

# CITIZENS for a RESPONSIBLE CAMBRIDGE FIRE & EMS STATION

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## Facts:

Here are a few facts that every property owner / voter should consider when voting.

**1. What is the real meaning of “non-binding” and “advisory” in the referendum question and why may there be a second in person vote at the Town of Oakland, Town of Christiana and Town of Lake Mills' annual meetings, likely scheduled for April 20, 2021?**

A. **IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT FOR FOUR OF THE MUNICIPALITIES, the Town of Oakland, the Village of Cambridge, the Town of Lake Mills and the Village of Rockdale) the referendum is NON-BINDING AND ADVISORY.**

The Referendum vote on April 6, 2021 satisfies the contractual agreement, from 2019, that all five municipalities entered into. That agreement requires a Referendum for sharing the cost of the land. It will be important for each taxpayer to vote, but the result of the April 6, 2021 Referendum is not binding on the Boards in those four Fire/EMS District municipalities. Three of the Fire/EMS Commissioners have already stated that they would still move to disregard the referendum vote, even if the voters vote “No”.

**\*Only the Town of Christiana has made their referendum BINDING.**

**BINDING means that the Board will be bound by the referendum voters' decision.**

However, the law in the State of Wisconsin says voters/electors in Townships **MUST** approve any plan to acquire land on which to build a fire station, or build a fire station with an **in-person vote** of the electorate at a Town Meeting. **Town of Oakland, Town of Christiana and Town of Lake Mills' will likely have their Annual Meeting for Tuesday, April 20, 2021 and the voters' decision for the Towns at that meeting is binding.**

**2. Was the purchase of the Pizza Pit property by the Town of Christiana for \$280,000 legal?**

A. No. The law in the State of Wisconsin for Townships is that prior to purchasing land for a fire station, or building a fire station, the electorate in the Township must approve it at an annual meeting. Christiana failed to have that vote at an annual meeting before purchasing the land.

## **RESPONSE TO THE CVFD/EMS REGARDING “INACCURACIES”:**

The Fire Department open letter of March 1, 2021 states that the answer to FAQ#2 stating that the Town of Christiana purchase of the Pizza Pit land was illegal was inaccurate, It is not inaccurate.

The Town of Clayton v Cardinal Construction Co, Inc. case, decided in 2009 by the Wisconsin Court of Appeals (with review denied by the Wisconsin Supreme Court) stated unequivocally “We conclude that the town board exceeded its authority in purchasing land and contacting for the construction of a new fire station without prior elector authorization...” The Town of Christiana purchased the Pizza Pit property in 2018, 9 years after this law was in place, for the express purpose of constructing a fire station. There was no elector approval.

The Fire Commission’s new attorney, charging \$450 per hour, acknowledged that this **“is a problem”**. **The Town of Christiana has admitted this.** The Fire Department confuses the attorney approving either a binding or non-binding Referendum to satisfy the terms of the inter-governmental contract to share the costs of the Pizza Pit land, with the original purchase of the land. The original purchase of the land by the **Town of Christiana was not in compliance with the law.**

### **3. What will the operating costs will be for a building that will triple the size of the current building and include the following:**

- ❖ **3 Kitchens** (2 Full Kitchens\* with 1 mini kitchen)
- ❖ **15 Bathrooms** (7 bathrooms plus the 8 that are included in the individual bedrooms)
- ❖ **8 Individual Bedrooms, furnished with bed, closet, dresser, lounge chair, television and private bath with shower\***
- ❖ **Physical Work-Out Facility**
- ❖ **Large Community Lounge and recreation room**
- ❖ **Conference/Meeting room to accommodate up to 72 attendees\***
- ❖ **Solar Energy System\***
- ❖ **Large Office area**

According to the information provided by the Fire Commission and reported in the Cambridge News on 11/12/20, the cost of operating the new, expanded station will be approximately \$42,580 annually.

## **RESPONSE TO THE CVFD/EMS REGARDING “INACCURACIES”:**

\*The Fire Department believes this information to be inaccurate. Please refer to the Fire Commission’s developer’s narrated video, a “virtual walk through” done by Keller Architects, found on all Town and Village websites, of what the proposed station will include and look like. The cost of the building was estimated at \$6 million, and an extra \$500,000 was added for “solar” and other things. In the Fire Station letter, they have mentioned a “Phase 2”. “Phase 1” is apparently only on the Referendum at \$6.5 million.

**Is there more to come? What is Phase 2?**

### **4. Should there be provisions for taxpayers to participate and vote virtually on April 13, 2021 due to COVID restrictions? Many people may wish to have their vote counted but do not feel safe attending a meeting where attendance is large?**

- A. There should be provisions in place for each municipality.

**5. Was a Needs Assessment report done to study the project, identifying the current needs that support the current plan?**

- A. If a Needs Assessment report has been done, it has not been made available to the public by the Fire Commission.

**RESPONSE TO THE CVFD/EMS REGARDING “INACCURACIES”:**

The Fire Department in their letter discloses that there were 2 “needs assessments” done, 1 in 2017 by an architect and 1 in 2019 by Keller. Though they have never been made public until now (you have to go to the Fire Station to review them) it does not appear there has been a needs assessment done by a party without a conflict of interest, a party who will not make money on the overall cost of the project.

**5. Have alternative designs, changes or cost saving measures been considered?**

- A. Reported by the Cambridge News on May 5, 2020, at an April 30, 2020 meeting of the FIRE/EMS Commission, the developer, Keller Inc. presented a list of about a dozen potential changes to the plans that could result in a trimming of up to \$500,000 in project costs. As far as we know, none of these cost saving ideas, nor any others have been included. **Click on the link below to read the entire article.**

[https://www.hngnews.com/cambridge\\_deerfield/article\\_adf7f550-82d1-5f2a-a156-3825922b4d65.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://www.hngnews.com/cambridge_deerfield/article_adf7f550-82d1-5f2a-a156-3825922b4d65.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share)

**7. What are other municipalities Fire/EMS station facilities like?**

	<b>Cambridge Fire/EMS Proposed</b>	<b>Lake Mills Fire</b>	<b>Cottage Grove Fire/EMS</b>
<b>Estimated Population Served</b>	6,100	11,600	14,200
<b>No. of Volunteers</b>	31	31	31
<b>Kitchens</b>	2 Full 1 Small	2 Small	1
<b>Baths</b>	15	4	6
<b>Bedrooms</b>	8 (Accommodates 8)	3 (Accommodates 4)	2 (Accommodates 2)
<b>Large Meeting Room</b>	To accommodate up to 72 attendees	Estimated to accommodate up to 50. Uses City Hall or School Facilities for large groups	Estimated to accommodate up to 50

Wisconsin Policy Forum did two extensive studies for Jefferson County in 2020. In their study “Taking the Pulse” (October 2020) they reviewed EMS services for Jefferson, Whitewater, Watertown, Lake Mills EMS, Johnson Creek, Palmyra, Cambridge and the outlying areas. On page 9, in their study of calls for service from 2016 to 2019, Cambridge EMS was the only one listed

with a net reduction in calls. Calls during this period declined 17 percent for Cambridge EMS. Cambridge EMS also reported the fewest calls per 1,000 population out of the communities in the study. In this same study, the Wisconsin Policy Forum cited the cost per capita in four departments. In the four EMS only areas, **Cambridge EMS had the highest cost/capita:**

<b>Municipality / EMS</b>	<b>Cost per Capita</b>
Ryan Brothers	\$31
Lake Mills EMS	\$44
Whitewater EMS	\$50
Cambridge Area EMS	\$84

Link to **“Taking the Pulse”** by Wisconsin Policy Forum:

<https://wispolicyforum.org/research/taking-the-pulse-ems-collaboration-opportunities-in-jefferson-county/>

Another report done for Jefferson County regarding consolidation of Municipal Services is **“Greater than the Sum”** by Wisconsin Policy Forum:

<https://wispolicyforum.org/research/greater-than-the-sum-a-scan-of-municipal-service-sharing-opportunities-in-jefferson-county/>

These are just a few of the many articles and research done about consolidation of services to increase efficiencies and save costs.

## **8. What is the \$6.5 million project cost to each taxpayer, and how is it determined?**

- A. The cost will be based on your property’s assessed value and the mil rate for the project. Various estimates of the mil rate for the project are between \$45 and \$90 per \$100,000 assessed value for the next 20 years.

### **RESPONSE TO THE CVFD/EMS REGARDING “INACCURACIES”:**

As of 11/05/20, (Cambridge News) there was no cost per \$100,000 of assessed value disclosed to the electorate from any financial agent but many different numbers were discussed at meetings. The Village of Cambridge voted unanimously to hire a financial consultant to pin down the number. As of 1/28/21 the News reported, “...questions arose about the specific impact of the referendum on property taxpayers per \$100,000....Local officials said more information on those impacts will be directly shared with taxpayers in coming months.” The Fire Commission on 2/18/21, less than 2 months before the Referendum, said that the range is \$4 (Town of Lake Mills) to over \$60 per \$100,000 of property valuation for everyone else for the \$6.5 million.

**9. If the current \$6.5 million project is approved, will my municipality borrow the money and what will that cost?**

- A. Most of the municipalities are planning to borrow the money initially on a 10 year balloon note, though the pay-out could likely be over 20 years. The reason for the initial 10 year note is because Municipalities need to have a binding referendum approved by voters to borrow money for longer than a ten year term. If the interest rate on a 10 year note is 3%, it will add over \$1 million to the debt. A 3% interest rate over 20 years could result in over \$2,150,000 in interest, provided interest rates do not rise in the future

**10. How many property owners will be splitting the bill for the \$6.5 million Fire/EMS station plan? Will this number increase in future years? Here is some data for the Cambridge Fire/EMS District:**

- A. **Town of Oakland has 1,236 households**  
**Town of Lake Mills has approximately 40 households**  
**Village of Rockdale has 89 households**  
**Village of Cambridge has 615 households**  
**Town of Christiana has 468 households**

*(The source of the above data is from 2010 as reported by Wikipedia. Please note that only a small portion of the Town of Lake Mills households are located in the Cambridge Fire/EMS District.)*

The Village of Cambridge’s population has grown by **less than 1% annually over the last 10 years**. Following is more data on the Fire/EMS district population changes over the past ten years. The population data is reported by Census.gov and the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Again, only a small portion of the Town of Lake Mills population is included as part of the Cambridge Fire/EMS district.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>2010 Census</b>	<b>2019 Census Estimate 7/1/19</b>	<b>Number Increase</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>
Village of Cambridge	1,457	1,535	78	5.35%
Town of Christiana	1,235	1,316	81	6.56%
Town of Lake Mills	100*	100*		
Town of Oakland	3,100	3,212	112	3.61%
Village of Rockdale	214	216	2	.93%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,106</b>	<b>6,379</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>4.47%</b>

*\* Approximately 100 citizens/taxpayers out of total 2,070 population in the Town of Lake Mills are serviced by the Cambridge Fire/EMS District.*

**11. Is the \$6.5 million plan the right project for our Fire/EMS District at the right time for the right cost?**

- A. Each taxpayer should study the facts and follow the links to make his/her decision on this question.

Watch our Web Site @ [CambridgeFireandEMSReferendum.org](http://CambridgeFireandEMSReferendum.org) for more facts and information as they become available.

**STAY INFORMED. STAY INVOLVED.**