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Tyrone Township Newsletter

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Tyrone Township Public Safety Ballot Proposal August 3, 2010 Primary Election

Shall a special assessment district be created, encompassing all of Tyrone Township, for the purpose of purchasing police and fire department services and annually assessing each parcel of land containing a structure within Tyrone Township a sum not to exceed \$150.00 and annually assessing each vacant parcel within Tyrone Township a sum not to exceed \$75.00 and annually assessing each commercial parcel within Tyrone Township a sum not to exceed \$250.00 with the assessments levied for a period of 5 years commencing in 2010 and continuing through and including 2014? The first year of the assessment shall generate estimated revenues of \$570,000.

Frequently Asked Questions

Our property taxes are already too high. Why do we need to pay more taxes for public safety?

The property tax that Tyrone Township receives on a home with a taxable value of \$125,000 is \$114 per year. The rest of your taxes (over 95%) go to local schools, Livingston County, and Cromaine Library or Mott Community College. Because total taxable value on homes has decreased over the last several years and is forecasted to continue to decrease, the amount of property tax revenue has decreased and will decrease more the next few years. Public Safety costs are increasing and will soon exceed 50% of all township expenditures.

Recipients of Public Safety services are suppose to pay whenever they use fire services. Why aren't we collecting the fees from the users to pay for what we are billed for?

The township is striving to bill and collect for all fire runs. Since the township handles all the collections for fire runs, we have increased the amount to collect. When fee-for-service was first put in place back in the 1980's, the cost for a fire run was around \$300.00. Today the cost is \$1337 or \$1400 per run depending on which Fire Department services your residence. Over half of the Fire Department runs are for EMS assisted activities. The township can only bill \$350.00 for these calls which means the township must pay \$1000 from the general fund to make up the difference. There are a number of cases where a fire call cannot be traced to any specific location and the township pays the whole amount. With the increasing cost of fire services, cost recovery based on a fee-for-service is not sustainable.

I heard that the sewer fund has a shortage and the township residents must pay for it. Why isn't the sewer paying for itself?

The township has pledged its full faith and credit to repay the sewer bond. The sewer was initiated when the economy was growing at a very rapid pace. The expectation was that new growth in the township would be sufficient to pay for the bond. The reality, as we all know, is that growth and development has come to a crashing halt and little is expected in the near future.

Next year the sewer fund is forecasted to be \$450,000 short in meeting its payment. This trend is expected to continue for 10 or 15 years or until the economy recovers sufficiently to restart growth and development. If the sewer fund cannot meet its payments, the general fund must make up any shortage prior to paying any other expenses. We will **loan** the sewer fund money from the general fund.

Furthermore when property taxes do not get paid, the county advances the township the tax money. If the taxes on these properties cannot be collected within 3 years, the township must repay the county the uncollected amounts. Next year the amount to be repaid may be as high as \$1,000,000. This leaves little to nothing to pay for public safety services.

Why do I have to pay for the sewer if I don't use it?

The township's plan to pay the sewer bond is to make a **loan** from the township general fund to the sewer fund. When the economy gets better and growth returns, the connection fees and service fees from future users will be used to repay the **loan** from the township. Under this plan, residents that have no benefit will not be paying for the sewer.

The Livingston County Sheriff's Department is supposed to cover our township. Why do we need to pay for police coverage?

Tyrone Township shares a deputy from the Livingston County Sheriff's Department with Hartland Township. Between our two townships, we have a dedicated deputy patrolling our township 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The Sheriff provides all the manpower, vehicles, insurance, and other expenses for a flat fee. This arrangement significantly shortens the wait time you will have for a police officer to arrive in the event you need one. Much of the Sheriff Department's manpower is used in operating the jail and transporting prisoners to and from court. By law, Sheriff's Departments in Michigan are not required to provide routine patrols. Because we have a dedicated deputy, we have routine patrols for crime deterrence, plus the wait time for a police officer to arrive at your location, when you need one, is about half what other outlying townships experience.

Why don't we eliminate other township expenses to fund public safety activities?

By law, the township is required to hold elections, collect taxes, assess property, as well as other functions. Over the last several years the township has reviewed all the expenses incurred by the various departments and functions. We have used technology to streamline our processes and to eliminate many outside expenses for tax collection, utility billing, and fire collection with no increase in township personnel. The Elections Department reduced the number of people used to run an election efficiently. Also, during this budgeting process we cut expenses for overtime, pensions, work hours, benefits, liability insurance fees, and other outside affiliations. Approximately \$125,000 was eliminated from general fund expenses this year. The township operating expenses, excluding public safety expenses, are at the same level as in 2002 and we are at rock bottom.

How can I be sure that the money requested will not be wasted on something else?

By Michigan law, special assessments must be deposited in a special fund that can only be used for the stated purpose. No matter what happens to the general fund or the sewer bond, the special assessment funds that we hope to create can only be used to pay for police and fire services.

What happens if the vote for the assessment does not pass?

There is a real possibility that there will be no fire stations responding because we cannot pay them. Additionally there would be an increase in the time it takes for police to respond to a call for help. Not having fire coverage also could negatively impact the cost of your homeowner's insurance or the market value of your house.

How do I learn more about this proposal?

Tyrone Township is holding an information meeting on July 28th at 7:00 pm at the Tyrone Covenant Presbyterian Church, 10235 White Lake Road.