



A GUIDE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

By Douglas H. Frazer

Local government provides many services, but it's not always obvious who is in charge of what.

Village Board and Senior Staff. Each village has a seven-member board. The board controls village operations, property, and finances, sets policy and priorities, and conducts oversight. The board approves or authorizes ordinances, regulations, licenses, permits, borrowing, and taxation. Senior staff manages operations day-to-day.

Public Safety. Each village has its own police department. The North Shore Fire and Rescue is a seven-municipality consortium (Bayside, River Hills, Fox Point, Glendale, Brown Deer, Whitefish Bay, and Shorewood) overseen by a commission and a board of directors. Dispatch is also a seven-municipality shared service operating from the Bayside Communication Center.

Public Works. Each village has its own Department of Public Works that performs services connected to village infrastructure, including garbage and yard waste collection, water conveyance (fresh or stormwater), sanitary sewers, erosion control, signage and streets, snow and ice control, and village facilities.

Property Taxes. Each village levies and collects taxes, and maintains a board of review to consider appeals.

Permits, Applications, and Licenses. Each village regulates construction and land use. The inspector administers and enforces the building, plumbing, HVAC, and electrical codes. The inspector also enforces the zoning code along with fence, lighting, and property maintenance ordinances.

Municipal Court. The Fox Point and River Hills courts hear municipal citation cases. Bayside shares the services of the North Shore Municipal Court located in Glendale.

Boards, Commissions, and Committees. Each village maintains boards, commissions, and committees. Among these are the plan commission (land use), the board of appeals (staff determinations), and the board of review.

Elections. For each election the village clerk administers registration and voting.

Library. The North Shore Library, governed by a library board, is the joint library of Bayside, Fox Point, River Hills, and Glendale.

Water. The North Shore Water Commission operates pumping and filtration for Fox Point, Glendale, and Whitefish Bay. Mequon Water provides access to 86 percent of Bayside, River Hills, and the balance of Bayside, rely on wells.

Parks. Fox Point and Bayside maintain their own parks. Doctors Park, however, is a Milwaukee County Park.

Public Health. The North Shore Health Department is a seven-municipality consortium.

Emergency Management. This function is shared by each village, Milwaukee County, the State of Wisconsin, and the federal government.

Animal Control. The Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) has county-wide jurisdiction.

Public Schools. Each school board is in charge of its schools. Municipalities have no direct management or oversight authority.

Home Rule. Although the Wisconsin state constitution provides for local government "home rule" powers, many state or federal statutes "preempt" what local governments can do.

When in doubt, call your respective village. If the village cannot handle the concern, it can direct you to the right place.

Douglas H. Frazer is a Fox Point resident and neighborhood contributor as well as the village president. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.



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