

Westfield Township Trustees

Second Public Hearing for consideration of \$5.00 Motor Vehicle Tax for the Township Roads Fund

June 11, 2012

7:00pm

Trustee Harris opened the Public Hearing to consider a \$5.00 Motor Vehicle Tax for the Township Roads Fund.

Trustees present: Ronald Oiler, Gary Harris, and James Likley. Also in attendance was Heather Sturdevant and Fiscal Officer Martha Evans.

Trustee Harris opened the meeting up to the public for comments or questions.

Ms. Sturdevant stated that she had two concerns regarding the proposed motor vehicle tax. First, in the time she has been coming to the meetings, she has not seen the Trustees have to deny work being done on the roads and felt that our Township roads are very well maintained. Sturdevant stated that in the winter, the Township roads were in better condition than any of the surrounding communities. She therefore had a concern as to why this tax was needed. She was looking for more of an explanation other than Township expenses was outweighing the revenue. Sturdevant then asked if the Trustees had an idea of what they would like to spend the funds collected on or things that the public were unaware of that needed to be done but had to be denied due to lack of funding. From the public's perspective, the roads were well maintained and the Township even found the funds to purchase a new truck last year. She then stated that she was looking at this situation from two standpoints. One, the economy is bad at present. Many people are losing their homes, are out of work and we have seen in this township that levies are not easy to pass. That being said, we do have a fire levy that will be on the ballot in November. Sturdevant stated that we haven't been able to get that levy passed after numerous tries. We were very close this last time and she was hopeful that in November it would pass. She wanted to know if the Trustees had any concern that by collecting an additional tax now, it would sway residents to not vote for the fire levy.

Trustee Oiler stated that there is a culvert repair on Kennard Road that has been postponed for the second year. It is a large culvert that will cost \$54,000.00 to fix. Second they had to turn down the grant that was offered on the railroad crossing for safety on Buffham Road as they did not have the \$20,000.00 in matching funds needed to proceed with the project. They did apply for another grant but have not heard anything back yet. He then stated that he had the County Commissioners go back to Columbus to see if they could reduce our portion required so that the project could proceed. Unfortunately, as money is tight at the county and state level that could not be accomplished. Trustee Oiler also stated that the stretch of Kennard Road between Lake and Westfield Road is bleeding out. That will cost between \$16,000.00 and \$20,000.00 to repair and the prices increase 10% to 15% to do that work every year. Next year the Township will have to repair all of Mudlake Road and Daniels Road.

Westfield Township Trustees

Also, the Township is working on a project for Buffham Road this year and the Township has postponed the widening of Buffham Road for three years. Trustee Oiler estimated that this tax will generate at least \$20,000.00 and that money could pay for one or more of the projects he previously mentioned.

Sturdevant stated while this tax may have a \$5.00 or \$10.00 effect on some residents, there are many residents who own several registered vehicles including herself and that for those residents this tax could cost close to or more than the fire levy on an annual basis.

Trustee Oiler then stated that between the Trustees and Mr. Evans, they have tried to be very diligent about being good stewards of the resident's money and have tried to save money wherever they can. In trying to do that the Trustees have begun to split up projects such as striping over a two year period instead of doing it all at once.

Trustee Harris stated that the Township unlike many places does not have a road levy. He feels that by collecting this tax it will keep the Township from having to impose a road levy in the near future. He also stated that according to Mr. Thorne, the county could impose the \$5.00 motor vehicle tax and then the Township would only get a portion of the money collected.

Ms. Sturdevant asked if the Township adopted the motor vehicle tax first and then the county wanted to do so later, would the Township still only receive a portion of the money generated.

Trustee Likley stated that from what the Trustees understand, if the Township adopts the tax first that there is no sharing of those dollars with the County. The County is in need of cash as well and the Trustees have reason to believe that the County would impose the tax if the Township didn't. Therefore, the Township, in order to be able to use 100% of those dollars to aid our own residents, decided to look into adopting the motor vehicle tax locally.

Trustee Oiler stated that Westfield Township is one of the few places in the county that has not implemented this tax.

Sturdevant then asked if the Trustees had any concern of the Fire levy not passing due to this tax being imposed on the residents. She went on to say that even though the Township advertised both public hearings in the paper and on the Township Website that she has found that many residents are still unaware of the possibility of this tax and that her concern was that if residents found out between now and November, it could affect the upcoming ballot. She wanted to know if there was any other way to get the information out to the public sooner rather than later to reduce the chance of having it affect the levies on the ballot.

Westfield Township Trustees

Trustee Likley stated that was his concern as well. He felt that the Township had met the requirements for advertising but unfortunately, Ms. Foster from the Trading Post had not been present to report on the subject. He felt that most residents in the Township do read the Post as opposed to the Gazette and getting the information reported there was the best way to get it to the residents. He stated that the Trustees could bring up and discuss the subject again at a meeting where Ms. Foster was present to report to the public. This issue will not go to the residents for a vote unless there is a referendum on the decision. That is why there is a process before the tax goes into effect.

Ms. Evans stated that part of that procedure was to notify the Board of Motor Vehicles by letter after the Resolution is passed and then the County Auditor needs to be notified. The tax goes into effect after that process is complete which gives the resident's time to challenge the decision. Trustee Likley then stated that he did not want the residents to think that the Trustees were trying to slide the tax in under the table. That is why the advertising was so critical.

Trustee Oiler brought up a point that the County Engineer actually in some instances was suggesting that Townships not having the funds to fix their roads, let them go back to gravel to reduce the deterioration and that some Townships, such as Homerville were taking that advice. Trustee Likley stated there has even been talk at the state level of not taking on the expense of ditch maintenance and mowing even in the road right of way. The entities could pass that cost on to the residents and if the maintenance was not done, the residents could be charged a fee for maintenance in the road right of way on their property.

Trustee Oiler stated that according to his rough estimate the Township revenue from the state would be reduced by 19 ½% and that each year it would continue to be reduced. He felt that by banking money from the tax they could continue to meet their budget with reduced revenues from the state.

The Trustees thanked Ms. Sturdevant for speaking. Trustee Harris then closed the public participation portion of the hearing.

Trustee Harris asked if there was any further discussion from the Board.

Trustee Likley reiterated that fact that the County has access to pursue this tax on their own and in that case the Township would only get a portion of the funds collected. By imposing this tax locally, the Township would get to use 100% of that funding on projects within the Township. He felt it also important to note that there is also a need for an additional storage facility to store equipment as currently the Township is storing the tractor at Seville in the off season. He also did not want the Township to get to a point where they let the maintenance of the roads slip to where the residents were complaining. Therefore Trustee Likley stated he would support the pursuit of the motor vehicle tax.

Westfield Township Trustees

Trustee Oiler made a motion that the Board of Trustees in Westfield Township, Medina County, Ohio, move forward with a \$5.00 motor vehicle license plate tax and that Ms. Evans prepare a Resolution to be signed at the next meeting. Trustee Harris seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL: Trustee Likley-yes, Trustee Oiler-yes, Trustee Harris-yes.

Trustee Harris made a motion to close the public hearing for the consideration of a motor vehicle license tax at 7:27 pm. Trustee Oiler seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL: Trustee Likley-yes, Trustee Oiler-yes, Trustee Harris-yes.

Approved June 18, 2012