

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING
BEFORE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
VILLAGE OF STEGER, WILL & COOK
COUNTIES, ILLINOIS**

The Public Hearing convened at 7:00 P.M. on this 17th day of February, 2026 in the Municipal Building of the Village of Steger, Illinois. Clerk Zagone led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Village Clerk Joseph M. Zagone, Jr. called the roll. The following Trustees were present, Hanus, Stewart, Thurmond, Trotier, and Perchinski. Mayor Joyce and Trustee Kaminski were absent.

Clerk Zagone asked for a nomination for Chairman Pro-Tem:

Trustee Hanus made a motion to appoint Trustee Thurmond as Chairman Pro Tem. Trustee Stewart seconded the motion.

Roll was called. The following Trustees voted aye; Hanus, Stewart, Thurmond, Trotier and Perchinski. Motion carried.

Chairman Pro-Tem Thurmond: This hearing is for our upcoming budget for Fiscal year 2026. I am going to defer this to Village Administrator Wiszowaty for further discussion.

Village Administrator Wiszowaty reviewed the proof of publication from the Chicago Tribune which were published in accordance with state statutes.

For my opening remarks I want to let the board know that the Fiscal Year 2026 budget represents a total of \$23,542,309. VA Wiszowaty went on to describe the breakdown of these funds as distributed to all board members. VA Wiszowaty further described each category and changes that may have been made. At this point the budget is presented to the Village Board for consideration at it's next regular meeting. It is not on the agenda for this evening. At this time it would be appropriate to open up to comments from the floor.

A question from the public asked if this is increased from last year. Trustee Perchinski responded \$7 million and \$10,300,000 is in loans.

Another resident asked what increased? Trustee Perchinski: Well, they want to build a new Village Hall. VA Wiszowaty: There is money anticipated within the budget to cover expenses for a new Village Hall, and other capital projects as well as to fund water improvements and infrastructure for the Water Department. Those monies would be anticipated and borrowed within the budget.

Resident asked why isn't this Village Hall sufficient? Trustee Perchinski: My question would be why didn't the Village Board get to vote on this Village Hall (renovations)? Why would we spend \$40,000 on this if we are going to go buy a new building?

Resident asked where the building would be? Trustee Perchinski: I don't know and I don't know if \$5 million is enough. Resident: do we know what building you would purchase? VA Wiszowaty: We have not made that decision. That is a decision that would be made by the board. Trustee Trotier: We are also looking for grants to provide money. Trustee Perchinski: And, by the way we had grants of \$3.8 million for 2025 that we don't have this year. Borrowing \$10 million which according to GWA we won't be able to qualify for. Resident: My question is, Do we need a new Village Hall? Trustee Perchinski: me personally, I think we need to work on the water before we have to worry about a Village Hall. Resident: Any other board members think we need a new Village Hall? What is your opinion on it? Trustee Trotier: My understanding, I don't work here on a day to day basis so as far as sitting here all day long, I don't know what files go back and forth. Who can over hear what is going on whether it is confidential or not. I think part of that was discussed in the past is confidentiality. Granted we do not have GWA, our auditors here. I think anything like that would be discussed in VA Wiszowaty's office to have a meeting behind closed doors, but part of it would be which we have been considering for a while, this isn't the first time we have discussed a new Village Hall. It's not anything new to us. A presentation of how we want to be presented in the Village of Steger would be one, confidentiality and files, I don't know if you can lock what is here. Resident: Would they look to raise our taxes if they build a new Village Hall? Trustee Trotier: That would be worked on if we can get a grant. Another resident: You know they aren't doing this today. Trustee Thurmond: There are also safety issues, safety compliance issues. We have a manual lift for people with disabilities. That in itself... Trustee Perchinski: Then why would we spend \$40,000 on this? Trustee Hanus: It is probably going to take 10 years to get a new Village Hall. At least we have something nice for our residents, because this isn't going to happen over night. Trustee Perchinski: It is in the budget for this year. \$5 million for a new Village Hall. It's going to take less than 10 years. If we have the money we're going to go for it, right Joe? VA Wiszowaty: I would anticipate that if the Village Board's pleasure is to move forward with a Village Hall that we would move forward with that. Trustee Perchinski: Well, I hope we can have a vote on that because we did not have a vote on this. Trustee Thurmond: We have also occupied this space from the Fire Department for that many years and it's always nice to leave things better than when we got it. Trustee Perchinski: It still doesn't make sense to spend \$40,000. Resident: So there are two loans correct? Both for 45 million and one is an IEPA loan? Trustee Perchinski: There is a bond and low interest load through IEPA. Resident: So the IEPA is for water infrastructure, correct? Trustee Perchinski: Yes, which is just scratching the surface. We probably need more like \$40 million. Resident: So are we going for the loans regardless if we can identify a property for a new Village Hall? Are we going after both loans? My follow up question would be: what are the terms and how are we paying it back? What does it mean for Village residents? VA Wiszowaty: I would like to have our Village Engineer speak to the loan forgiveness program that we are talking about for the water. Village Engineer Melanie Arnold: I have been working with the Mayor and the Village Administrator. We are preparing this year to go for a \$5 million loan which could

range from 30 to 40 years. It would have very low interest, potentially Zero % loan repayment. This year we would be preparing a project plan where we would deep dive into all of the needs of the Village and we would be starting, as Trustee Perchinski said, there's tens of millions of dollars that could put to water construction that needs to be done. We would start with the guts of the systems, pumps, wells and water treatment. We are looking at updating your telemetry and your data and pumps. Most of your infrastructure is very old, so modernizing what we have. That would be the first step. We are preparing a project plan for going after a low interest IEPA low interest loan. We are working to get on their intended funding list for next year. If we can do that, there would be some forgiveness that we would hope to achieve. The goal would be to bid this project out at the end of next summer.

Resident: What is the definition of low interest? Village Engineer: Usually the rates are between 1 and 2 percent range. Steger could qualify for a small community rate that would be even more reduced. But, every year the funding list comes out in July and the rate gets set at that time. Resident: Does the Village have a plan for the repayment of the loan? Trustee Perchinski: No, nor do we have the funds to do it according to GWA. We are trying to do the bond and this loan, we cannot show the way to pay it back. Resident: I am only asking about the IEPA loan. Trustee Perchinski: Yes that is a loan, the other is a bond. Resident: Thank you, so we do not have a plan on how to repay it? We may be able to get some of it forgiven? I agree the water and infrastructure needs to be updated. The other loan for \$5 million is to go to a new Village Hall, what are the terms for that?

VA Wiszowaty: So, typically when you issue a debt service on a bond, we are not looking to borrow \$5 million. That is what we are looking at as total expense. We would be looking to borrow more like \$3-3.5 million, but it depends again on what we find for Village Hall. Resident: Are we looking to get approved for this prior to identifying.... VA Wiszowaty: You have to figure out what you can afford before you start building. That is the problem I believe that was happening when they were doing the rebuild on the Police Station. I just got so big, things got scaled down and the Village Hall got pushed out. We have been here for 10 years. This is not a conducive Village Hall for a community our size, it's just not. People should be able to come in and not have to walk upstairs to get to a Village Board Meeting. In most cases like that there is an elevator. They put an elevator in the police station because they had to. We want to make sure we are compliant with the ADA. Any money produced by the bond has to be used for the Capitol Projects described in the ordinance. The bond issue will be more further described at a future meeting. Another resident of Miller Woods asked: Will anything be done for residents of Miller Woods, who pay taxes, but do not benefit from village water system. Can anything be done with the culverts that need to be worked on? Village Engineer: That would not be part of this program because this is for public water supply. Trustee Stewart: This program is to bring our water supply system up to date. VA Wiszowaty: It would have nothing to do with the culverts. Trustee Stewart: At the end of the day it will be paid for by the residents. The Village of Steger has the lowest water rates in the south suburbs. For now.

Steger Resident: There are a lot of people that are in Miller Woods. I want the Village to do what they need to do, but they need to do culvert work in Miller Woods.

Trustee Trotier: I know that the Mayor has this issue on his agenda. VA Wiszowaty: I know we were looking at some grant money opportunities for that as well. The Army Corp of Engineers had money on tap for this issue, but is currently on hold.

Trustee Thurmond: Were any of the culverts in the original plan for the drainage?

Village Engineer: I would have to go back and review the plans. Trustee Perchinski: It is definitely something we need to address, but it is not in this budget.

Trustee Thurmond: So, your concerns are well within the boards ears on resolving.

Miller Woods Resident: I don't care about me, in Miller Woods there is a lot of draining going across the streets. Where I live, we have good culverts and they are going right through. But, there are a lot of places that they like covered them over and they shouldn't have done that. Ditches should stay ditches, and they covered them up. Trustee Trotier: It is well noted and we will speak to the mayor when he gets back.

Trustee Thurmond: Is there any more discussion on the budget?

Trustee Perchinski: The Admin Department, the maintenance of buildings, you budgeted \$35,000, we are there and we still need to do the work on the roof.

We are way under budget. Where is that money coming from?

VA Wiszowaty: We did have additions to that specific line item as well as to the old Fire House. Trustee Perchinski: What line is that?

VA Wiszowaty: I do not have the additions on here, I know we did make some additions on that.

Trustee Perchinski: Why did we get all these changes tonight?

VA Wiszowaty: I can send you an updated format. Trustee Perchinski: on page two, still under Admin, new vehicles which is \$18,720. I know we agreed to buy new vehicle, but \$18,720 will get two vehicles on the lease.

Is there a plan to buy another vehicle on the Admin. VA Wiszowaty: Not that I am aware of.

Trustee Perchinski: Why is it... VA Wiszowaty: That was the amount that we had put in for the budget.

This is a lease program. It is not a purchase. Trustee Perchinski: That is something we will have to talk about when we get to the Purchase Policy. VA Wiszowaty: It will also be addressed at the meeting on March 2nd, we will have discussions on the leases at that time.

Trustee Perchinski: Can you explain to me exactly what Admin building code and moving expenses are? VA Wiszowaty: That would fall under the Code Enforcement.

Trustee Perchinski: Are we moving him? VA Wiszowaty: No..

Trustee Perchinski: Why is code with the Police Department but in Admin? VA Wiszowaty: They are in Admin because they were at one time part of the building department and not under the police department.

Probably part of the legacy. Next year I would probably have them separate it out in it's own budget. As you see they are in Department 07, so whatever 07 was back in the day, but it still falls under Corporate so dollar for dollar it's coming out of the Corporate Fund. But, The Admin Building Code, I believe that is for our plan reviews and such that we send out. I don't know what the move expense is.

Trustee Perchinski: Is there a plan to move Paul's office? VA Wiszowaty: Not at this time.

I would rather have him in Village Hall as opposed to the Police Station and have a Building Department handling the permits etc.

Trustee Perchinski: on the next page we have maintenance of building, \$10,000. Is this for work that is being done? VA Wiszowaty: That line item has also been increased, just so you know.

Trustee Perchinski: This is another project that we are doing without Village Board Approval. It is under Fire Department, do you know what it is for? VA

Wiszwaty: I will get you the updated number for this line item. Trustee Perchinski: What do you think it is? VA Wiszwaty: I want to say that it is probably \$35,000. Trustee Perchinski: So, this is another project that we are doing without Village Board approval. Why is that happening Vlado? VA Wiszwaty: The fact of the matter is that the money is budgeted to get the old Fire Station fixed and Trustee Perchinski: It's not budgeted yet. VA Wiszwaty: I understand that. But, that is the intent is to have that done so that way the Early Voting can take place over there. Trustee Perchinski: Why isn't the Village Board having any input on these matters? VA Wiszwaty: You are giving input now. Trustee Perchinski: Well, I am, but it's too late now because we have already started the work. This room was done and we didn't have any input on this. This is already done, and I wholeheartedly believe the Village Board should have some input on this. Maybe some of us would have said let's not spend \$40,000 if we are buying a new building. Maybe? Anybody? Trustee Thurmond: I really think that if there is further, sounds like you are going page by page, and this is a public hearing. Trustee Perchinski: This is exactly what we are doing. Trustee Thurmond: But you are not the public. Trustee Perchinski: So, I am the public. I am a tax payer. Going on to salary of Police Patrolman. We are looking to hire three extra police officers, but we've only increased the appropriation for that by \$50,000. How is that going to work? Although, we do have the School Resource Officer which I think is going to be hard to get this year. That will take \$60,000 off, but still we are going to be \$70-80,000 off on that line item. VA Wiszwaty: Based on what we are paying our police officers, and new hires that are coming on, the monies were allocated, you can see in the specific line items not necessarily what you are looking at in general there, but as the specific line items in the budget that we had gone over. We have well over a million dollars budgeted for salaries for patrol officers, sergeants and the police chief. Trustee Perchinski: But, the patrolmen themselves, we have only allocated another \$50,000 for three more people. That is my question. VA Wiszwaty: We budgeted \$831,000 in the 2025 budget. We are only spending \$728,000. We budgeted \$300,000 for sergeants; we overspent that by \$7,000. Trustee Trotier: Isn't the School Resource Officer less if we have the IGA with the school? Trustee Perchinski: I don't think that is even going to come to fruition. VA Wiszwaty: It's not likely we are going to have that this year. Trustee Trotier: But, it is in here. So we aren't actually going to spend it? So it will only be 2 officers? VA Wiszwaty: No, it is for three new officers. Trustee Perchinski: We are not properly budgeted for it. VA Wiszwaty: I believe that we are. The numbers we reflected made sense. Keep in mind, we are in March and it will be May before any new officers are ready to come on board. Trustee Perchinski: I still don't think that \$50,000 gets three people. Now, we go down to Public Benefit. We have \$40,000 in the sidewalk program which we spent \$10,000 that wasn't budgeted last year with no board approval. But, there is another \$10,000 for that total. What is that other \$10,000? There is \$40,000 in the sidewalk program, and then it doesn't list anything else, but the total Public Benefit is \$50,000. This is on page 5. VA Wiszwaty: I did get answer for you on this, it was for lawn mowers. Trustee Perchinski: There was a mower that was purchased without Village Board approval. VA Wiszwaty: I don't know about a mower that was purchased, but I know some of those mowers came out of that fund and they were for

mowing the ditches. Trustee Perchinski: The Parks and Rec Fund you changed to include Chris as the Coordinator? VA Wiszowaty: Correct. Trustee Perchinski: What is Clerical there? VA Wiszowaty: That is the part-timers at the Community center. Trustee Perchinski: Then we go down to water and sewer fund, I know we have old stuff and we need new stuff, but in 2025 we spent nearly \$60,000 there, \$33,000 over budget. What do you think Roy, we going to be okay this year with \$30,000 for repairs? For maintenance of vehicles? Roy Stone: No.

Trustee Perchinski: So we are paying for the Admin Department, and we are taking some from Water Department and some out of the Admin Department, but it still seems like it's about \$40,000 less than we paid out last year. And, we have added another person. Again, without Village Board approval. Are we getting rid of somebody? VA Wiszowaty: No, all employees are accounted for. I can tell you that before, they were doing a general journal transfer from one fund to another which we stopped in this budget. It should be budgeted appropriately. Trustee Perchinski: I just want to make sure the money is here for these people. So, the total appropriations for this year are \$23,187,000. In 2025 we were at \$16,318,000 which included \$3.8 million of free grant money. We are nearly \$10 million over, but, this is some of those capital projects again, I am going to tell you what GWA told me, we can't show a way that we pay those loans back. VA Wiszowaty: You're right. As it stands right now we cannot show a way to pay back a low interest loan with IEPA. We have to show a method on how we have to pay that. Ultimately it is going to come down to your decision. How you want to handle that. It's going to come down to how much you are going to put on the residents to pay that. Trustee Perchinski: Speaking of that, I am looking at the revenues, call them what they are, they are taxes. The revenue for this year is \$603,000 higher than it was in 2025. Revenues are taxes, motor fuel taxes, real estate taxes, income taxes, fees, water and sewer fees that we pay. It is all in there. VA Wiszowaty: It could also be reflected as transfers or fund balance uses. Right now you may or may not know this, but the Village does have approximately \$3.5 or 3.7 million in reserve. Trustee Perchinski: Which we worked very hard to get to because at one point we were at \$475,000. VA Wiszowaty: Part of that was for building a new Village Hall. Some of that money, and that is a decision this board will have to make, is going to have to be allocated to that project. So, that would reduce the amount we would have to borrow. And, we would find alternate revenue sources to offset whatever those loans would cost the village. We are not just going to say we are going to raise taxes. We don't have that ability to do that. We are putting it in the budget, whether we do it this year, or we do it next year. It's in the budget this year, but it may change by time we get to that point. Trustee Perchinski: Do we pay off the bond for the Police Station in 2030? VA Wiszowaty: Yes, and we are going to be looking at doing a refunding of those bonds in 2027 to see if we can save money on our payments. I don't want to see them extended, but I want to see if we can refinance at a lower rate and keep the pay off in 2030. Trustee Perchinski: I would like to see those existing bonds paid off before we do a new Village Hall. I think we have a nice Village Hall now. I would rather put money toward fixing our water.

Trustee Perchinski: The last thing I have here, and I appreciate everybody bearing with me. The interest income is down significantly from \$220,000 to \$162,000 which

makes it look like we are going to have a lot less reserves. VA Wiszowaty: We are budgeting low on our revenue because you don't want to budget high. We don't know what the interest rate climate is going to be going into the rest of this year. But, also, if we decide to use the fund balance reserve to construct, build, buy, whatever a Village Hall, then that money we are going to reduce and obviously it's going to reduce what interest we do earn. Trustee Perchinski: Those funds right there are what show if we are able to pay these bonds and loans back. So, the lower that fund is, the worse off we look. VA Wiszowaty: What it also does not account for is the interest we have on the bonds as well. It could be a wash on that for this year. It's a lot of moving parts. We tried to estimate our revenues as conservatively as we can so that way there are no surprises. That's where we are with that. Trustee Trotier: And if anyone knows any new businesses that would like to come to the Village of Steger, please feel free to speak up.

Trustee Thurmond: I do appreciate the Public Comment. Thank you. I also would like to add that this is a very unique and diverse board where a lot of specialties are at the table here. They give a lot of input on things whether it be finance, water, construction, you name it.

Resident: I do think the people of Steger need better water. I have my own well, but you read about the problems they have with water. Trustee Perchinski: Even if we double the rates, there is not enough money to fix the stuff, so we have to figure something out. Trustee Thurmond: there are some long-term repairs that need to be made. Trustee Perchinski: I would rather see the money go toward water and not to a new Village Hall.

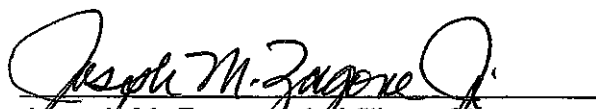
There being no further business,

Trustee Hanus made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Stewart seconded the motion. Voice vote; all ayes. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.



Steve Thurmond, Chairman Pro-Tem


Joseph M. Zagone, Jr. Village Clerk