

CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
January 2, 2025

A special meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District Board was held on January 2, 2025, at the firehouse located at 5138 Columbus Road Centerburg, OH 43011. The following attended:

Board Members

Peter Dickerson
 Tom Stewart
 Eric Cochran

Staff

Chief McCann
 Courtney DeCosky, Fiscal Officer

Guests

Crystal McElhaney
 Julie Laughlin

Mr. Stewart called the Special Board meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Levy discussion)

Ms. McElhaney thanked Ms. DeCosky and the Board for fulfilling her recent public records request. She inquired what revenue is accounted for in “Charges for Services.” Ms. DeCosky confirmed it was EMS soft billing.

Ms. Laughlin inquired about the financing plan for the new fire truck arriving in March. Chief McCann explained they had originally planned to put 400K down and finance the rest. He noted that if there was not a replacement, they would likely finance the entire purchase. He went on to explain that if the levies are replaced, the funds would be used to cover salaries and stay competitive. He pointed out that the Mount Vernon Fire Department is offering 109K.

Following a question, Chief McCann confirmed that there was no legislation that mandated the money in the Star Ohio account be used for Capital. It could be transferred out to be used for any department expenditure if needed.

Mr. Stewart read the following statement:

Mr. Hardwick read a statement at our last meeting, that the voters had spoken and that they didn't want an additional increase in taxes.

What we as the board and levy committee failed to do was explain that without the replacement, we will not be able to maintain the paramedic and fire response we provide today. We focused on what the tax increase would cost the homeowner in the attempt to be as open and transparent as possible.

What we failed to explain is without the replacement we will lose 3 firefighter/paramedics.

Without the replacement, response times will increase because of limited personnel. This will affect Milford Township and the far reaches of Hilliar Township even more than the Village of Centerburg. As we all know, time is important whether it is a medical or fire emergency. Relying on mutual aid/automatic response fire and EMS is not a guarantee of adequate service to our residents.

Our residents will not be able to choose the hospital they prefer; it will have to be the closest medical facility such as KCH or maybe St. Ann's so we can be in service for the next needed response.

The purchase of fire and EMS equipment will have to be put on hold or delayed indefinitely. Some of our vehicles need to be replaced in the next year or two as per our Board approved replacement schedule.

Because of the age of some of our equipment it will cost more to maintain instead of replacing as needed and required by the National Fire Protection Association and ISO who your homeowner and equipment insurance companies base insurance premiums or rates.

We will not have enough funds to retain the highly trained personnel to fight fires and save lives. We have stabilized the loss of personnel buy offering competitive salaries and other benefits but have a long way to go.

Whether or not I will be a board member next year, I do not want to receive calls (but probably will) about delayed service to a medical or fire emergency of one of our fire district residents.

That is why I will make a motion now or later to put the levy on as it was originally proposed with the needed full support of all board members.

Mr. Dickerson shared that at the previous meeting, he had motioned for a reduction in millage. He would have been fine had it passed, but he had done due diligence in the weeks since the meeting, talking to residents and researching, and his outlook has changed.

Mr. Cochran thought some of Mr. Stewart's statements were not accurate. He also thought the talk of paying the mortgage off early was ill-timed and was afraid they were not listening to the voters. Talking to the residents in Hilliar Township, he believes a replacement would no doubt fail there.

Ms. McElhaney shared she thought Mr. Stewart was using scare tactics to get the levy passed. Mr. Stewart invited her input in rewriting it.

Ms. Laughlin was concerned that the confusion on the levy language had not been cleared up and shared with the public. She questioned who was correct, the district or the auditor's office. She also believed the department had funds that could be used to cover firefighter salaries and as a voter, she thought the first priority of the department should be to get the truck out the door when someone calls, not all the other stuff. She inquired about grants that cover training. Chief McCann confirmed that sometimes they can get training grants from Ohio Means Jobs, but they were not a guarantee and shared that the training is a part of the recruitment and retention plan, in which firefighters who receive the training agree to sign on for 3 years.

Mr. Stewart moved the adoption of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, THE AMOUNT OF TAXES THAT WILL BE RAISED WITHIN THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION WILL BE INSUFFICIENT TO PROVIDE FOR THE NECESSITY REQUIREMENTS OF CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT, KNOX COUNTY, OHIO ("TOWNSHIP"); AND,; WHEREAS, IT IS NECESSARY TO LEVY A TAX IN EXCESS OF THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION; AND

WHEREAS, THE LEVY WOULD BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF(I) For 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 file-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 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 fire department or firefighting company, or for the payment of other related costs; pursuant to Revised Code 5705.19(I);

SAID PURPOSES BEING AUTHORIZED BY R.C. 5705.19 (I); AND,

WHEREAS, A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE NECESSITY OF LEVYING A TAX, PURSUANT TO R.C. 5705.19(I), OUTSIDE THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION MUST BE APPROVED AND CERTIFIED TO THE KNOX COUNTY AUDITOR (“AUDITOR”) IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE BOARD TO CONSIDER THE LEVY OF SUCH A TAX AND MUST REQUEST THAT THE AUDITOR CERTIFY TO THE BOARD THE TOTAL CURRENT TAX VALUATION OF THE TOWNSHIP, AND THE NUMBER OF MILL(S) REQUIRED TO GENERATE A SPECIFIED AMOUNT OF REVENUE, OR THE DOLLAR AMOUNT OF REVENUE THAT WOULD BE GENERATED BY SPECIFIED NUMBER OF MILL(S).

RESOLUTION

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE BOARD AT LEAST TWO-THIRDS (2/3) OF ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD CONCURRING, AS FOLLOWS:

1. THE AMOUNT OF TAXES THAT WILL BE RAISED WITHIN THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION WILL BE INSUFFICIENT TO PROVIDE FOR THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS OF THE TOWNSHIP.
2. IT IS NECESSARY TO LEVY A TAX IN EXCESS OF THE TEN-MILL LIMITATION.
3. PURSUANT TO R.C. 5705.03 (B)(1):
THE PURPOSE OF THE TAX IS AS FOLLOWS:
(I) For 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 file-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 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 fire department or firefighting company, or for the payment of other related costs; pursuant to Revised Code 5705.19(I);
 - a. THE TYPE OF LEVY IS AS FOLLOWS:
 _____ ADDITIONAL LEVY
 _____ RENEWAL LEVY: _____ INCREASE _____ DECREASE
 _____ X _____ REPLACEMENT LEVY: _____ INCREASE _____ DECREASE
 - b. THE SECTIONS OF THE REVISED CODE AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF THE TAX ARE R.C. 5705.03, 5705.191, AND 5705.25 AND THE FOLLOWING: 5705.19(I);

c. THE TERM OF THE TAX IS AS FOLLOWS (IN YEARS OR CONTINUING);
FOUR (4) YEARS: 2025,2026,2027,2028;

d. THE TERRITORY WHERE THE TAX IS TO BE LEVIED IS AS FOLLOWS:
 X UPON THE ENTIRE TERRITORY OF THE DISTRICT
_____ IF AUTHORIZED BY THE REVISED CODE, THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED
PORTION OF THE TERRITORY OF THE TOWNSHIP:

e. THE DATE OF THE ELECTION AT WHICH THE QUESTION OF THE TAX SHALL
APPEAR ON THE BALLOT IS AS FOLLOWS: MAY 6, 2025;

f. THE TERRITORY WHERE THE BALLOT MEASURE IS TO BE SUBMITTED IS AS
FOLLOWS:
 X UPON THE ENTIRE TERRITORY OF THE DISTRICT
_____ IF AUTHORIZED BY THE REVISED CODE, THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED
PORTION OF THE TERRITORY OF THE TOWNSHIP:

g. THE TAX WILL BE FIRST LEVIED AND COLLECTED AS FOLLOWS:
THE TAX YEAR IN WHICH THE TAX WILL FIRST BE LEVIED IS 2025;
THE CALENDAR YEAR IN WHICH THE TAX WILL FIRST BE COLLECTED IS 2026;

h. THE DISTRICT HAS TERRITORY IN KNOX COUNTY AND EACH OF THE
FOLLOWING LISTED COUNTIES: MORROW.

4. PURSUANT TO R.C. 5705.03 (B) (1), THE FISCAL OFFICER IS HEREBY DIRECTED TO
CERTIFY A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE AUDITOR. THE BOARD HEREBY
REQUESTS THAT THE AUDITOR CERTIFY TO THIS BOARD OF THE FOLLOWING:

- a. THE TOTAL CURRENT TAX VALUATION OF THE TOWNSHIP;
- b. THE NUMBER OF MILL(S) REQUIRED TO GENERATE THE FOLLOWING AMOUNT
OF REVENUE, OR,
\$ _____

c. THE DOLLAR AMOUNT OF REVENUE THAT WOULD BE GENERATED BY THE
LEVY OF THE FOLLOWING MILL(S):
5.925 MILL(S)

5. ALL FORMAL ACTIONS OF THIS BOARD CONCERNING AND RELATING TO THE
PASSAGE OF THIS RESOLUTION WERE ADOPTED IN AN OPEN MEETING OF THE BOARD
AND ALL DELIBERATIONS OF THIS BOARD AND OF ANY OF ITS COMMITTEES THAT
RESULTED IN SUCH FORMAL ACTION WERE IN MEETINGS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN
COMPLIANCE WITH ALL LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING R.C. 121.22.

6. THIS RESOLUTION SHALL BE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT IMMEDIATELY UPON
ADOPTION.

MR. DICKERSON SECONDED THE RESOLUTION.

VOTED ON AND SIGNED THIS January 2, 2025 IN CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT,
KNOX COUNTY, OHIO.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT, KNOX COUNTY, OHIO

TOM STEWART, TRUSTEE	YES
PETER DICKERSON, TRUSTEE	YES
ERIC COCHRAN, TRUSTEE	NO

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Central Ohio Joint Fire District, at 7:21 p.m., Mr. Cochran made a motion to adjourn until the organizational meeting at 7:00 p.m., on January 15, 2025, unless called upon for urgent business. Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Clerk
