

# James Woodke Rebuttal Responses

## DEVELOPMENT

### **1. You say growth must be “smart and balanced,” but do not define those terms. What specific criteria would you use to determine whether a development proposal is “smart”?**

Smart growth means development that makes financial sense for the Village and is located in an appropriate area. Balanced growth means avoiding situations where we have all commercial or all residential development, we need a mix.

I do not believe the Village should choose which types of businesses to support or oppose. Instead, we should look at how a business will affect the local area and whether it benefits the Village in a positive way.

A large commercial presence can work if it is placed in the right location. It also makes sense to attract small businesses to our “downtown” areas to help revitalize them. Attracting a bank or grocery store to an appropriate location would also benefit the community.

Residential housing needs attention as well. We need a mix of small, medium, and large single-family homes, along with multi-family developments. Residential projects must be planned so they are financially viable for the Village and placed in the right areas to maintain balance.

## TAXES & FISCAL STABILITY

### **2. You note that expenses are rising faster than revenues. What specific actions would you take to close that gap without relying solely on development?**

Many people don't realize that the Village's tax levy can only increase when there is new growth or development. Without development, the levy cannot increase, and revenues stay flat.

The first step is to examine all expenditures. We need to review the entire budget and prioritize every item-from highest priority (life safety: Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement) to lowest priority (such as paper towels and soap). Then we determine where cuts can be made.

Some items cannot be cut because lives depend on them, but even within high-priority areas, there may be ways to save money. Everything outside of life-safety services must be considered for reduction.

If the Village wants to avoid borrowing, we would need to reduce spending by roughly 20%. If we choose not to reduce spending, then borrowing becomes necessary. Low interest rates make borrowing less painful; high interest rates make it more difficult. But borrowing is only a temporary fix until expenditures no longer exceed revenues.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

### **3. You propose listening sessions and educating residents. How would you handle situations where residents strongly oppose a project you believe is necessary for long-term stability?**

It is not about what I personally want, it is about what is best for the entire Village. Salem Lakes includes Camp Lake, Lake Shangri-La, Salem, Silver Lake, Trevor, and Wilmot. Each area has its own concerns, but the Village Board must look out for the whole community, not just one neighborhood, resident, or business.

When residents understand how the system works and the rules and procedures involved, they often see why certain decisions make sense. Education and communication can help people understand the reasoning behind long-term decisions.