



FOR RELEASE:

February 26, 2024

Media Contact:

Mia Tripi, Mueller Communications

414-390-5500; fitchburg@muellercommunications.com

**CITY OF FITCHBURG ASSESSES CRITICAL NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STAFFING,
NECESSARY FUNDING**

Report explores challenges, potential solutions to bring
municipal services in line with growing community needs

FITCHBURG, WIS. - Today, the City of Fitchburg released a report identifying a need to increase staffing, invest in the maintenance of a future public safety building and increase funding for transit services to meet the increasing service needs of the growing community. The assessment also outlined recommendations from both a third party report and City Departments, and identified six potential options the City could pursue to prioritize funding and staffing improvements.

The report cites a growing population, increased demand for services, and expanded Departmental responsibilities as factors driving the need for additional staffing and investments in services.

“In the past ten years, the City of Fitchburg has experienced increasingly rapid growth in commercial and residential development, and we expect more in the future,” Fitchburg Mayor Julia Arata-Fratta. “As the City of Fitchburg community has grown, the demand for City services - including public safety and other core municipal services like infrastructure development and maintenance - has also increased while funding has not kept pace.”

The City’s ability to respond to changes in the demand for its services is inhibited by external forces. In Fitchburg, as is true for all communities in Wisconsin, the City’s revenue growth is restricted by state legislation - limiting tax levy increases to the percent increase in equalized value from net new construction, or else requiring the City to seek permission from voters through a referendum to exceed levy limits.

The City saw a 33.59% increase in population between 2013 and 2023 - significantly outpacing population growth in the State of Wisconsin as a whole, which hovered around 3% over the same period of time.

From a public safety perspective, an increase in calls for service is the main driver in the need for additional staff. Between 2013 and 2022, the City of Fitchburg saw a 22.6% increase in calls for police services, a 39.8% increase in calls for fire services, and a 61.2% increase in calls for emergency medical services by Fitch-Rona EMS. It is becoming increasingly challenging for current City staff to meet these growing public safety needs.

Department leaders, a third-party team from Baker Tilly and municipal staff from the City of Fitchburg have assessed community needs and identified recommendations that will help bring public safety and other core municipal service capabilities in line with the growing needs of the community. These efforts uncovered a need for more than fifty additional City staff members in the coming years.

In addition to putting increased pressure on current staff, community growth has also increased pressure on traffic and the need for additional transit services. In line with the City of Fitchburg Transit Plan adopted in 2022, Fitchburg has identified a need to invest in improved intracity transit service, including between residential areas such as the newly added Southdale area, City facilities such as City Hall, the

Senior Center, and Library, and job centers. The City has been contacted by business owners and employers who support additional transit options to ensure employees, particularly shift-based employees, can travel to work.

The City of Fitchburg recognizes that, while it is important to provide high-quality services in all areas, the City needs to carefully prioritize resources and that it would not be fiscally reasonable to fund all improvements at once. City staff have outlined potential options for paths forward to increase staffing and help meet the growing service demands of the community - all of which would require the City to include an operating referendum on an upcoming ballot.

In the coming weeks and months, the City of Fitchburg Common Council - in collaboration with Fitchburg residents - will determine the best path forward to address expanding service demands on the City as the community continues to grow. All households in Fitchburg will receive a survey designed to help elected leaders determine which funding option to pursue and/or which services to prioritize.

The full report is available in its entirety at www.fitchburgwi.gov/referendum.

ABOUT THE CITY OF FITCHBURG

The City of Fitchburg first incorporated as a town in 1847 and then as a city in 1983. Located in south-central Dane County, Wisconsin, 10 miles south of the state capitol in Madison, Fitchburg has a land area of approximately 35 square miles and an estimated population of 34,019. This includes land absorbed in October 2022 when the former Town of Madison was dissolved and a portion became a part of Fitchburg.

The City funds a full range of services including police, fire protection and emergency medical services; sanitation services; building inspections; the construction and maintenance of streets, highways, and other infrastructure; transit services; economic and neighborhood development; and supports recreational activities, including through a library, senior center, and the maintenance of parks. In addition to the general activities, the City Council exercises control over the wastewater, water, and stormwater utilities.

Learn more at www.fitchburgwi.gov.

###