

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF GREENBUSH
SPECIAL MEETING – FIRE DEPARTMENT FORUM
January 22, 2025

Chairman John Halbach called the Special Town Board meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Board members present were Spencer Thiel, Dan Klahn, and Mary Kracht. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairman Halbach opened with remarks expressing that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current and future needs of the Greenbush Fire Department and how those needs might be funded.

Fire Chief Steve Dickman expressed frustration at the board motion that stopped discussing the purchase of a new fire truck until the town's annual meeting. He hoped the forum would provide a time and place to discuss with the town board the needs of the fire department.

Spencer Thiel stated that the reason discussion of fire department needs was halted was to give the town board time to do their homework. He expressed the certainty that one way or another, the town was obligated to provide fire protection to its residents. He said funding such an obligation really came down to three options: referendums, using debt and deferring other costs, or creating a fire protection fee as a few other municipalities in the state have done. Thiel suggested this was a way to give the fire department more revenue continuously. Audience members commented that it was important to use the fee revenues exclusively for the fire department and not replace the tax revenue the department already receives.

Also suggested was going to a referendum by several audience members. They concluded that voters would have a more direct say, the referendums for capital expenses have not failed in Greenbush, and it was a simpler solution. Simply adding taxes to the town levy is not allowed, as the town persists under state imposed revenue limits, continually levies to its maximum, and will lose shared revenue if the maximum is exceeded, resulting in no net gain of revenue.

Some discussion occurred about how the Greenbush Fire Department had become "the Greenbush Fund Raising Department." Dickman and others commented how difficult it was to recruit new members who largely wanted to be firefighters and not fund raisers. Halbach thanked the members for their past efforts in this regard. Dickman showed 20 years of history of fire department fund raising and what the approximately three quarter of a million dollars had been spent on.

Dickman also presented the County Wide survey of Fire Departments and EMS Units. Results from the study concluded that county departments should centralize training when possible. It acknowledged the lack of members and resources that may continue to exist into the future. It also stated that Sheboygan County is largely underserved by ambulance services. The survey concluded that some area stations needed upgrades and that consolidation of departments and services should continue as necessary.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

