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Media Contact:
Mia Tripi
414-390-5500
cedarburg@muellercommunications.com

**CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT ASSESSES CRITICAL NEED FOR
ADDITIONAL STAFFING, SUPPORTS FOR VOLUNTEERS, NECESSARY FUNDING**
Options assessment explores challenges, potential solutions to improve emergency services

CEDARBURG, WIS. – Today, the Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) released an options assessment detailing a need to improve emergency response reliability by funding additional full-time personnel, supporting volunteers, and raising emergency medical services to a paramedic level. This assessment also identifies potential funding options for the City and Town of Cedarburg, which are served by the department.

The options assessment analyzes the history of the primarily volunteer-staffed department and cites decreased availability of volunteer staff and increased calls for service as putting a significant strain on CFD.

“In the last decade, we have seen a nearly 47 percent increase in the number of calls for service,” said Jeff Vahsholtz, Fire Chief, Cedarburg Fire Department. “Due to a lack of in-station staffing, CFD is not always able to respond to calls immediately. We must increase our full-time staffing and support our volunteers to ensure we are serving and protecting local residents to the best of our abilities.”

With only a handful of full-time personnel on staff, CFD volunteers are required to travel from their location at the time of a call to the station to man vehicles or apparatus before heading to an incident site – which has negative implications for response times and outcomes.

“Since its founding, the Cedarburg Fire Department has relied almost exclusively on volunteer staff rather than part- or full-time employees,” said Chief Vahsholtz. “However, since 2012, CFD has seen a nearly 17 percent decline in active volunteers. With fewer volunteers on the roster, those who do volunteer are becoming overburdened and are in need of support as they seek to continue serving their community.”

In order to ensure the continuation of high-quality, timely emergency services for the Cedarburg community and support the dedicated volunteers who have committed themselves to the Cedarburg Fire Department, the Joint City and Town of Cedarburg Fire and EMS Committee has recommended the following changes to the Department:

- **Adjusting from a volunteer to a paid-on-call model**, compensating those who respond to emergencies and helping retain dedicated public servants;
- **Transitioning the Fire Chief role to a full-time position**, helping ensure continuity of leadership;

- **Adding three full-time Lieutenant positions**, helping ensure the constant availability of a team prepared to respond to all emergencies; and
- **Funding nine full-time Firefighter-Paramedic positions**; helping ensure adequate staff is available at all times to handle multiple emergencies, support volunteer responders, and improving care to a paramedic level for victims of emergencies in Cedarburg.

Making these adjustments would require an additional \$2,015,658 for the CFD annual operating budget. Based on the Department's funding formula, the City's portion of this additional budget would amount to approximately \$1,292,302 and the Town's portion would be approximately \$723,356.

In the coming weeks, residents in the City and Town of Cedarburg will receive a survey designed to help municipal leaders determine the best path forward.

"As a community, we have a decision to make about the level of service we want and need and how we can identify the funds necessary to make it a reality," said Chief Vahsholtz. "This assessment of our funding options is a critical step in a community dialogue around the future of emergency services in our area."

The options assessment was presented to municipal elected officials and staff at the November 16 Joint City and Town of Cedarburg Fire and EMS Committee meeting, and elected officials in the Town and City received updates on the options assessment at respective meetings on November 21. It is available in its entirety at <https://www.cedarburgfiredept.com/>

ABOUT CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) was founded in 1866 by a group of early Cedarburg residents who served as the first volunteers on the crew. The Department's approximately 30-square-mile service area includes more than 7,200 residences, three nursing homes, eight senior living facilities and commercial properties valued at more than \$227 million total across both municipalities.

It operates out of two fire stations and serves a population of more than 18,000 residents in both the City of Cedarburg and the Town of Cedarburg, providing fire suppression, fire inspection, rescue, and AEMT-level emergency medical services, in addition to providing public safety education to the community. As part of its commitment to providing rescue services, the Cedarburg Fire Department supports its own dive team, one of just three in Ozaukee County.

Learn more at www.cedarburgfiredept.com.

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