

Dennis Faber - Rebuttal Responses

DEVELOPMENT

1. You rely heavily on the Smart Growth Plan as the foundation for future development. How would you respond if a development fully aligned with that plan is strongly opposed by residents?

The Smart Growth Plan was created using the 13 required elements and extensive citizen input. That reflected the community's priorities at the time, but priorities can change. If a development aligned with the plan is later strongly opposed by residents - and their concerns are credible- I would support their position. I would not support a development that no longer reflects the community's desired land use

2. You emphasize that the Smart Growth Plan was created with extensive public input years ago. How will you adapt to it when current residents' priorities differ from those expressed decades earlier?

Our Smart Growth Plan is currently being updated to a 2050 plan. A public hearing was recently held to gather input, and I have recommended that the Economic Development Committee also provide feedback before the plan is finalized. This ensures the updated plan reflects today's priorities, not just those from years ago

TAXES & FISCAL STABILITY

3. You cite levy limits and inflation as the reason for borrowing. What long-term strategy-beyond grants and consortiums-would you use to avoid future borrowing cycles?

Borrowing becomes a problem only when it is used to fund things a municipality does not truly need. At one of our budget meetings, Dave Bretl-former Walworth County Administrator, our interim administrator, and someone widely respected in municipal government- explained that many municipalities are now forced to borrow because levy limits prevent them from raising enough revenue to meet immediate needs

Twin Lakes, for example, borrowed \$2 million on a five-year note last year for the same reason we did. Our own \$1.9 million loan is being paid back in one year, significantly reducing interest costs. The interest rate was 3.7%, and the mill rate increased only \$0.23 per \$1,000 of assessed value. With an average home value of \$376,200, that increase amounted to about \$87.

Could we take another short-term loan in 2027 without raising taxes? We will find out during the next budget workshops.

We currently have 5,854 improved residential properties and 193 improved commercial properties. By law, a municipality can only increase its levy by the value of new net construction-including additions like porches or outbuildings, not just new homes. In 2025, new residential construction added about \$20,401,200 in value. At a \$3.18 mill rate, that generated only about \$65,000 in new levy-far from enough to fund road work.

A few years ago, the board issued about \$3 million in bonds at a 2% interest rate to pave roads. Because other debt was being retired at the same time, this had virtually no impact on the mill rate. Our Highway/Fire building in Trevor will be paid off in a few years, which may create a similar opportunity.

4. You highlight the Village’s historically low debt and strong bond rating. How do you ensure that continued borrowing for roads and equipment does not erode that position over time?

Our strong bond rating is supported by the General Fund balance, which consists of budgeted money that was not spent. Public Works is the largest contributor, along with other departments that come in under budget.

If the board chooses to increase the General Fund balance from 17% of the levy to 25%—as recommended by Ehlers, our financial consultants, and our auditors - I would support doing so gradually over several years. This approach maintains our strong bond rating while minimizing the burden on taxpayers.

PUBLIC INPUT

5. You note that some residents claim the Village is “not transparent” when they disagree with outcomes. How will you rebuild trust with those residents without dismissing their concerns?

Rebuilding trust often starts with personal conversations- explaining decisions in more detail and listening to concerns. Sometimes trust is regained through future decisions where we find common ground. I have always made myself available as an elected official and respond promptly to credible emails and phone calls.

It is important to remain respectful and professional, but some residents have fixed agendas and will not be satisfied regardless of what is said or done. Being re-elected shows that many residents trust my judgment and the decisions I make on their behalf.