

Bad Government on Steroids

Residents from several communities filled Independence Township Hall in Clarkston on Monday, October 24, to better understand the Oakland County Transit proposal included on the November 8 ballot.

Hosted by Michigan Senator Ruth Johnson and moderated by Senator Jim Runestad, a panel of local officials, an Addison Township resident, and a former SMART transit system board member provided comments and answered questions submitted by attendees for over 90 minutes.

The ballot proposal, which would tax all residential, commercial, and agricultural property an additional 0.95 mills for ten years, would raise over \$60 Million per year and give the Oakland County Board of Commissioners the authority to decide how and where they will spend it. Homeowners would typically pay \$166 more per year while apartment renters, business owners, and farmers would also pay based on their taxable values.

Holly Township Supervisor George Kullis and County Commissioner Robert Hoffman took Oakland County Board Chair David Woodward and County Executive David Coulter to task for pushing this “11th-hour” proposal on residents. Hoffman explained that Chair Woodward gave elected commissioners just six days to consider placing the proposal on the ballot. Despite lacking any study showing a need for these additional services or a plan for how Commissioners would spend the money, the majority-Democrat Commission approved placing the new tax before voters.

Most surprising to me were comments from officials expressing frustration for not even being consulted by Woodward about the transportation needs of residents in their district or township. Other panel members expressed frustration that decades-long local control provisions were being abandoned, that allowing townships the ability to opt-out was being canceled, and that invitations for Chair Woodward to attend local information meetings were simply ignored. Further, tax limitations in the Michigan Constitution were circumvented by creating a county transit authority to levy taxes.

I laughed when Commissioner Hoffman described this transit proposal as “bad government on steroids,” but I agree. In my 30 years living in Oakland County, I’ve never seen such disregard at the county level by one political party toward the other, nor the indifference to drowning lower-income and senior residents such as myself with excessive taxes for unneeded projects.

Have you once seen a packed bus in Oakland County? Do we need to spend more?

Jay R. Taylor
Oxford