

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING STREET LIGHT CHARGE

### What is a “street light electric expenditure recovery user charge”?

This is a charge to property owners to cover the costs of the electricity for the Village’s public street light system.

### What is the public street light system?

Streetlights can be found throughout most communities, including the Village of Marshall. They are a raised source of lighting on the edge of a street or other public way, such as a sidewalk or path. Street lighting is commonly used in communities for public safety purposes, such as improving visibility for traffic and pedestrians or illuminating areas to discourage crime.

Most of the Village’s streetlights are owned and maintained by WE Energies, but the Village is responsible for paying the electricity cost of those lights. The Village owns and maintains the decorative street lights in the downtown area.

### How does the charge work?

Expenses are allocated by a billing unit system that charges “improved” properties by two different types. An “improved” property means a property with a building, garage, shed, storage unit or facility, or any other type of structure that provides housing or storage.

The charge will be annually reviewed to ensure it meets the necessary amount of funds needed to cover electricity costs:

Primary Land Use	Current Monthly Rate
Single-family, two-family, or multi-family use with three or less dwelling units	\$2.94
Non-residential, multi-family consisting of four or more dwelling units, commercial or mixed uses	\$5.88

### Why is this being charged directly to property owners?

Property owners have been paying this fee as part of their property tax bill. We are just shifting how we collect this fee from the tax bill to the utility bill. The state law that authorizes local governments to use this kind of charge (Wis. Stat. 66.0627) requires that the charge be imposed against the property.

### When did the Village decide to create this fee?

The Village Board began evaluating the creation of this charge in the fall of 2022 due to increasing costs to maintain existing public services and limitations on other sources of revenue.

The Board authorized a study to be conducted, which was presented to the Board in March 2023. The Board approved the creation of the charge at its meeting on September 12, 2023.

### **I never heard about this, why wasn't I informed?**

The Village Board discussed the creation of this charge at several meetings in the fall of 2022. The Village Board discussed and authorized a study to be done in January 2023. On September 12, 2023, a Public Informational Meeting was held for the Street Light User fee. The Village Board then discussed the study results, the fees, the ordinance, and the implementation at the September 12, 2023, meeting. These meetings are open to the public to attend in person or via Zoom. Meeting agendas are posted online and in three public places (Village Hall, post office, and Village website) at least two days in advance of meetings. Village Meeting Minutes are posted on the Village Website.

The public can also sign up to receive agendas directly to their email as soon as they are published by contacting the Village Clerk's Office.

### **Do other communities do this?**

Yes, the first community in Wisconsin implemented this charge in 2005. A handful of other communities now also use this charge, and many more are considering using it as well. It is also used in other states.

### **How much money will the Village earn from this charge?**

The Village estimates it will earn about \$58,953 per year to cover the total electricity costs for the Village's street light system. The charge may change annually to ensure it meets the necessary amount of funds needed to cover electricity costs.

### **Why doesn't the Village just raise property taxes instead of creating another fee?**

With a few exceptions, property taxes are restricted by State law and cannot be raised at the discretion of local governments in Wisconsin.

### **If the Village previously used property taxes for this, what will the Village do with the \$58,953 it has saved in taxes?**

The property taxes saved will help the Village cover ongoing costs for maintaining its existing public services, such as public safety and public works.

### **What if I don't pay this charge?**

Charges are due and payable upon issuance of any bill. If the charge is not paid within 21 days of issuance, the charge is delinquent.

A delinquent charge becomes a lien on the property against which it is imposed as of the date of delinquency. Delinquent charges will be included on the next property tax roll for collection and settlement pursuant to State law, and may be subject to additional fees, penalties, and interest.

### **I have an opinion, comment, suggestion, or input to give on this. Who can I talk to?**

You are encouraged to reach out to your elected representatives. Contact information can be found on the Village's website at the following link: <https://www.marshall-wi.com/villageboard>

I think there was an error or mistake on my bill related to this charge OR you have a question about the implementation/administration of the fee.

Please contact Village Hall staff at (608) 655-4017