

State of the Village Financial Outlook Address

Fellow Council Members, Village Staff, and Residents of Pinckney,

Tonight, I want to speak plainly about where we are as a village, where we are headed, and what choices stand before us.

For years, we had blinders on.

For years, we acted like a village much larger than we really are.

We expanded commitments. We added obligations. We increased costs. And somewhere along the way, we convinced ourselves that tomorrow would somehow take care of itself.

That mindset has brought us to where we are today.

The reality is that good intentions alone do not balance budgets. Promises alone, **do not pay bills**. And hoping for a better future is not the same as planning for one.

Eventually, every community reaches a moment when it must confront reality.

That moment is now.

Tonight, we have a choice. We can continue down the same path and hope things somehow improve on their own, or we can face the facts, make the difficult decisions, and put the Village of Pinckney on a sustainable path forward.

I choose the second path.

For years, leaders made decisions without fully looking down the road. Benefits were added. Obligations were made. Promises were given. Services expanded. And while many of those decisions were made with good intentions, not enough attention was paid to the long-term question:

How are we going to pay for all of this?

The truth is, for too long, we failed to fully recognize the financial realities facing this village.

Today, we are living with the consequences.

I truly feel for our employees. Many of them were promised benefits and compensation packages over many years. They planned their lives around those promises. They trusted the system. This isn't their fault.

The question before us is not whether those promises were made.

The question before us is whether the Village of Pinckney can continue to afford them.

As elected officials, we have a responsibility not only to today's employees, residents, and taxpayers, but also to future generations who will inherit the decisions we make right now.

The public deserves to know that its tax dollars are being spent as intended.

That requires a strong local government finance team.

That requires trustees who understand that we have been entrusted with the people's money.

Not our money.

The people's money.

Every dollar we spend represents hours worked by a resident, a small business owner, a retiree living on a fixed income, or a young family trying to make ends meet.

Our responsibility is to spend those dollars wisely.

That means every trustee must be willing to look at the bigger picture.

Every trustee must be willing to make difficult decisions.

Every trustee must have the wisdom to understand the long-term consequences of our actions and the courage to protect essential village services, public safety, and the future of our small 1.4-square-mile community.

Recently, I've been reminded of my good friend Mike.

Mike owns a business. A few years ago, he faced some incredibly difficult decisions. His costs were rising. Revenue wasn't keeping pace. He had to make painful cuts. He even had to pull back on healthcare benefits.

It was a gut punch.

Nobody wanted those changes.

Nobody celebrated those decisions.

But Mike didn't throw himself a pity party.

He didn't pretend the problem didn't exist.

He didn't kick the can down the road and hope somebody else would deal with it later.

He sat down, looked reality in the eye, developed a plan, and made the difficult decisions necessary to protect his family and his business.

He did what was right.

Not what was easy.

What was right.

And frankly, my own family is doing the same thing.

Many of you know that my wife suffered a serious injury.

Because of that injury, our household income is being reduced by nearly 40 percent over the next several months.

You know that truck I wanted to buy?

That's completely off the table.

We've had to cut spending.

We've had to change our lifestyle.

We've had to rethink our budget.

We've had to make sacrifices.

Not because we wanted to.

Because reality demanded it.

Every day, families across Pinckney make these kinds of decisions.

Small business owners make these kinds of decisions.

Employers make these kinds of decisions.

And today, the Village of Pinckney finds itself in that exact same position.

We are at a crossroads.

We can choose to make a difference.

Or we can choose to maintain the status quo.

If we continue down our current path, our financial outlook becomes increasingly dangerous.

Our General Fund is being drained at a pace that cannot continue indefinitely.

At our current trajectory, we have approximately three years before we face a very serious financial crisis—and that's assuming nothing major goes wrong.

No major equipment failures.

No infrastructure emergencies.

No unexpected costs.

And we all know that's not how real-life works.

When reserves disappear, local governments lose options.

When financial distress takes hold, outside authorities begin making decisions for us.

Local control disappears.

The ability of residents and local elected officials to determine their own future disappears.

I will not stand by and watch that happen if I can help it.

I will not vote for an unbalanced budget.

And I will not support asking taxpayers for a millage increase simply because we lacked the courage to address the underlying problem.

We can solve this.

We can protect essential services.

We can protect public safety.

We can protect the future of Pinckney.

But doing so requires us to leave our comfort zones.

It requires us to challenge old assumptions.

It requires us to have honest conversations.

And yes, it requires us to make difficult decisions.

Will those decisions be painful?

Absolutely.

Will everyone agree with them?

Probably not.

But leadership is not about doing what is popular.

Leadership is about doing what is necessary.

Leadership is about making the hard decisions today so future generations don't suffer because we failed to act.

Tonight, I am asking this council, our staff, and our community to join me in facing reality with open eyes.

No more blinders.

No more kicking the can down the road.

No more pretending tomorrow will somehow take care of itself.

We are at a crossroads.

One path is easy.

The other path is right.

The easy thing to do is nothing.

The easy thing to do is kick this problem down the road and let the next council deal with it.

The easy thing to do is spend money we don't have and hope somehow it works out.

The easy thing to do is continue acting like a village much larger than our 1.4 square miles and ignore the warning signs that are right in front of us.

But that's not leadership.

Leadership is doing what is necessary when it isn't popular.

Leadership is protecting the future, even when it requires sacrifice today.

Leadership is looking for reality in the eye, making the tough choices, and doing what is right for the people we serve.

I didn't run for office to make easy decisions.

I ran for office to make the right decisions.

I ran for office to protect this village.

I ran for office to ensure that future generations inherit a financially stable and independent Pinckney.

The time for responsible stewardship is now.

The time to secure the future of Pinckney is now.

Together, we can do this.

Together, we can put this village back on solid financial footing.

Together, we can preserve local control, protect essential services, and ensure that the Village of Pinckney remains strong, independent, and financially responsible for generations to come.

Tonight, we begin that work, I hope!

Thank you, and God bless the Village of Pinckney.