
From: Andrew Meindl
Sent: Friday, November 7, 2025 6:17 PM
Cc: tclerks
Subject: West Allis Joint Fire Department Term Sheet and Request for a Two-Week Hold
Attachments: Wauwatosa Gov Affairs Agenda Packet _11_11_25.pdf; Joint Fire Department Term Sheet.pdf; West Allis Fire Merger Workplan.pdf; West Allis Resolution R_2025_4630.png

Good evening Wauwatosa Government Affairs Committee,

As Alder Meindl, I am writing to express my serious concerns about the process and substance of the proposed joint fire department term sheet with West Allis, scheduled for consideration at our November 11, 2025, meeting. While I am open to exploring intergovernmental cooperation that could benefit our residents, the current timeline and lack of complete information raise significant issues that warrant a brief delay for thorough review. This is not opposition to the merger concept, it is about ensuring we fulfill our fiduciary duty to residents before committing to a decade-long structural change. I urge you to support a two-week hold on Item 25-2092 (and related items) to ensure informed transparent decision-making.

I've attached the West Allis Term Sheet, Resolution R-2025-4630, Workplan, the Wauwatosa Government Affairs agenda packet, and mutual aid data provided by the fire department for your reference.

First, the transparency and timing deficiencies are troubling. The agenda packet for our meeting was posted without the City Administrator's executive summary, providing the public with only about 24 hours to review (if included in the packet on Monday) a proposal that would fundamentally restructure our fire department governance for at least 12 years. For context, West Allis residents have had access to their city's analysis and resolution materials for days. Meanwhile, West Allis is voting on their related resolution and term sheet the same evening, just an hour after the Tosa government affairs discussion begins, which could preclude any real-time adjustments based on our input regardless of future negotiations. The West Allis term sheet's own workplan (page 5-6) states that performance metrics will be monitored based on "the Executive Summary provided to each Common Council in late 2025." We are in November 2025, and the Government Affairs Committee (and council likely a week later) is being asked to vote without this foundational document that the workplan itself identifies as essential for accountability.

This process occurs against a backdrop of regional pressures, including Milwaukee's ongoing fire equipment crisis. The Milwaukee Fire Department has [requested \\$27-30 million](#) for replacements but received far less, with many engines and ladders exceeding the NFPA's 15-year lifespan, leading to breakdowns and [borrowing apparatus from neighbors like Wauwatosa](#). Mutual aid data indicates we're increasingly supporting Milwaukee, which could exacerbate risks if our merger introduces uncertainties in fleet sharing without full disclosures.

Additionally, I am concerned that possibly framing this Government Affairs vote as merely "directing the administrator to negotiate" obscures the reality that the cities have already worked together to develop this term sheet. West Allis Resolution R-2025-4630 acknowledges that "*city staff from both communities have worked together to formulate a plan*" and that "*city staff has drafted documentation to implement the details of the initial term sheet.*" If the substantive negotiations have already occurred and implementation documents are already drafted, then approving this executive summary effectively constitutes approval of the merger's core terms. The committee should understand that this is not a preliminary step - I believe this vote

locks in the governance structure, cost-sharing formula, budget approval mechanisms, and contract terms that would bind Wauwatosa for at least 12 years. Final documents presented later will implement these approved terms, not negotiate them.

On costs, I believe the McMahon feasibility study alone totaled \$45,900, split evenly between our cities. Broader merger-related expenses, including legal structuring, have been referenced as exceeding \$100,000+, yet we lack a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis incorporating these or potential reimbursements via the innovation grant. Additionally, our ongoing arbitration with the firefighters union has incurred legal fees exceeding \$15,000. I have also identified a line item in proposed West Allis budget documents showing "Fire Department Merger Implementation: \$75,000 - One Time." If this cost is half of the total, as the feasibility study was, Wauwatosa's share would be an additional \$75,000. Before approving this merger, residents deserve to know the total costs already incurred and projected, and whether the anticipated savings justify these investments.

Additionally, from my understanding, the West Allis term sheet itself proposes a 50/50 cost split without adjustments for call volume changes or growth, automatic budget approvals that could lead to 15% growth over five years (at the fixed 2.84% rate) and 40-47% growth over 10 years (at the 4% or CPI+2% caps) without line-item oversight, and post-merger union negotiations, leaving key unknowns like wage harmonization (85-90% of budgets) unresolved. Additionally, the proposed governance structure transfers significant authority from the Common Council to a six-member board consisting of the City Administrator, Mayor, and Council President. Fleet inventories, dispatch consolidation, and performance enforcement are also missing, as are risk assessments for service declines or grant denial. How much will it cost to develop these reports? \$75,000+?

To address these, I am formally requesting that the Government Affairs Committee vote to hold this item for two weeks to allow:

- Release and review of the executive summary
- Complete preliminary financial projections, including labor scenarios and estimated third-party consultant costs to develop required documentation
- Public information sessions
- Adequate time for council and resident input

I believe this measured step prioritizes transparency and fiscal responsibility without derailing potential benefits. If this proposal has merit, it will withstand two weeks of thorough public review. If it cannot, that tells us something important about whether we should proceed.

Furthermore, if this truly is just a preliminary step directing staff to negotiate, then a two-week hold to ensure complete information should be uncontroversial. However, if the urgency stems from the fact that this vote effectively finalizes the merger terms, then that urgency itself demonstrates why thorough review is essential.

Regards,
Andrew

CC' City Clerk requesting this email be included in the Government Affairs 11_11_25 agenda packet as public comment.

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**This email and its contents are intended solely for official City of Wauwatosa business and are sent in my capacity as the elected Alderman for District 1. Any opinions expressed herein reflect my official position and responsibilities.*