

Pros and cons of continuing levy discussed

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PAINESVILLE TOWNSHIP – The difference between levies can be confusing for some voters. One aspect which has been receiving more attention lately is that of continuing levies which go on “forever” being placed on the ballots as opposed to levies that come up for renewal after a set number of years.

At the Oct. 1 Painesville Township trustees meeting, John Muzic of Coventry Drive stated, while he appreciated the work of the Township Service Department, he did not like the fact that its proposed road levy on the November ballot would be a continuing levy rather than a renewable one.

The proposed levy is a 1.95-mill continuous Road Levy which would raise \$707,523 annually and cost \$68.25 per \$100,000 in property valuation.

“The thing about it is, in my opinion, what I can afford today I may not be able to afford in five years from now, or 10 years from now,” Muzic said. “I feel it is the right of the taxpayer to have oversight and accountability. Just like the three of you, we have the right to say if you’re doing a good job or not doing a good job.”

He added, if people have to spend more than 30 percent of their income on their living expenses and property taxes keep increasing, they eventually will not be able to keep their homes.

Muzic noted, there are 10 inside mills allowed by the state which property owners are charged without a vote. In Lake County, 8.9 mills is being charged.

(Editor’s Note: The Lake County Board of Commissioners voted to reduce the inside millage by 1.1 percent in 2012, a savings of about \$35 per \$100,000 property valuation, when it increased the sales tax by 0.5 percent.)

Muzic said he felt the voters had a right to determine whether or not they wish to have a levy continue.

Trustee Gabe Cicconetti stated there were three types of levies essentially: bond levies to construct something and are done when paid off; “luxury” levies like for libraries, the community college and parks which are important, but not absolutely essential; and essential levies for police, fire and public services like roads.

If people should vote down levies for essential services, it would hurt the community and make it less attractive for residents and businesses, he said.

“Some things we know are not going to change,” Cicconetti said. “We’re not going to get back the million-plus dollars that we’re not getting from the state anymore. We’re not getting the estate tax back most likely. Prices are only going to continue to increase. Our community’s only going to continue to grow as far as housing developments and those types of things.”

He said he understood Muzic’s point of view, but by having a continuous road levy, the Township will be assured of having funds to maintain the roads properly in the decades to come.

He stated voters had the option of putting an initiative petition on the ballot to vote to stop a levy. They could also vote out the trustees if they felt they were not doing a good job.

Cicconetti noted the levy funds could only be used for roads, nothing else.

Having road levy funds also provided the matching funds to get Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) grants to pay a portion of the cost for repairing roads.

It was noted how the condition of Painesville City roads had deteriorated for years, decreasing property values, because it did not have funds to do repairs until a levy was passed. It had also lacked matching funds to get OPWC grants to stretch their road repair dollars further.

In other business:

- During the work session, a Mentor Avenue property owner spoke about his proposed use; service director reported on a concrete replacement project and selling excess winter salt to Fairport Harbor; and a firefighter became a certified mechanic for fire engines; firefighters are doing training program with ER nurses; and Fire Department is presenting a “Stop the Bleed” class to Riverside High teachers.

The zoning inspector reported Confluent Senior Citizen Services is planning to construct an assisted liv-

ing and memory care facility on Mentor Avenue.

Trustee Gabe Cicconetti reported on a discussion with Painesville City about electric rates. The trustees discussed the road levy, plan to attend the Ohio Township Association Winter Conference; decided the cost to rehang Hometown Heroes Banners would be \$50 next year; and discussed economic development.

- Regarding his meeting with Painesville City Power, Cicconetti said, “They made it clear they have no intentions at this time of making any rate adjustments for our residents and, as a matter of fact, their restructuring will be occurring for another two years so some residents could actually see more rate impact increase ...”

He said the city claimed line loss, or the distance from the plants, was the reason for the greater fees to township residents. But, when he worked up a map, he found more than half the township residents were no further from the plants than city residents. Plus, there are lines which have to pass through the Township to get to city residents.

Another point he made was that the cost for Painesville City street lights was assessed to all customers, even those in the Township.

Cicconetti said he asked the city to look at that since he felt that cost was unfair to Township residents.

- The next regular trustees meeting will be held at the Riverside High School District Board Office Tuesday, Oct. 16 at 7:30 p.m. with the work session preceding at 6 p.m.