

December 5, 2017

Mr. Jason Boyd  
Lake County Administrator  
104 Main Street  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Painesville, OH 44077

Subject: 2018 Senior Levy Funds

Dear Mr. Boyd:

As a follow-up to our conversation before the Commissioners' meeting, we have been trying to educate ourselves on how the taxpayers' money, collected by the Senior Levy, is being spent by the various agencies.

There are two agencies on which we have focused – the Council on Aging and the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program. We attended a Council on Aging's Board meeting, and are quite impressed by their dedication to the Lake County Seniors.

As you know, the RSVP is an "Employment agency for retired Seniors". They received \$115,000 in 2017 and \$619,925 for the period 2013 – 2017. We asked Cristen Kane for their financial statements to show how they have been good stewards of the taxpayers' funds. We received a copy of a federal form that was totally lacking in details. You did tell me that they placed ~300 seniors annually as volunteers for Lake County Non-Profits. For 2017, that would mean that the placement cost per volunteer is approximately \$383. ( $\$115,000 / 300$ )

Our research has told us that there are two basic issues that compound the problems for Lake County seniors – food and housing insecurity. However, there is another problem that does not get much publicity – abuse of seniors by neighbors, caregivers, strangers and family members.

The published reports by The Center for Community Solutions, and MCS Consulting Services provide some very disturbing statistics and trends for seniors in Northeast Ohio:

**Housing Insecurity:**

1. For those owning their homes, 26.2% pay more than the recognized affordable factor of 30% of their annual income.
2. For those renting their homes, 52.5% pay more than the recognized affordable factor of 30% of their annual income.
3. The median monthly rent ranges from \$514 to \$754 per month depending on the county. This means that a household needs an annual income of \$20,560 to \$30,160. However, less than half (49.5%) over age 60 have retirement income, but 76.5% receive average Social Security payments of only \$17,763.

**Poverty Level:**

1. Six percent of those 65 years in the county are living below the poverty level. The 2010 census says that there were 51,488 persons over 60 years of age, therefore ~3,000 in living in poverty, and that number surely has increased since 2010.
2. By the year 2030, the 60+ is projected to grow to 33.9% of the population, further compounding the problems of housing and food insecurity.

**Elder Abuse and Neglect:**

1. This includes physical, emotional, or financial abuse, exploitation, or neglect by neighbors, family members, and total strangers. In 2014, The Ohio Family Violence Prevention Project estimated that there were 41,236 cases of elder abuse or neglect in 2014. However, only 4,593 (11.1%) were reported.
2. This is definitely an area that could use much more oversight.

**Food Insecurity:**

1. The Council on Aging does a remarkable job with their meals on wheels program, providing 148,261 meals in 2016 with 139,959 delivered to homes.
2. Their costs for the delivery of a meal to a home was \$3.53, but is increasing to \$4.95. This is an increase of \$1.42 (40.2%) per meal. That means to deliver the same number of meals to a home their annual costs will increase by \$198,742.

All of these statistics lead us to the conclusion that Lake County Seniors would be better served if the \$115,000 allocated to the RSVP would be given to the Council on Aging. The employment services could easily be handled by a page on the Council on Aging's website.

Sincerely,

Brian Massie  
Lobbyist for Citizens  
8196 Rainbow Drive  
Concord Township, Oh 44077

CC: Lake County Commissioners