

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING, CHEVIOT, OHIO

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July 7, 2009

The following were found in attendance:

Mayor	Samuel D. Keller
President of Council	Deborah M. McKinney
Law Director	Mark Waters
Council 1 st Ward	Ryan A. Zech
Council 2 nd Ward	Matthew D. McGowan
Council 3 rd Ward	James F. Sunderhaus
Council at Large	Kathleen S. Zech
Council at Large	Dennis T. Dinkelacker
Council at Large	Steve L. Braun

? – All resident comments or questions are marked in this manner

The hearing was called to order at 6:30pm to discuss the proposed Tax Levy.

President McKinney informed the public a flyer was available to explain the proposed tax levy. President McKinney stated the rules of the public hearing. Mr. Neal was briefly in attendance before tending to the pool.

Mayor Keller thanked the public for a good turnout. The City of Cheviot has always been fiscally conservative. The City of Cheviot has gone almost 26 years without a revenue increase. Running the city budget is like running your household budget. The City has implemented 2 temporary garbage fees to combat the issue. The most recent fee will help the City get through the 2009 year.

The increase is a 5.61 mil levy. This does not mean the levy will generate 5.61 million dollars. This will raise approximately \$719,000 per year for the City of Cheviot. The garbage fee for a 13 month period was \$130, and will expire at the end of the year. The levy is a small increase over what the homeowner is currently paying. To the homeowner, the increase is approximately \$166.44 dollars a year on their tax bill.

The Mayor referred to the flyer to explain how tax dollars are divided. A pie chart shows that 14.6% of tax dollars go to Cheviot, 20.1% to Hamilton County and 65.3% to Cincinnati Public Schools. For a \$100,000 home, a Cheviot resident currently pays approximately \$240 a year to the City of Cheviot.

For this, each resident receives:

-Police Protection	-Fire Protection
-Garbage Pick-up	-Paramedic Service
-Snow Removal	-Yard Waste Collection
-Recycling	-Leaf Pick-up
-Road Repair	-City Parks including fields for youth/adult sports

The levy will be on a special election on August 4, 2009 and will be the only issue on the ballot. Absentee ballots can be requested.

? – Who is paying for the collection of the garbage fee?

The garbage fee is a 13 month fee. The first time the city implemented a garbage fee the City collected it. This time the City chose Water Works to administer the fee for 5%. The collection rate is approximately 98% and the collection fee is minimal to the amount of time the Mayor's Administrative Assistant spend trying to collect the last fee. The city is still currently trying to collect on the previous fee.

? – If the tax levy fails, will the garbage fee remain?

If the levy fails, there will be cuts that need to be made, possibly elimination of city services. There will need to be a revenue increase whether it is a fee or tax.

Residents' concerns are that there will be no increase in social security. One resident has only had one 5% increase in his pension in the last 20 years. The economy has gone down.

Mayor Keller stated there are a large percentage of residents are on a fixed income.

Mayor Keller explained the tremendous amount of equipment the city needs to replace. The city is very reserved in replacing equipment but the time has come when these items need to be replaced. The city is approximately \$665,000 behind in replacing equipment. The city currently has a salt truck that is 10-12 years old. According to manufacturer's suggestions, the life expectancy is 4 years. The city also has a 1996 Ambulance. The City tries to replace each ambulance every 5 years, the manufacturer recommends every 3 years.

Mayor Keller stated the only cuts left to make are personnel or departments.

Over the years the City has lost a large amount of revenue. The federal, state and county government has done nothing but taking away from cities. We don't receive a dime from the state. The federal road money we did receive is going to repair Harrison Avenue. The county dispatch fees in the last 12 years have risen from \$10,000 to \$118,000. The city has seen nothing but increases in cost.

Ms. Zech stated that the City promotes Cheviot all the time. Last year the City hosted a Realtor's Brunch. During the research, the committee found that Cheviot is the only full service city that does not have an industrial base. Ms. Zech is also retired and on a fixed income. The City and Administration is coming to its residents for their opinion. Do you want to keep your services?

? – Will the tax levy balance its budget with passage of this levy or just cover expenses they are in the hole?

Mr. Zech explained the city is looking at a five year plan. The City's hopes are that the estimates are over what will actually be spent. For the first few years there will be a surplus. The City will be looking into investing the money to carry the City through. The ultimate goal is to work with an economic developer to increase the business district and the tax base in Cheviot.

Mr. McGowan stated the city doesn't plan to just raise taxes. The levy may not have to be renewed in five years if the City is able to increase its revenue. All members of Council are Cheviot residents and have to pay the taxes as well. No one wants more taxes but it is vital to the continuation of the City's Services. The economic developer will help to increase the business and residential districts.

? – Will the tax be for the general fund or specifically for certain things?

All money collected will go into the general fund. Mr. Sunderhaus explained that sometimes the city obtains grants that are earmarked for specific things. There is no separate fire or police levy.

Mayor Keller informed the public it is a wage negotiation year. There will be no increases to the administrative staff's pay. The city has reached a deal with the maintenance department for a one year 0% increase contract. The city has also extended this offer to the police and fire as well. With rising healthcare costs, this means a decrease to everyone.

? – How were the calculations for the garbage fee determined, i.e. what a two family house compared to a single family house should pay?

Ms. Zech explained the garbage fee was well publicized through the paper, public hearings and on the marquees.

President McKinney explained the garbage fee is not just that. The easiest way to make the fee as fair as possible was to charge by units. The fee covers all city services. President McKinney stated she also owns a two family in which only one family lives. The price was \$14 a month for a 13 month period. The fee was on the first two water bills so the money could be collected in 2009. Money collected in 2010 would not help us with this year's budget.

Mayor Keller reminded the public that the fee was hard to figure it out but it took the Administrative Assistant was bogged down with the fee for over six months.

More discussion on the fee continued.

Mr. Zech stated there is no perfect way to charge the fee. Rumpke charges the city a per ton fee to dump garbage.

? – One resident appreciated the fee being on the Water Bill so that the city received everyone's money.

? – How much money does the city get from recycling? Surrounding cities are not recycling as much as they could.

Mr. Neal stated that recycling generates approximately \$8,000 but costs the city about \$11,000.

Mr. Sunderhaus stated that the money generated from recycling is actually going down.

The Mayor explained that curbside recycling is expensive, approximately \$3 a month per house, per month.

Mr. Zech spoke to Rumpke concerning curbside recycling. This will be addressed if the levy passes.

Mr. Zech also stated the garbage fee was a last minute measure. The City is now trying to prepare for the future and give the public the choice. There was no time to organize it last year because it was too late to put a levy on the ballot. If the levy passes we move forward. If the levy fails, a decision will have to quickly be made.

Mr. Neal stated the because of problems with residents in the city, there are now 1000 more dispatches a year. Cheviot is starting to have some problems with people who move here.

Mr. Neal also explained the pool operates on its own money. It has done so for the last 11 years and doesn't cost the taxpayers a dime.

? – Where is the money going?

? – How are costs rising when my gas and electric is going down? Fuel is down.

? – How about a \$100 fee for all bars for police.

? – How are emergency runs for Medicare/Medicaid getting charged?

Mayor Keller answered each question as best as he could without being interrupted every time he spoke.

Mr. Sunderhaus stated the city tries to make sure residents aren't directly billed for emergency runs. If you aren't a resident of Cheviot, you do receive soft billing.

? – City employees should receive a 15% cut across the board and if they don't like it they can take a walk. The police are a bunch of overpaid idiots. They drive around with blinders on.

President McKinney asked the gentleman to finish with his comments.

Another resident addressed council.

? – If the levy passes, will it be retroactive?

No, collection of the taxes will begin in January.

? – Is there any historical data as to how the money is coming in and out of the city? This resident believes it is important to get that information out there. Perhaps a graph would be helpful.

Mr. Sunderhaus agreed that this would be helpful. The downside is this explanation would not show all the cuts that were made and the equipment that was not purchased.

? – How many public intoxication citations were issued from Westfest?

Mayor Keller does not have this information.

? – How much does the city make off of Westfest?

Mayor Keller said nothing. Ms. Zech stated the community association puts on Westfest and gives a lot to the city.

CWCA donates back. Cheviot markets itself. A lot of plans are on hold right now due to the lack of money.

President McKinney asked the unruly resident to leave.

? – How many homes in Cheviot are in foreclosure? When they are in foreclosure do we receive any tax dollars?

Mayor Keller stated that he is not sure of the amount of homes in foreclosure in the City of Cheviot but did assure residents that the tax bill still accumulates. The Mayor explained the \$1 home program the City has been running. There are certain restrictions to each sale. The city is trying to put good neighbors into the city. A home purchased on Darwin Avenue accumulated a \$1600 tax bill the city had to pay. The tax money does continue to accrue. Grass cutting by the maintenance department is usually added to tax bills as well.

Mr. McGowan stated that these are hard economic times. All members of Council are having problems, some unemployed, some retired. As a resident and single father, Mr. McGowan sees no better alternative. Private collection is much more expensive than what the city offers.

? – Is there an extra fee for furniture?

The City of Cheviot does not charge extra for furniture pick up or disposal. The City is also certified to pick up refrigerators and air conditioners and dispose of the Freon. The city does this at no additional cost to the residents.

Some of the maintenance men pull out cans for older residents.

Mayor Keller wanted to publicly thank Mr. McGowan and Mr. Stautberg for all their hard work in the Finance Committee.

Mr. McGowan was the first to be vocal about not raising taxes or a fee. Mr. McGowan stands firmly behind this levy.

Mayor Keller stated that by law, the city is only required to provide police protection. The flyers to explain the issue have completely been paid for by the City and Administration. No tax dollars were used in production of the piece.

The public hearing was adjourned at 7:26p.m.

Rachel A. McKinney
Clerk of Council

Deborah M. McKinney
President of Council