

# CITIZENS FOR EDUCATION IN TOWN GOVERNANCE

February 4, 2019

Lac du Flambeau Town Board  
Lac du Flambeau Town Hall  
109 Old Abe Road, PO Box 68  
Lac du Flambeau, WI. 54538

Dear Messrs. Gaulke, Hanson & Mayer:

On February 6, 2019, the town board will address re-setting the time and date of the special town meeting scheduled for electors to consider committing \$1,750,000 for renovating the town's primary fire station. Before we are asked to approve spending even one penny; however, every one of Lac du Flambeau's 3,750 taxpayers should be given detailed information about the project and then time to make a thoughtful decision. Please consider the following.

The project was officially announced by the town chair at a town board meeting on September 20, 2017, and then an architect's preliminary drawing and some information were reviewed at a special board meeting a year later on September 27, 2018. The few folks who attended both meetings learned the drawing represents years of discussions at meetings of the town board's Fire/Ambulance Committee. Yet, in responding to a Freedom of Information Request for minutes of those meetings the town clerk indicated there are no minutes because the meetings are simply monthly get-togethers, not real meetings. Moreover, minutes of town board meetings held from January 2010 to August 2017 include one reference to the topic, when on April 15, 2014, Mr. Gaulke acknowledges speaking with the fire chief about expanding the station and avoiding debt.

Of Lac du Flambeau's taxpayers, 94% own lakefront property, presumably the same folks being counted on to provide much of the \$1.75 million. Many of them are not here during the winter months when these important meetings and decisions on how to spend their money are happening without regard to their perspectives.

Almost two years ago (April 18, 2017) electors authorized conducting an audit of the town's finances. According to town officials, the audit has been completed, but the town has yet to receive the results. We should be assured the town's current finances are in order before being asked to spend \$1.75 million we do not have. Moreover, the town does not have a multi-year capital improvement plan nor multi-year projections for revenues and expenditures. How does the \$1.75 million liability fit into the town's overall financial position? Can the town assume the new debt as well as provide for all the other future needs of the town? And regarding personal finances, what will this project likely cost the owner of a home and property valued at \$100,000? 350,000? 500,000? 1,000,000?

If renovating the fire station has been under consideration for years, why must a decision be made now? There are numerous important questions yet to be answered and much information still to be shared, and elections for a town chair, two supervisors and a treasurer will be held in February and April. Why not make a decision after the new board is seated and all taxpayers have had a chance to learn about the project and contribute to the decision?

Here are a several recommendations.

1. Postpone a decision until July/August.
2. Provide details on the status of the town's finances.
3. Mail a newsletter to all residents that clearly explains the need for the renovation and provides information answering all questions.

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4. Conduct open house programs at the fire station in May and June so residents have an opportunity to see firsthand why and how spending their dollars will prove beneficial.
5. Put the newsletter and all relevant documents on the town's website and keep that section of the website up to date throughout the duration of the project.
6. Hold a Special Town Meeting in July-August.
7. Seek approval through a binding referendum.
8. Establish a community volunteer committee to oversee the entire project.

Respectfully submitted by Citizens for Education in Town Governance,

Norman R. Wetzel

Cc Lakeland Times