



7511 12th Street, Somers, Wisconsin, 53171

# NEWSLETTER

Connecting with Your Community

Issue 10: January, 2021

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As we enter 2021, it is a good time to reflect on the past year. There have been many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fourth of July parade was canceled, recreation programs were canceled and Santa had to stay in the North Pole instead of making his pre-Christmas visit to Somers.

But despite the pandemic, the Village and Town of Somers have experienced extensive growth this year. Housing is going strong with more projects to be completed in 2021. New businesses are moving in. Infrastructure is being repaired and aging equipment on the fire department is being replaced.

It is an exciting time to live in Somers. We are looking forward to more exciting announcements throughout the year.

# Budget highlights

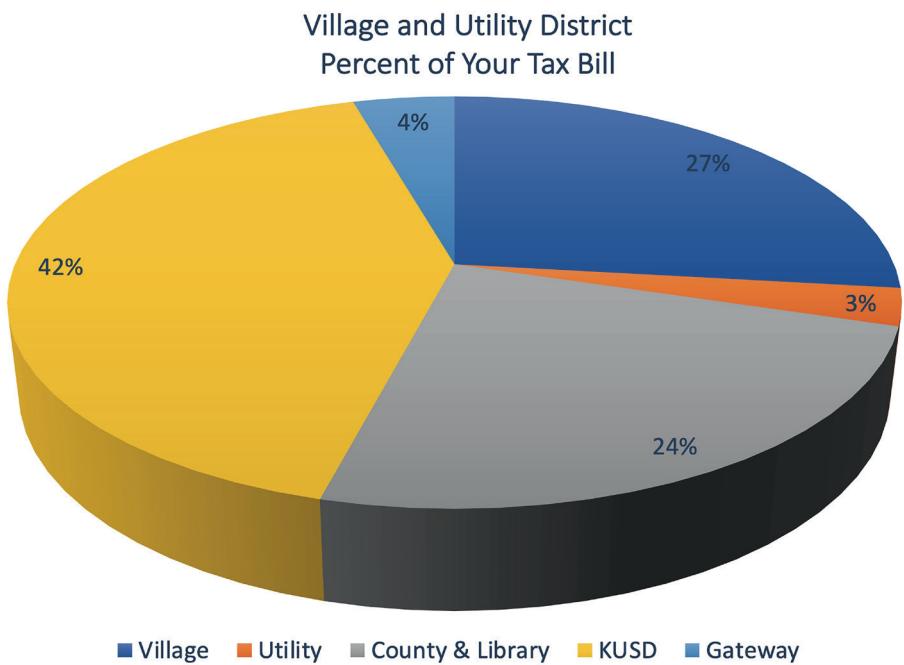
The 2021 budget was adopted Nov. 24, 2020.

The combined levy for the Town and Village increased by \$63,974, or 1.4 percent, from \$4,467,391 in 2020 to \$4,531,365 in 2021.

Properties in the Village of Somers were reassessed in 2020, which had not been done in 10 years. The new total assessed value for the Village is \$921,232,000. This is a 25 percent increase from last year, which will reduce the overall tax rate in the village but may increase property owners' taxes.

The 2020 assessed value for the Town of Somers is \$92,059,200, a decrease of \$2,800,200 in value or 3 percent from 2019. Because assessment was up in the Village, it will result in Town taxpayers paying a lower percentage of operating costs.

A hard copy of the budget and information sheet is available to residents by request at the Village/Town Hall.



The breakdown for the Town is slightly different: KUSD 41%, Town 27%, county and libraries 27% and Gateway 5%.

## Tax levy for 2020

- Village — \$4,099,221 (90.91 percent of the total levy)
- Town — \$432,144 (9.1 percent of the total levy)

## Mill rate for 2020

- Village — \$4.98 per thousand of assessed value (down from \$6.09).
- Utility District — \$0.54 per thousand of assessed value (down from \$0.70). This applies to properties in Sanitary Utility District #1, which is about 65 percent of Village properties. It applies to only one property in the Town.
- Town — \$4.69 per thousand of assessed value (down from \$5.62).

## Budget key points

- Salaries for Village staff will increase by 2 percent for most employees.
- Firefighters' salaries will increase by 3 percent as negotiated in their contract.
- Law Enforcement costs have increased by 49 percent as coverage has increased.
- Garbage and recycling costs increased by \$72,000 due to additional multi-family units being built.

# Welcome to Somers

Residents of Somers have a new restaurant. The Lake Geneva pizza chain Oakfire Pizzeria Napoletana opened a location at 3552 Market Lane.

Also in Market Center, Jiffy Lube is opening a facility.

The Wisconsin Referral Center Vet Hospital, an 11,674-sq.-ft. facility at the north west corner of Green Bay Road and Highway E, is getting ready to open.

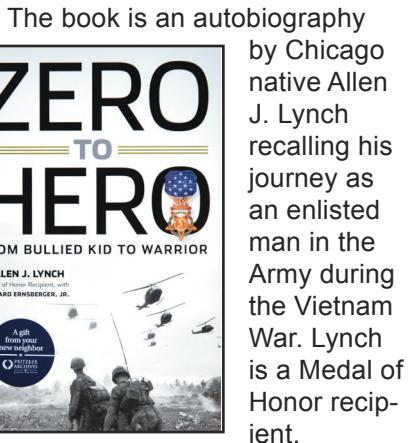
Construction of Metz Machines at 3700 72nd Ave. is nearly complete.



The Lake Geneva-based Oakfire Pizzeria Napoletana is open.

# Pritzker project breaks ground

The Pritzker Archives and Memorial Park Center held a virtual groundbreaking in October. Neighbors received a plantable postcard and a book to celebrate the event.



The book is an autobiography by Chicago native Allen J. Lynch recalling his journey as an enlisted man in the Army during the Vietnam War. Lynch is a Medal of Honor recipient.

The Pritzker organization also donated U.S. flags to the Somers American Legion David Leet Post 522.

Work on the 288-acre property has started. Grading is underway.

The centerpiece of the project will be the Pritzker Military Archives Center, designed by architect firm JAHN. It includes a 9,400-square-foot gallery.

Less than 7 percent of the total 288 acres will feature buildings, the



Heavy equipment grades the site of the Pritzker Archives and Memorial Park Center.

rest will be green space, including 7,440 feet of walking paths. Wetlands will remain undisturbed and buildings will be energy efficient and utilize solar panels and rainwater collection for reuse, PAMPC staff said.

The Pritzker Archives and Memorial Park project was created to house artifacts that could no longer fit in the Chicago museum. The new state-of-

the-art archives will provide space to restore, preserve and house collections that include books, artifacts and other historical materials, PAMPC staff said.

The project will be completed in phases over 10 years.

The construction is led by Pepper/Riley Construction and TAWANI Development.

## Federal help for COVID-19 expenses



Sanitizing stations are available to visitors at the entrance of the Village/Town Hall.

The Village and Town incurred unplanned expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic for personal protective equipment, sanitizers, disinfectant, sanitizing stations and other public safety products.

The Routes to Recovery program was set up by the State of Wisconsin to distribute Federal CARES Act dollars to reimburse municipalities for some of those costs.

COVID-related expenses incurred between March 1 and Nov. 17 were eligible.

The Village was allocated \$143,148; the Town \$20,354.

"Our staff has worked extremely hard to make sure that the Village and Town allocations were used to refund unexpected COVID-related expenses," said Village/Town Administrator Jason Peters.

## 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.*

*Chapter 9 of the ordinances addresses junk and abandoned vehicles, chapter 10 addresses public nuisances and chapter 21 addresses property maintenance requirements.*

*For more information, Village/Town Ordinances can be found under the Government tab on the Somers website at somer.org.*

# Fire Chief to retire

Somers Fire and Rescue Chief Carson Wilkinson will be retiring in September of 2021. He started in the position in March of 2016 after a lifetime in the fire services.

He started at a young age as a volunteer with Salem and Scout Leaders Rescue when he was in high school.

Prior to joining the department, he was on the Kenosha Fire Department for 26 years where he became the Division Chief of Training and Safety. He left that department, to become fire chief at Road America race track where he stayed 15 years.

"After 50 years of service, it is time," he said. "I am not able to do the things I could do as a 19 year old, or even as a 40 year old," he said with a chuckle.

He prides himself in leaving the department in better shape than he found it.

"I think we are in a better position than when I came," he said. "We have some excellent employees."

The fire department has consistently improved its services. Under past chiefs, the level of care firefighters were able to give patients increased, and Chief Wilkinson has done the same. Under his leadership, the department began to transition to a paramedic ambulance service. He hopes the next chief will be able to complete that transition.

With the support of the Village Board, Wilkinson oversaw the replacement of aging equipment. New to Somers during his tenure are two ambulances, two engines and a command car. Before he leaves, the grass rig and defibrillators will be replaced.

Wilkinson is hoping to have the Insurance Services Office rate the fire department before he leaves as well. A better score would potentially lower insurance rates for homes and businesses in Somers.



Chief Carson Wilkinson is set to retire by the fall of 2021.

One challenge that he leaves for the next chief is to find the money to hire more full-time firefighters, a need that was identified in a recent fire study. Somers has relied on part-time firefighters, who often move on to full-time positions in other departments after having been trained in Somers. Having more full-time staff would make the department more stable and save money on training costs.

As the Village looks for a replacement for Wilkinson, it hopes to promote from within the department. Wilkinson is confident that a candidate can be found from the competent staff.

In retirement, Wilkinson hopes to spend time traveling and on his hobby, scuba diving.

## Infrastructure upgrades are ongoing



The 13th Avenue bridge over the Pike River has been repaired.

The infrastructure of the Town and Village continues to be upgraded. Here are some of this year's highlights:

- The 13th Avenue bridge has been repaired
- The Maple Ridge subdivision was repaved at a cost of \$328,653.
- 56th Avenue was repaved at a cost of \$95,717. The City of Kenosha paid for half of the project.
- The 11th Street lift station has been upgraded.
- Automatic doors were installed at Village/Town Hall to make it handicap accessible.

In 2021, water and sewer mains along the Sheridan Road corridor will be repaired and replaced and two more lift stations will be upgraded.

# Thank You

Congratulations to Tim Kitzman who is retiring after 14 years as the Clerk/Treasurer. His last day will be March 1, 2021.

Assistant Administrator Mary Cole will take over that role. She has been working with Kitzman to ensure a smooth transition.

Public Works Foreman Bob Rojas is retiring on April 1, 2021. He has worked for the village since 1997.

Thank you both for your service.

## Reminders



**■ If you live near a fire hydrant, please make sure it is clear and accessible to firefighters.**

For your safety and that of your neighbors, snow should be kept 3 feet away.

**■ Help us fix potholes promptly by reporting issues to our road maintenance crew.**

Call Village/Town Hall at 262-859-2822.

We want to repair them promptly.

**■ Residents can keep their water system from freezing during subzero temperature.**

Let a faucet run. A trickle the size of a pencil lead is all that is needed.

**■ Somers residents in need of a carbon monoxide detector are invited to reach out to the Somers Fire & Rescue Department.**

A limited number of alarms are available for free.

If interested, call 262-620-3285 or email [apisula@somers.org](mailto:apisula@somers.org) and firefighters will gladly come to your home and install a new carbon monoxide alarm.

## A place to gather

Using his hobby to bring fellow firefighters together, Somers Fire-fighter Aaron San Juan built a table for the department out of recycled pallet wood.

The table, which is 12 feet long and nearly 4 feet wide, features two inlays. One is the Somers Fire Department crest, which is displayed on rigs and uniforms. The other is the Local 4831 union logo.

"Having these on the tabletop makes it more than a place to set down stuff," said San Juan. "It reminds us of



The new table is now at Station 1.

what we do and who we serve."

The new table will replace two folding tables that were in the department's kitchen.

The project started about a year ago. Local businesses donated the material, and firefighters took apart the pallets.

"Without all of us working together, it would have taken much longer," said San Juan.

The table was finished with four gallons of epoxy which will make it easy to clean.

"I made the table so we could have a nice place for morning coffee, meals and reconvening after calls," said San Juan. "It's nice now to have something that is specific to Somers, livens up the kitchen, and brings people together."

## Thank you volunteers



Adelia Scaman, left, and Jan Lewandowski count mail-in ballots in the basement of the Somers Village/Town Hall. Poll workers arrived each day to assist the front office with the increased number of early voters. Their help and dedication have been invaluable. The Somers staff and volunteers have worked extremely hard to make sure everyone had an opportunity to vote.

### Pay taxes, utilities

Pay your 2020 Somers taxes at Tri City Bank, 5901 Washington Road. Payment can also be made at the Village Hall, by mail or via the drop box at the Village Center.

Utility bills can also be paid online by setting up your account through the Somers website.



### Construction reminders!

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

If you are traveling, or just commuting to work, find up-to-date travel information from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation at [511wi.gov](http://511wi.gov).

# A word from the Village

Somers is experiencing growth and it is very exciting.

We have new housing developments coming to the Village. Across from Carthage College, the Pike Ridge project will bring in an 80-unit senior apartment building and 16 townhomes. Construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2021. Behind Somers Elementary School, a developer is planning a housing development with a mixture of owner-occupied duplexes, townhomes, and apartments. The 60-acre development will include a 9,000-sq.-ft. clubhouse, pool, fitness center, dog parks, sports courts, walking paths and public green space.

Our new housing developments will help alleviate the shortage of quality living space in the area.

On the commercial side, the Pritzker Archives & Memorial Park Center is underway. Grading has started on the property and the Village will be bringing in utilities in early 2021. I am very excited about the project, it is a beautiful environmentally-friendly building with ample green space that will enhance Somers, giving the Village culture and exposure. It will be a destination, something residents will be very proud of as it will serve as the gateway to Somers.

We have been actively trying to bring new restaurants for Somers. The Oakfire pizzeria has opened and we have received interest from national restaurant chains who are looking to come to the Village.

Thanks to the support of the board we have been able to repair infrastructure that has been neglected for too long. The bridge on 13th Avenue was in desperate need of repairs, and that work has been completed. The water and sewer mains along Sheridan Road are scheduled to be repaired and replaced beginning in 2021. As a part of this project, all the side streets will be repaved.

Our lift stations in this corridor are being brought into the modern age. Two of them have been rebuilt and by next



*George Stoner  
Somers Village President*

spring two more will be completely refurbished.

We are continuing to repave roads. We have been working cooperatively with the city of Kenosha on those located in the Town. Within the next six years, most of the roads in the Village will have been repaved.

Our 2021 budget was adopted in November. It was a difficult process and many hard decisions were needed to hold the line on taxes. In the end, cuts were

needed to balance the budget while requiring a minimal increase. We understand this is a hard financial environment for many residents and the board tried to be responsible to the residents while continuing our level of service.

I am proud of the work we have done. Our board works very well together and our administrative staff is second to none. I am also very proud of the work they did during the election. Everything ran smoothly considering the increase in the number of ballots and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the next year we will be facing some staffing challenges as we continue to lose paid-on-call firefighters to other departments. Some of our public works employees will retire and we will need to fill those positions.

Clerk/Treasurer Tim Kitzman will retire in 2021. We thank him for his years of service to the Village and Town. Fire Chief Carson Wilkinson will also retire, and he will be missed. He has been great about communicating with the staff and addressing some of our equipment challenges.

I am excited about the progress we have made and I wish all residents a Happy New Year as we enter 2021.

## Make sure your address is visible from the road

When first responders get a call to respond to your house, they identify the address by the number displayed by the road. Those numbers should be displayed on your mailbox and your house.

Making sure your ad-

dress is visible approaching from either side and at night is essential.

Kenosha County ordinance requires that house numbers be displayed on or in front of buildings.

If you have multiple houses off of one driveway,

readable numbers by the road and on each house are very helpful.

If mailboxes are grouped, first responders may not know which house is which.

House numbers that can be seen on your house or at the end of your drive-

way are best.

If you have a corner lot, your mailbox may not be on the street of your address making it harder to find your home.

If your address is not visible from the road, it will delay their response.

# A word from the Town

I trust many of you, like me and my family, are wishing for a hasty exit of 2020. To be certain, we have all experienced the difficulties this pandemic has brought upon the world and our communities and look forward to getting our lives and economies back on track for everyone.

Now more than ever, it is important that we recognize a simple turn of the calendar to a new year or the national election will not resolve the pandemic. Rather, we all must continue to do our part to stem the spread of the virus and help our friends and neighbors in any way we can.

I would like to address the remaining residents of the Town of Somers. Per the agreement with the City of Kenosha, all remaining Town land will become city properties in 2035. Before then, any Town property owner can request annexation to the city at any time.

While we can continue to lament our dislike of the agreement and the inevitable future it holds for all of us, the reality is we must continue to financially support a town with



*Mark Molinaro Jr.  
Somers Town Chairman*

barely 700 parcels of land that gets smaller every month through annexation.

The shrinking number of parcels means a limited tax base from which to draw to continue to maintain roads, plow snow, collect waste and operate Town offices.

Our cooperative agreement with the Village of Somers is the backbone that allows us to provide our current level of services.

Providing those services will continue to require a cooperative approach as 2035 approaches. I encourage all town residents to

take an active role in understanding the challenges we face.

I wish everyone good health and success as we close out 2020 and look forward to 2021.

## Somers pride

Thanks to the generosity of Village Board Trustee Gregg Sinnen and the creative design work of Trustee Jackie Nelson, banners have been installed along Highway E welcoming people to Somers.

The banners are attached to telephone poles and were installed by Somers Public Works.

The banners give residents and visitors a sense of pride for our community.

"It can be confusing for visitors and residents because people who live in Somers can have a Kenosha, Sturtevant, or Racine address," said Nelson. "That makes it difficult to brand our community. The banners are one way of addressing this issue."

Somers plans to add more banners. Any resident or business interested in donating funds toward the purchase of banners, should contact Heather Teigland at [hteigland@somers.org](mailto:hteigland@somers.org).



Banners welcoming people to Somers have been placed on utility poles.

*A small step to help both the Town and Village is listing your vehicle as being kept in Somers to help the municipality receive state and federal money. Those funds help pay for road repairs, among other things.*

## Newsletter going online

This edition of the Somers newsletter will be the last printed version that residents will receive in the mail.

After 10 successful publications, the newsletter will now be online to be more timely and useful to residents.

This move will also save money by eliminating printing and postage cost of over \$10,000.

You can access past newsletters all the way back to 2014 on the Somers website at: [somers.org/newsletters](http://somers.org/newsletters).

Somers has a long history of communicating with its residents.

As far back as 1896, Somers pioneer Minnie Ozanne started writing a Somers news column.

Her column, "Neighborhood News" was published in the Kenosha News and Racine Journal Times. Every week, she would telephone residents for the news, which opened an insightful window into the lives of our early settlers.

The Town Board published newsletters sporadically until 2013 when Jackie Klapproth Nelson was hired as Director of Communications.

"My task was to resurrect the newsletter and rebuild the Town's website," said Nelson. "It was an excellent way to learn about the operation of small government and share the accomplishments of the board and staff."

Nelson resigned as Director of Communications in 2018 when she became a Trustee for the Village of Somers.

# Root-Pike WIN updates

After a lengthy delay due to adverse weather conditions, Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network phase one of the restoration of Neumiller Woods Park and Gitzlaff Park is underway.

The parks are located on the north side of 12th Street (Highway E), just west of the railroad tracks north of the Village Center.

On Oct. 23, a group of volunteers from the Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps cleaned up trash in Neumiller Woods. A few days later Applied Ecological Services moved in with heavy equipment to create the wetlands. These areas will provide a more stable habitat for a vast array of plants, insects, fish and other animals. It will also increase water quality and stormwater retention in the area.

"Water quality issues, systemic flooding, weakening infrastructure and degraded habitats plague our Lake Michigan watersheds," said Root-Pike WIN Executive Director Dave Giordano. "Clean water is a basic need and enhances the quality of life in Somers."

The project was funded by grants. "With increasing development and growing population, the area needs 'win-win' projects and programs that include best practice for clean water," said Giordano. "Root-Pike WIN collaborates with municipalities and developers, writes grants and advances water quality projects from planning through construction."

Root-Pike WIN collaborations include:

- Helping Kenosha County raise funds to plan, design and restore 5.5 miles of stream corridor and flood storage along the South Branch of the Pike River
- Recreating two wetland/prairie



Farmland without vegetated buffers of 15 feet or more creates excessive erosion, runoff pollutants and flooding issues. Here, along a small tributary to the Somers Branch, Root-Pike WIN is working with the farmer to install wider stream buffers and consider cover crops and no-till techniques.

areas in Gitzlaff Park and Neumiller Woods in the Village of Somers to reduce flooding along the Somers branch

- Working with farmers to switch to cover crops and no-till techniques that reduce pollutants, soil erosion and operating costs
- Improving the 210-acre UW – Parkside Cross Country Course to help endangered pollinators and reduce sheet runoff issues
- Implementing two 500-foot regenerative stormwater conveyance systems as part of the Highway KR expansion project and within an eroded ravine
- Designing stormwater infrastructure improvements throughout the UW – Parkside campus
- Planning 1,700 feet of stream

corridor restoration and agricultural berm removal project along the north branch of the Pike River

- Reestablishing a quarter-mile stretch of farmland buffer along the School Tributary
- Educating the public about native plants, mitigating pet waste, reducing nutrient loading from leaves and turf grass and the overuse of road salt

This year, Root-Pike WIN is celebrating its 20th anniversary of mission-driven work in the Root-Pike basin. The non-profit organization is located on the UW – Parkside campus at 4116 12th St. in Somers.

For more information, contact Dave Giordano, Executive Director, for more info at [dave@rootpikewin.org](mailto:dave@rootpikewin.org)