrate at home.

Nevertheless, the siblings made the best of it with the help of their supportive family and the fire department.

The Somers ambulance and engine lined up around the corner and surprised the triplets by driving past their home, with lights and sirens, followed by a parade of cars driven by family members and friends.

The Bencs stood in their driveway waving as the parade of vehicles drove by, picking up some birthday treats through open car windows.

Inside they set up a casino and bar to celebrate their coming of age.

The triplets are expected to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in 2021.

The SFD program has ended now that the Safer-at-Home order has been lifted.



Above, the Somers Fire Department ambulance and fire engine pull up to the Bencs' house with lights and sirens to celebrate the triplets' 21st birthday. At right, the whole family stands outside their home to watch the parade. From left are father Barna, brother Austin, 18, mother Karen and triplets Brianne, Kaelyn and Tyler.



4th of July parade canceled

The Somers Parade Committee made the difficult decision to cancel this year's Independence Day Parade and Ice Cream Social.

The determination was made following discussions with Kenosha

County Health officials and the fact that the area is not expected to reach Phase 3 of the Kenosha County reopening plan by July 4, which would allow large public gathering.

"Our hearts are broken that

we cannot provide the residents of Somers with an opportunity to honor our veterans and celebrate the birth of our Nation," said Parade Committee Chair Judy Schantek.

"Not only has our priority been the concern for health, but now, also the safety of all! We hope we will be able to celebrate in 2021!"

New construction

Somers is becoming a busy place! Commercial and residential developers have projects underway at every corner.

■ Wisconsin Veterinary Referral Center is building an 11,000 sq. ft. clinic at the corner of Highway 31 and Highway E.

■ The 214-unit Hawthorn Apartments complex, west of Green Bay Road on Highway E, is nearing completion. The first occupants are expected to begin moving in this summer.



■ Construction is ongoing at the 80-unit Carthage View Apartments, located on Sheridan Road where Park View tavern was. The property overlooks Carthage College.

■ Two nail salons: Utopia and Evie's Nail Spa Salon now have locations in Somers.

■ The 11th Place lift station is being updated.

■ Construction on Oakfire's new 10,000 sq. ft. restaurant is underway. The pizzeria chain is from Lake Geneva and this will be their second location.



Carthage View senior apartments are going up on the bluff overlooking the Carthage College campus.



Eight buildings at Hawthorn Apartments have been granted occupancy.



The north side of 12th Street is being graded for the new bike path.

Bike path under construction

A multi-use trail is under construction on the north side of Highway E. Construction began in April and is scheduled to be completed by August.

The 10-foot-wide paved trail will be 0.76 miles long and connect with the existing north-south trail to Highway 32.

It is a Kenosha County project and will be paid for in most part by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement funding from the federal government.

Extensive work planned for the Sheridan Road corridor

The Village of Somers approved a project to replace water mains and reline sewer lines along the Sheridan Road corridor.

Both systems are almost 70 years old.

Leakage from pipe deterioration has caused extra cost to the Village.

The project has been planned for many years.

Payment for the projects is expected to come from low-interest loans from the Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water Fund.

Water Main

The water main will be replaced along Sheridan Road between Highway KR and 17th Street.

It is estimated to cost \$5.5 million.

Sewer

Sewer lines will be inspected and relined as necessary.

The work seeks to eliminate rain water getting into the system.

The estimated cost of that project is \$4 million.

Pairing these two projects together will save taxpayers money on resurfacing all roads.

Both projects are expected to start in the fall and be completed by Memorial Day of 2021.

Informational meetings about these projects will be held at a date to be determined.

Fire Department News



Somers took delivery of a new ambulance, built by Life Line Emergency Vehicles in Iowa.

New equipment

The Somers Fire and Rescue department took delivery of its new ambulance, which will be based out of Station 2, 818 12th St. (Highway E).

The ambulance was built by Life Line Emergency Vehicles on a Ford chassis. This is the second ambulance in the department's fleet made by the Iowa company.

It features hearing protection and advanced seatbelt systems for Emergency Medical Technicians. It is also equipped with a power-assist system to load patients into the ambulance.

"This makes it safer for both patients and our staff," said Somers Fire Chief Carson Wilkinson.

The ambulance was purchased by the Village of Somers for \$281,764 and replaces a unit from 2007.

A new fire engine has

also been ordered and will be coming. It was scheduled to be delivered in May, but due to the pandemic was delayed until sometime this summer.

It is a 2020 Rosenbauer, with a 1,000-gallon tank and 2,000 gallon-per-minute pump.

It will be equipped with rescue tools, positive pressure fan and saws — all battery-operated. It also features all LED lighting.

It has a smaller footprint than the other Somers engine so it can fit in the smaller space at Station 2.

Because of the delivery delay, the manufacturer has added (at no additional cost) a system that alerts nearby drivers of the approaching emergency vehicle.

This system only alerts drivers with compatible Bluetooth systems.

Department Promotions

The Somers Fire Department wants to recognize two May promotions:

■ **Ben Andersen** was promoted to Captain.

Andersen has been in the fire service since 2006. He has an associate degree in Fire Science and numerous Fire and EMS certifications. They include Firefighter 1 and 2, Driver Operator Pumper & Aerial, Fire Officer 1, Fire Instructor 1, EMT-I12, Haz-Mat Operations, Trench Rescue Operations and Public Safety Diver (SCUBA). Captain Andersen is currently the Team Leader of the Kenosha County Dive Team and is a member of the Kenosha County Technical Rescue Team, Haz-Mat Team and Fire Investigation Task Force.



Ben Andersen is recognized in front of the Somers Village Board.

■ **Adam Pisula** was promoted to Lieutenant. Pisula has been with the department since 2006 and full-time since 2018. He serves as a fire inspector and public education officer. One of his goals has been to improve the outreach of the smoke alarm program to residents. He is a certified Firefighter 1 & 2, Driver/Operator, Fire Inspector, Fire Officer, Fire Instructor and Paramedic. He is a member of the County Haz-Mat Team.



Adam Pisula is recognized in front of the Somers Village Board.

Call 211 for non-emergency

The Kenosha Sheriff Division of Emergency Management in cooperation with the Kenosha County Division of Health is aware that many people have questions regarding the COVID-19 virus. Kenosha County residents are reminded to contact 211 for non-emergencies.

This service is free, confidential, and multilingual. It is available 24/7 and can provide health and safety information related to the COVID-19 virus and services that are in need by our community.

More information about the pandemic is available at the following websites:

- kenoshacounty.org/2043/COVID-19-Information-Center
- dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm
- cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

Root-Pike WIN office moves to Somers

Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network is moving from Racine to the University of Wisconsin – Parkside campus in Somers.

The new office will be in the former “University House,” 4116 12th St. It is located within the UW-Parkside Wayne E. Dannehl Cross Country Course parcel on Highway E. The house provides more space, functionality and resources.

Root-Pike WIN's contact information:

4116 12th St.
Kenosha, WI 53144
262-883-4018

“Root-Pike WIN is thrilled to have this new space and partnership with the UW-Parkside,” said Executive Director Dave Giordano. “We are doing a lot of work in Somers, Kenosha

and Mount Pleasant, so the location and resources of this facility will help us better accomplish our mission.”

The new place will allow the Root-Pike WIN to start



The Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network's new office is located at 4116 12th St. in Somers.

new projects such as an endangered plant species incubator, on-site student volunteer opportunities, and others to be announced.

This year marks the organization's 25th anniversary.

Be a responsible pet owner, protect the water



RESPECT OUR WATERS

The Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network is a nonprofit organization with a mission to protect, restore and sustain the Root-Pike basin watershed. The Root-Pike watershed faces a long list of challenges. Chief among them is stormwater runoff into our lakes, rivers, and streams. Soil, lawn chemicals, lawn debris and petrochemicals all result in polluted water.

There is another factor threatening water quality that many people don't associate with contaminated waterways: dog poop. And that is something residents can easily do something about.

According to the American Pet Products Association 2017, there were an estimated 89.7 million dogs in the United States. If left on the ground, fecal matter is conveyed

to our waterways via the stormwater sewer system, it can result in several undesirable conditions:

- Increased nutrient load
- Increased algae growth
- Decreased oxygen levels as fecal matter decays
- Fish die-off due to low oxygen levels
- Fecal coliform bacterial contamination

Fortunately, all dog owners can prevent this kind of contamination just by cleaning up after their dogs. It is especially important if you live near a body of water. There are several ways to properly dispose of dog waste. It can be flushed down the toilet, put in the trash or buried at least five inches deep.

More information is available on the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network website at rootpikewin.org.

Help keep Somers looking good

As a reminder, there are Village/Town ordinances regulating the upkeep of your property. The ordinances address items such as grass cutting, how a trailer should be kept and junk cars.

For more information check out chapters 10 and 21 of the Village/Town Ordinance which can be found on the Somers website.



Construction reminders!

There are many construction projects in our area and road closures change regularly.

If you are traveling this summer, or just commuting to work, find up-to-date travel information from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation at 511wi.gov.

NEW FACES

Somers staff news

ADMINISTRATION

The Village/Town of Somers hired Mary Cole as Assistant to the Village Administrator.

She previously worked for the Village of Sturtevant for seven years as the village administrator.

She helped bring commercial development and economic growth to the community.

"One of my proudest achievements was the closure of Tax Increment District 3," she said. "It closed as one of the most successful in state history."

She also saw the village going from a deficit to a healthy fund balance in part by implementing a capital improvement plan.

She is a graduate of UW-Parkside with a degree in sociology with minors in psychology and geography.

Administrator Jason Peters has been bringing her up to speed on

current projects and introducing her to the staff.

"Somers has so much to offer," Cole said. "There's so much growth potential. It's a great community, with a lot of opportunity. I look forward to assist village staff with day-to-day operations." She replaced Ann Brumback.

ACCOUNTING

Heather Teigland started May 11 as a full-time accountant for Somers. She is a lifelong resident of Mount Pleasant.

She worked as an accountant at A&E Incorporated, a manufacturing company in Racine. Prior to that, she worked for Andrea and Orendorff, which provides certified public accounting for Kenosha County.

Teigland wanted to get back to public accounting.

Her first few days have been busy. "They are throwing a lot of projects

my way," she said. "I am excited."

CLERK

Cassandra Bodenbach started March 6 in the position of Clerk I.

She will be assisting Clerk/Treasurer Timothy Kitzman.

She previously worked in a similar position for the Village of Sturtevant.

She replaced Joyce Ade.

BILL MORRIS RETIRES

After almost two decades as Somers Administrator, Bill Morris retired at the beginning of the year.

Jason Peters has replaced him after working as his assistant for almost three years.

"I am sorry to see Bill Morris retire," said Somers President George Stoner.

"He has been a wealth of information for the village, but we had a succession plan in place and his replacement, Jason Peters, is doing great."

ELECTIONS

Your elected officials

BEN HARBACH

Ben Harbach returns to Somers as a Village Trustee.

Harbach was the Town of Somers Chairman from 2013 to 2015 and was supervisor for the Town for 14 years.

"This is my home I want to make sure that things are running well," he said of his return as an elected official.

He wants to make sure that when developers come to the community, they use the land to the benefit of the whole community.



Ben Harbach

"They're not making any more land," he said. "So you have to use it properly. And don't waste it."

DAVE GEERTSEN

After serving three terms as Village of Somers Trustee, Dave Geertsens is moving on. He did not seek re-election in April.

During his tenure, Geertsens worked with the incorporation committee helping Somers become a village.

Reflecting back on his time, Geertsens is especially proud to have helped out with the Capital Improvement Plan, creating a growth plan and the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)

analysis. His experience in finance — he was the Kenosha County Chief Financial Officer until 2018 — helped put the village in a better financial situation.

"Somers had been the lowest rated government in the state," he said.

A big part of the improvement was achieved through development, starting with First Industrial Park, which is still growing today and is one of the most successful Tax Incremental Districts in the state.

"The value of the village was \$600 million with very little commercial development," he said.

"It is now over a billion dollars."

Earlier this year, the village's credit rating was improved to an A1 rating by Moody's Investors Services.

"While all institutions and government are affected with the pandemic, Somers is in better shape to weather the storm," he said.

In retirement, Geertsens will be working on a book, a professional memoir in which he shares experiences of his 40-year career.

RE-ELECTED

In the Spring elections, Somers Trustees Joe Smith and Karl Ostby were re-elected to 2-year terms.

James Armes was re-elected to the Town Board of Supervisors.

Visit the new Somers website



The much anticipated new Somers website went live in January. The site was designed by Kenosha marketing firm Dooley & Associates. Check it out at Somers.org.

Stay up to date with relevant news for Somers residents by visiting Somers.org. News items are displayed on the main page in chronological order.

You can also find agendas, minutes and packets for meetings by going to the agenda tab on the top right corner of the website.

More information such as forms, programs and voting is on the site.

Unsure about what the rules are? Check Village/Town ordinances on the site as well: Somers.org/government/.

Need a smoke detector?

If you do not have a smoke detector in your home, the Somers Fire Dept. can install one free of charge. Smoke detectors are free for all Somers residents. If you have a smoke detector and have questions about installation, operation or maintenance, call the department at 262-620-3285.

The Village/Town Hall will be closed on the following dates:

- **July 3**
for Independence Day
- **Sept. 7**
for Labor Day
- **Nov. 26 - 27**
for Thanksgiving
- **Dec. 24 - 25**
for Christmas
- **Dec. 31 - Jan. 1**
for the New Year

Credit rating increases

Moody's Investors Services increased Somers' credit rating from A3 to A1.

The credit rating agency looked at Somers' strong financial position, healthy reserve and liquidity in making the decision to increase the rating.

"Village trustees, Town supervisors and Village/Town staff have worked very hard to increase our rating and are very happy to see this hard work pay off for our residents," administrator Jason Peters said.

Moody's anticipates the financial outlook for the Village/Town will remain healthy through conservative budgeting and managing expenses. Revenue has outpaced expenditure in four of the past six years.

The increase in credit rating allows the municipality to borrow money at better rates, saving taxpayers money.

Moody's full report is available on the Somers website.



Open fire safety

As the summer season starts, residents should be aware of the ordinances regarding open burning. Somers Fire and Rescue Chief Carson Wilkinson offers these friendly reminders:

- Fires must be at least 25 feet from any building.
- Piles larger than 32 cubic feet are not allowed to be burned.
- Fires can only be burned on your property.
- Anything other than a camp fire or bonfire needs to be extinguished by dark.
- Only clean wood or yard waste is allowed to be burned.
- On high-wind days, burning is not permitted.
- Flammable liquids cannot be used to start a fire.
- Burn permits are required, except from April 15 to May 15 and Oct. 15 to Nov. 30.
- Burn barrels are not allowed.

In their words ...



*George Stoner
Somers Village President*

“We have a lot of exciting projects coming to Somers. Developers are looking at property at 1170 22nd Ave. This lot has been vacant for at least 10 years and now there is interest in building a very high-end gas station and office building.

“More development is also planned at Highway 142 and the interstate.

“We have also been approached by developers wanting to build apartments at 743 Sheridan

Road and 1150 Sheridan Road. That is in addition to the Carthage View and Hawthorn Apartments being built right now.

“That growth is great for Somers residents. One-time contributions from developments have allowed us to replace two fire engines and two ambulances without having to raise taxes.

“We are also tackling overdue infrastructure projects. The Village is working on relining the sewer mains and sewer laterals and replacing all water mains along Sheridan Road side streets from 17th Street to Highway KR.

“At the same time, we are rebuilding the last three lift stations along the Sheridan Road corridor.

“We will be replacing the bridge over the Pike River at 13th Avenue and Highway A this year.

“The Pritzker Museum project was approved and this

will be an outstanding project. It will open up the west side of Somers for major development. We now have a letter of credit of \$14.5 million and have started the process of getting easements for water and sewer, which will allow us to build a lift station, water pumping station and to put in all of the necessary water and sewer mains from Highway 142 north to Highway E.

“We are negotiating for a restaurant, hotel and another gas station across from Amazon.

“We are lucky to have a great relationship with our neighboring communities. We continue to have a very good relationship with Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian and have been able to cooperate on multiple projects to the benefit of both municipalities.

“Our new website, designed by local marketing firm Dooley & Associates, is now up. With it, our residents can keep up to date with projects and issues. I urge every Somers resident to check it to stay informed about what is going on in our community. Meeting agendas, packets and minutes are available there.

“The information is there. But people need to take it upon themselves to get involved.

“We hired new staff at the Village Hall: Mary Cole is the Assistant to the Village Administrator, Heather Teigland is a fulltime accountant and Cassandra Bodenbach was hired to assist Clerk/Treasurer Timothy Kitzman.

“Village Administrator Bill Morris has retired, and he will be missed. But his successor Jason Peters has been with us for several years and is doing a great job.

“I will also miss Dave Geertsen who decided not to run again. His financial knowledge has been a great help to Somers.



*Mark Molinaro Jr.
Somers Town Chairman*

“As we welcome the summer of 2020 during the most difficult of times, I want to personally extend my wishes that each of you, your families and friends are healthy and that we are all leaning on each other for support where needed. We have a long road ahead in getting our economy back on track but I remain optimistic we will do so.

“Once again, this spring we have seen record rainfall and more than the average number of significant rain events. I have heard from several town residents regarding flooding in your neighborhoods or your specific property. Living along the Pike River, I too have significant flooding on my property again this year. The increase in rainfall, high lake levels and continued development across the region all contribute to the flooding.

“It is important for you to know that the Town and Village take these issues seriously. Not only is this a growing concern for specific areas of Somers, the issues of stormwater management capacity are problematic in municipalities across the region. Discussions are taking place every day and action plans are being generated with cooperation between municipalities wherever possible.

“Having said that, addressing the areas of isolated flooding within the Town will continue to be a challenge financially as well as logistically.

When registering your vehicle

When registering your car, one of the questions you are asked is where the car is kept.

As a Somers resident, paying Somers taxes, you should state that your vehicle is kept in Somers.

This little step helps the Town and Village get the state and federal money it is due.

It is one of the ways it is allocated.

That money helps pay for road repairs, among other things.

Thank you for your help.

Hazardous waste collection rescheduled

Kenosha County has rescheduled its hazardous waste collection to July 25 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Kenosha County Center, 19600 75th Street in Bristol.

Residents can dispose of household cleaning items, aerosol cans, bug sprays, vehicle related fluids, oil-based paints, paint removal products, fluorescent bulbs, pool chemicals and garden/outdoor related products.

Electronic waste and refrigerant will also be collected.

Residents are asked not to bring latex paint, tires, infectious or biological waste, compressed gas cylinders, explosives, radioactive waste, medical or pharmaceutical waste. No commercial or business waste will be accepted.

The original date was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandemic affects local institutions, businesses

UW-PARKSIDE

The pandemic has affected every aspect of life at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

Academically, more than 1,600 course sections have moved online.

The library has halted face-to-face interaction but the staff continues to assist faculty, students and community members virtually.

The spring graduation ceremony has been postponed until December. It was the largest spring graduating class, with more than 500 students eligible.

The entire summer semester will be held online, and enrollment is up more than 10 percent over last summer.

UW-Parkside is taking applications for the fall semester.

The fall semester may be face-to-face, virtual, or a combination of both. A decision is expected in early July.

As for the Athletics Department, all spring sports were canceled as well as community sporting events on campus.

The university is continuously cleaning all surfaces and closing off areas of campus where possible once they have been cleaned.

All community events were

canceled through June 30.

The administration is addressing the fiscal challenges caused by lost revenue and has instituted temporary furloughs.

VERIZON

The new Verizon store has seen less foot traffic, but business has still been good.

"The people who come in, come in with a purpose," said Manager Colin May. "They know what they want."

The store has been using disinfectant and has installed plexiglass barriers at desks to separate employees and customers.

"Customers have been pretty respectful," he said. "They understand we are trying to make them safe."

FESTIVAL FOODS

Similar measures have been taken at Festival Foods.

Cashiers are now separated by plastic barriers. Employees are wearing masks and wipes are available at the entrances for customers to use.

We encourage all residents to keep safe by exercising caution, social distancing and using masks when appropriate.

Get ready for the next elections

Voters are encouraged to vote absentee in the upcoming elections. The next elections, Aug. 11, will be the statewide partisan primary.

Voters can register to vote and apply for an absentee ballot on the My Vote Wisconsin website at myvote.wi.gov.

Contact Somers Village/Town Clerk/Treasurer Timothy Kitzman at tkitzman@somers.org or 262-859-2822 if you have any questions.