

CIRCLEVILLE FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 5/27/2025

Circleville City Finance Committee convened in City Council Chambers, 127 South Court St, Circleville, OH. on Tuesday May 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. Members Present: Chair Katie Logan Hedges, Tom Duvall, and Clerks, Melissa Burns. Absent members: Jeff Hallinin. Other Council Members present: Tom Klitzka, Audrey Lukasak and John Moats. Invited Guests present: Mayor Blanton, Law Director Kendra Kinney, Safety Director Paul Pride and City Planner Hannah Wynne.

Hedges called the Meeting to Order at 6:00 p.m.

Duvall motioned to approve the Finance Committee minutes from April 29, 2025. Seconded by Hedges. Motion carried.

New Business:

a) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF CIRCLEVILLE SO AS TO INCREASE THE CITY INCOME TAX RATE FROM THE CURRENT RATE OF TWO PERCENT (2.00%) TO A RATE OF TWO AND A HALF PERCENT (2.50%) TO BECOME EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026 WITH ONE TENTH OF ONE PERCENT (0.1%) OF THE INCREASE TO BE ALLOCATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF GENERAL CONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION, RESURFACING, AND REPAIR OF THE STREETS, ROADS AND BRIDGES NECESSARY IN THE CITY OF CIRCLEVILLE AND FOUR TENTHS OF ONE PERCENT (0.4%) TO BE ALLOCATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING AND MAINTAINING FIRE APPARATUS, MECHANICAL RESUSCITATORS, UNDERWATER RESCUE AND RECOVERY EQUIPMENT, OR OTHER FIRE EQUIPMENT AND APPLIANCES, BUILDINGS AND SITES THEREFOR, OR SOURCES OF WATER SUPPLY AND MATERIALS THEREFOR, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF LINES OF FIRE-ALARM COMMUNICATIONS, FOR THE PAYMENT OF FIREFIGHTING COMPANIES OR PERMANENT, PART-TIME, OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE, OR COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE SAME, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ANY EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FOR SUCH PERSONNEL UNDER SECTION 145.48 OR 742.34 OF THE REVISED CODE, FOR THE PURCHASE OF AMBULANCE EQUIPMENT, FOR THE PROVISION OF AMBULANCE, PARAMEDIC, OR OTHER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES OPERATED BY A FIRE DEPARTMENT OR FIREFIGHTING COMPANY, OR FOR THE PAYMENT OF OTHER RELATED COSTS TO DIRECT THE PICKAWAY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS TO SUBMIT THIS ORDINANCE TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Discussion: Mayor Blanton gave a presentation on a proposed 0.5% income tax levy for Circleville aiming to replace the levy that expired on December 31, 2024. Blanton explains the tax levy is needed to sustain essential Fire/EMS and street improvement services, critical for public safety and community quality of life. The proposed levy allocates 0.4% to Fire/EMS to fund personnel, equipment, training, and station maintenance, and 0.1% to street improvements for resurfacing, pothole repairs, and infrastructure maintenance. The city's current funding structure includes the General Fund (Fund 101, \$3.65M from 1.0% income tax in 2024), Capital Improvement Fund (Fund 206, \$1.80M from 0.4% tax), Safety Forces Funds (Fund 212, \$2.25M from 0.5%; Fund 216, \$415K from 0.1%), and Capital Improvement Fund (Fund 306, \$388K). The expired levy (Fund 227, 2020–2024) generated \$2.35M in 2024, supporting 5 police officers, 2 communications officers, and 3 firefighters. Blanton explains the levy's critical importance stems from escalating demands on Fire/EMS and deteriorating infrastructure. Emergency call volumes have surged 57% from 3,088 in 2019 (2,370 EMS, 718 fire) to 4,853 in 2024 (3,576 EMS, 1,277 fire). Without the 0.4% allocation, potential staff reductions and slower response times could jeopardize public safety, as the 2024 Fire/EMS expenses totaled \$5.48M, with 70% (\$3.81M) for personnel. Similarly, the proposed 0.1% for

streets is vital to address deteriorated roads, ensuring safe emergency access, traffic flow, and property value preservation through resurfacing, curb maintenance, and grant-matching funds. Without the levy, accelerated street deterioration and reduced Fire/EMS services are likely, directly impacting community safety and livability. Blanton highlighted Circleville has leveraged successful grant applications to bolster Fire/EMS capabilities, notably through FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) programs. Key grants include: \$100,215 (2017, with \$3,960 city match) for SCBA equipment; \$563,333 (2019, \$49,200 match) for a fire engine; \$80,701 (2021, \$4,035 match) for an exhaust system; \$928,571 (2021, \$46,428 match) for a ladder truck; and a SAFER grant of \$1.56M (2023–2026) funding 6 firefighters. These grants, totaling \$3.26M with \$103,624 in city matches and a \$494,686 loan, have enhanced equipment and staffing, but the levy is essential to maintain core positions beyond the SAFER grant's March 2026 expiration. Residents and workers in Circleville would pay the tax, while those working outside will continue to receive a 100% credit, protected by a 2014 voter initiative. Funds are restricted to Fire/EMS and streets, with transparency ensured through annual audits and public reporting. Blanton hopes to have the tax levy ready for ballot placement by August 5, 2025, with an effective date of January 1, 2026. Safety Director Paul Pride voiced strong support for the proposed tax levy, reinforcing Mayor Blanton's stance on its critical importance. He emphasized that the levy is essential to meet the city's growing demands, ensuring the continued safety and well-being of the community. Duvall inquired about Mayor Blanton's decision to exclude the police department from the proposed tax levy. Mayor Blanton explained that the Fire Department faces greater risks due to its larger workforce, which could be significantly impacted if the levy fails. Duvall suggested reallocating the levy to distribute 2.5% to street improvements and 2.5% to Fire/EMS, aiming for a balanced approach. Hedges and Klitzka expressed concerns about the city's ability to sustain growth without the financial support the levy would provide. Moats sought clarification on the timeline for the levy's funding and how the city would manage the transitional period. Mayor Blanton estimated that full funding would take approximately three years. Duvall then asked Law Director Kinney if the ordinance could be amended to eliminate the proposed 0.4% allocation to Fire/EMS and 0.1% to streets. Kinney confirmed that the committee could propose an amended ordinance and forward it to Council for further review.

MOTION-ROLL CALL-VOTE: Duvall motioned to remove the specific allotment percentages to Fire/EMS and streets and forward the Ordinance to the next Council meeting on June 3, 2025, for further evaluation. Hedges Seconded. (2 Yeas - 0 Nays) Motion carried.

b) A RESOLUTION TO SUBMIT TO THE ELECTORS AT THE PRIMARY ELECTION TO BE HELD ON THE FOURTH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2025 AN ORDINANCE TO INCREASE THE CITY INCOME TAX RATE FROM THE CURRENT RATE OF TWO PERCENT (2.00%) TO A RATE OF TWO AND A HALF PERCENT (2.50%) TO BECOME EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026 BY ALLOCATING ONE TENTH OF ONE PERCENT (0.10%) OF THE INCREASE FOR THE PURPOSE OF GENERAL CONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION, RESURFACING, AND REPAIR OF THE STREETS, ROADS AND BRIDGES NECESSARY IN THE CITY OF CIRCLEVILLE AND ALLOCATING FOUR TENTHS OF ONE PERCENT (0.40%) FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING AND MAINTAINING FIRE APPARATUS, MECHANICAL RESUSCITATORS, UNDERWATER RESCUE AND RECOVERY EQUIPMENT, OR OTHER FIRE EQUIPMENT AND APPLIANCES, BUILDINGS AND SITES THEREFOR, OR SOURCES OF WATER SUPPLY AND MATERIALS THEREFOR, FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF LINES OF FIRE-ALARM COMMUNICATIONS, FOR THE PAYMENT OF FIREFIGHTING COMPANIES OR PERMANENT, PART-TIME, OR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE, ADMINISTRATIVE, OR COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE SAME, INCLUDING THE PAYMENT OF ANY EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FOR SUCH

PERSONNEL UNDER SECTION 145.48 OR 742.34 OF THE REVISED CODE, FOR THE PURCHASE OF AMBULANCE EQUIPMENT, FOR THE PROVISION OF AMBULANCE, PARAMEDIC, OR OTHER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES OPERATED BY A FIRE DEPARTMENT OR FIREFIGHTING COMPANY, OR FOR THE PAYMENT OF OTHER RELATED COSTS TO DIRECT THE PICKAWAY COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS TO SUBMIT THIS TAX ORDINANCE TO THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Discussion: Kinney explained this is a companion Resolution that goes with the above Ordinance. If the above Ordinance is passed, then it directs Council to submit a Resolution to the Board of Elections for placement on the ballot.

MOTION-ROLL CALL-VOTE: Duvall motioned to remove the specific allotment percentages to Fire/EMS and streets and forward the Resolution to the next Council meeting on June 3, 2025, for further evaluation. Hedges Seconded. (2 Yeas - 0 Nays) Motion carried.

Old/Other Business:

Duvall motioned to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:15 p.m. Seconded by Hedges Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by Clerk, Melissa Burns.