
MINUTES OF SYMMES TOWNSHIP FINANCE & AUDIT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 11, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Members of the Commission present were: Mr. Harte, Mr. Maddali, Ms. Sharp, Mr. Tranter, and Mr. Vonderhaar.

Also present: Fiscal Officer - Carol Sims, Administrator - Mrs. Lapensee, Township Trustees - Ms. Lies, Mr. Beck and Mr. Bryant.

Mrs. Lapensee stated that the Township is trying to put together some information for a Road Levy request that needs to be put on the ballot in the spring. If you look at the projections on page 2, under Road & Bridge Fund you can see in 2018 that we are down about two thousand dollars. It is very concerning because if we only receive collections two times a year in March and August. If we are down to two thousand dollars by the end of 2018 that means that we will have to float money to the Road and Bridge Fund to actually pay for our employees out of road department at some point. Don't really want to do that but it looks like it might be necessary.

Mrs. Lapensee stated that she was put together a list of expenses with Bill Pitman's help. On the big spread sheet we list out all our actual 2016, if you look at the projections going out to 2024, basically she is predicting that the Township will need a 1.1 mil additional levy to fund everything that needs to be funded to keep the road levy going. Mrs. Lapensee stated that she is not sure what will we will need to do in 2020 when the other road levy comes up. Mrs. Lapensee stated that right now we have a current .9 road levy that generates about four hundred and seventy five thousand dollars and she stated that she thinks that they should keep it.

Mrs. Lapensee stated that they need to go for a road levy in 2018 because Loveland City Schools is planning a school levy for 2019 and in 2020 the safety service and their other road levy is up. These expenses can fluctuate. This estimate is based on salary increase of 3% each year includes road department employees, 10% for health insurance, 14% for PERS and she is hoping to start paying for Risk Insurance that a formula the Trustees will have to decide on. Right now she is suggesting 12% out of that fund based on their expenses as a percentage as a whole.

Ms. Leis asked what is the difference between a new levy or a renewal with an increase?

Mrs. Lapensee stated that a new levy we would not have a 12½ % that the current would pay. She was afraid that if she added it to the other levy as a renewal and if it did not pass the Township would have nothing. Ms. Leis asked when would the old levy go away. Mrs. Lapensee stated that would be in 2020. Ms. Sims stated that current levy only pays for major road improvements and sidewalks it does not pay for any salaries.

Mr. Harte asked what is the effect on the property tax per hundred thousand. Mrs. Lapensee stated that she does know, she has not calculated it.

Ms. Leis asked as of right now isn't every tax dollar spent, 15 cents goes to Symmes Township. Mrs. Lapensee stated that yes, total for every dollar. Mr. Harte asked Mrs. Lapensee if she were here five or ten years ago, what would she have done differently than to prepare for where we are now. Mrs. Lapensee stated the ten years ago unfortunately we would not make the same decisions because in 2010 we lost estate tax, personal property tax, utility deregulation and local government fund. We lost a whole lot of stuff. In 2010 that changed everybody's finances. Mr. Bryant stated that the economic down turn devalued property, tax income on those properties went down, and a whole bunch of things. We were in better shape than a lot of surrounding communities and we weathered the storm for a while. The only discretionary income we have is general fund and we have been paying a lot of salaries and everything out of that. Ms. Sims stated that the road salaries are not being paid out of the general fund they are coming out of the road fund. The Finance Committee has been talking about doing something in the road levy for two to three years because it comes to a point in 2018 where we have to do something.

Mr. Tranter asked what is included in a road levy. Mrs. Lapensee stated that everything we use to maintain and operated roads & sidewalks. It could be the material for crack sealing, all our base materials like gravel, sand, salt, concrete, pipes and we have a lot of equipment. One thing that we need to do and nobody wants to talk about; it is we need to build a new building. We have six to seven pieces of equipment that sits outside and that is a huge problem. That just ages the equipment that much quicker. Mr. Tranter stated that it would cheaper to lease a building instead of building a new one and there are empty buildings in Symmes Township. Mr. Harte wanted to know if they build a new building what would they do with the two buildings that exist now. Mrs. Lapensee stated that the two buildings will be torn down.

Ms. Leis advised that the road levy was presented to the Committee two years ago and they decided that it was too soon to put a road levy on. Mrs. Lapensee stated that if you look across the spread sheet in the road & bridge fund is only generating one hundred sixty thousand dollars a year and the salaries just for four people are up in the two hundred thousand range.

Mr. Maddali asked about the two line items sidewalk repairs and sidewalk improvements aren't they the same thing. Mrs. Lapensee stated no they are not the same. Sidewalk repairs are when we have cracks or chips in sidewalks and have to repair or replace them. Sidewalk improvements are new sidewalks.

Mrs. Lapensee stated that they allocate about 25 thousand dollars from the fund and she has suggested putting 50 thousand dollars in 2019 into the fund because you cannot do sidewalk projects with 25 thousand dollars a year..

Mr. Tranter asked do the salaries have to come out of road and bridge. Ms. Sims stated that salaries come out of that fund and she can take some of the salaries out of the gasoline fund. Mrs. Lapensee stated that permissive motor vehicle fund is capital only.

Mr. Bryant stated that he thinks the 1.1 mil is too steep and the residents are going to challenge it. Mr. Harte asked if that is because of the Sycamore levy. Mr. Bryant stated that is part of the problem. For all of the people on fixed income there are only so many places for it to go and if it all goes for tax dollars people will leave the county. Mrs. Lapensee stated that when the State Ohio did not do us any favors when they reduced all the taxes and pushed all the burden on us. Mr. Tranter stated that they do have a choice of how big of a levy they want to put on. Ms. Leis stated that she wants to make sure that they are asking enough so they do not have to go back and ask for more money. Mrs. Leis stated she would like to have this on a seven year term and take the building out.

Approved:
