

Cincinnatus

October 2007

BALLOT ENDORSEMENTS

Issue 22

Emergency Operating Levy (Cincinnati Public School District)

Voters in the Cincinnati Public School (CPS) district will be asked to approve a five-year 9.95 mill emergency levy which would raise \$65 million annually to support the CPS operating budget.

The levy would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home within the Cincinnati Public School District an additional \$294 annually.

The Excellence in Education Panel recommends that Cincinnatus Association endorse **approval** of this levy.

Issue 27

Comprehensive Safety Plan (Hamilton County)

Voters in Hamilton County will be asked to approve the implementation of the Hamilton County "Comprehensive Safety Plan" funded by a 1/2-cent sales tax increase for 8 years, followed by a 1/4-cent increase for 7 more years.

The Plan's proponents say that it will cost the average taxpayer \$33 per year, with non-Hamilton County residents making 40% of the tax payments.

The Excellence in Government Panel recommends that Cincinnatus Association endorse **approval** of this plan.

Issue 28

Mental Health Services Levy (Hamilton County)

Voters in Hamilton County will be asked to approve a 2.99 mill mental health levy (2.74 mill renewal, 0.25 mill new) which would raise \$39 million annually for programs and services for the mentally ill, plus facility expenses for the county's Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services District.

The levy would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home in Hamilton County \$44 annually (\$7 increase).

The Excellence in Government Panel recommends that Cincinnatus Association endorse **approval** of this levy.

Monthly Dinner Meeting

BALLOT ISSUE ENDORSEMENT and SHARED SERVICES

The Executive Committee is coordinating an **EVENING OF BALLOT ISSUES** accompanied by a brief presentation by **City Councilman Chris Bortz** on Hamilton County **SHARED SERVICES**. Association members will be asked to vote on whether Cincinnatus Association will, as an organization, endorse any or all of four ballot issues being presented by our Education and Government Panels.

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

5:30pm to 8:30pm (Dinner at 6:10)

Please note different location !!

The Bankers Club

Fifth-Third Tower at Fountain Square
511 Walnut Street; 30th floor

PLEASE RSVP IMMEDIATELY !!!

Make sure you tell us if you plan to bring guests. You may respond by simply using the [REPLY] to this email.

Issue 29

Senior Services Levy (Hamilton County)

Voters in Hamilton County will be asked to approve a 1.29 mill elderly services levy (1.16 mill renewal, 0.13 mill new) which would raise \$22 million annually for services for seniors.

The levy would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home in Hamilton County \$27 annually (\$4 increase).

The Excellence in Government Panel recommends that Cincinnatus Association endorse **approval** of this levy.

Issue 22 – Emergency Operating Levy (Cincinnati Public School District)

The Levy

Voters in the Cincinnati Public School (CPS) district will be asked to approve a five-year 9.95 mill emergency levy on November 6th. This is the first levy requested by CPS for increased funding in 7 years. Ohio Law does not allow any inflationary increases as property values rise, therefore, there has been no increase in funds for CPS in 7 years. The levy will cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$294 annually.

The case for endorsement

- CPS academic results ranks #1 among Ohio large urban public school districts
- CPS has climbed two levels to “Continuous Improvement” on the State Report Card and has maintained that level since 2004-2005
- CPS high school graduation rate, with assistance from the William and Melinda Gates Foundation, has improved from 52% in 2000 to nearly 80%
- CPS in 2006 adopted a strong 5-year strategic plan based on high performance expectations, best educational practices and accountability for results
- CPS, based upon the 2005 Mayor’s Task Force Recommendations, aggressively cut costs and “rightsized”. Staff was downsized by 1,100 employees, the budget reduced by \$40 million and frozen there for the past 3 years.
- Student enrollment, now leveling off, has declined by 3% since 2004 and the budget has been cut by 9% despite inflationary increase in utilities, health care, etc.
- Contributions to charter schools, required by the state, are estimated to increase by 30% next year to \$60 million
- The STRIVE initiative involving Cincinnati, Newport and Covington, is the most comprehensive initiative ever tried in the US to improve education of children in those cities. It cannot succeed without appropriate funding of public schools

Frequently asked questions

- With a declining school population, why is more money needed?
 - The school population is leveling off, after a 3% decline since 2004, yet the budget has been cut by 9%, frozen for 3 years and healthcare, utilities, contributions to charter schools and other costs are increasing with inflation
- What will be cut if the levy doesn’t pass?
 - CPS has already made substantial cuts this year, as much as 15% in some schools. The administrative staff is very small. Additional cuts will impact substantially the districts ability to continue its academic progress.

**The Excellence in Education Panel urges the Cincinnati Association
to endorse the Cincinnati Public School’s Operating Levy.**



Issue 27 – Comprehensive Safety Plan (Hamilton County)

We heard the arguments at our meeting last month. Here is a short description of the issues and outline of the key arguments on each side.

Description of the Comprehensive Safety Plan and Sales Tax

The County's description of the proposed Plan is on page 2. To pay for the Plan, there would be a ½ cent sales tax increase for 8 years, then a ¼ cent increase for 7 more years. It is estimated that this will raise about \$777 million over 15 years. The Plan's proponents say that it will cost the average taxpayer \$33 per year and non-County residents will make 40% of the tax payments.

Arguments in Favor of the Plan and Sales Tax Increase

Proponents of the Plan are Sheriff Leis and Commissioners Portune and Pepper. Many of their arguments are contained in the summary on the next page. In addition, Sheriff Leis says:

- There is inadequate space for female offenders. Many are being "early released."
- There are too many maximum security offenders being held in minimum security facilities, creating safety risk to corrections personnel, other prisoners, and the public.
- There are insufficient facilities for prisoners with medical and mental problems.

Arguments Against the Plan and Sales Tax Increase

Opposition to the "jail tax" is led by Commissioner DeWine, the NAACP, and COAST, who say:

- In November 2006, Hamilton County voters rejected a sales tax for a \$275 million plan to build a new jail by 57% of the vote. This plan is much more expensive.
- Despite talk of an overcrowding crisis, no male inmates have been released early in 2007.
- There is sufficient inmate housing available via contracts with adjacent counties.
- The County has wasteful spending that could be put into public safety.
- Hamilton County already has the 2nd highest property tax burden of all 88 Ohio counties. Unless repealed, its sales tax rate will be higher than that in any adjacent county.
- The new jail will actually net only 384 new beds.
- Most of those who are currently being jailed in Hamilton County for more than a short time are serious public safety risks (i.e., charged with violent offenses). Having more jail space will simply lead to incarceration of more people who really don't need to be in jail.
- The County already has a wide range of good programs in place to divert those who need not be jailed and to provide rehabilitation for those who are willing to seek it.
- A sales tax is a regressive tax that hits hardest those low income people least able to pay.
- This will not turn out to be a temporary tax increase.

**The Excellence in Government Panel urges the Cincinnati Association
to endorse the Hamilton County Comprehensive Safety Plan.**



HAMILTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY PLAN: A SUMMARY



THE PROBLEM:

For too long, the County's justice system has been overcrowded, the rate of recidivism has remained at 70%, and crime rates have been too high, especially for juveniles. Past solutions such as the Queensgate "temporary" facility and the Butler County contract have been expensive, unsustainable band-aids. No one has solved the problem in a long-term or comprehensive way.

THE SOLUTION:

The County Commission, Sheriff Simon Leis and Intervention Specialists like Doctor Walter Smitson have put together a comprehensive package of long-needed investments and reforms to address these issues and improve the safety of Hamilton County. The highlights of the Plan are:

EXPANDED ENFORCEMENT

- The County will take up **70% of County Communications Center** costs. This frees up millions of dollars for 48 cities, villages and townships to spend on public safety enhancements to better fight crime, prevent fires and respond to medical emergencies.
- The Plan provides ongoing funding of **targeted Sheriff's patrols** in Over the Rhine, and additional funding to expand patrols to hotspots throughout the County.
- The Plan adds prosecutors to pursue **federal gun prosecutions** of the County's most violent offenders. Such prosecutions will keep the most dangerous offenders off the streets for far longer sentences, and free up County jail space.

REFORM/LOWERING RECIDIVISM

- **Reentry planning:** the Plan creates a Reentry Planning approach where teams of specialists will assess the underlying issues that confront individual offenders as they enter the system, and then address those issues over the course of their term to minimize the likelihood that they will re-offend after release.
- **Rehabilitation:** the Plan adds investments in rehabilitation (mental illness, substance abuse, reentry, etc.), both inside and outside corrections facilities.
- **Accountability:** the Plan funds the Criminal Justice Commission, providing oversight and accountability to the millions spent on programs every year.
- **Juvenile violence:** The Plan invests new dollars in the Juvenile System, leading to more prevention and better interventions for high-risk juvenile offenders.

EXPANDED FACILITIES

- The Plan provides funding to **construct a new 1,800-bed facility** to meet the long-term demand for added jail space. The facility will be located on the property already acquired (at no cost) by the County in Camp Washington (the old Kahn's site).
- The Plan provides the needed funds to operate the facility.
- By consolidating numerous outdated facilities into one modern facility, the Plan achieves millions of dollars in **operating efficiencies**. New facilities will also allow for treatment and other efforts to reduce recidivism.



Issue 28 – Mental Health Services Levy (Hamilton County)

This is a renewal of an existing levy passed in 2002, plus additional millage to account for inflation and the increased need for services.

The 2.99-mill mental health levy (2.74 mill renewal, 0.25 mill new) would raise \$38.9 million annually for programs and services for the mentally ill, plus facility expenses for the county's Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services District. The levy would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$43.86 annually (\$7.40 more).

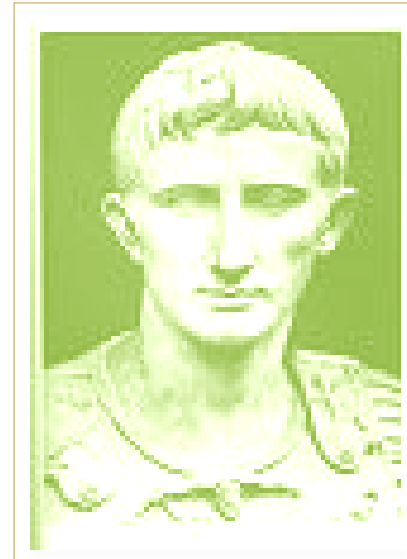
About 160,000 Hamilton County residents -- one out of every five -- are affected by mental illness each year. The Mental Health Levy provides funds for counseling of troubled children and teens in our schools. It also funds clinical treatment, housing and job training for severely mentally disabled adults, helping them to lead more self sufficient, productive lives in their communities. Levy funds are used by the Hamilton County Mental Health & Recovery Services Board to purchase specific mental health services from over 40 community-based agencies. The Board monitors contract compliance and ensures quality control.

Over 40,000 adults and children benefited in 2006 from levy-funded services:

- 11,705 adults and 6,509 children received a range of services, including more traditional services such as counseling, case management and medication monitoring, as well as specialized services that serve to further facilitate an individual's reintegration into a meaningful role in society.
- 8,072 individuals received emergency care
- 13,834 individuals received crisis services

Funding for these services in Fiscal Year 2006 (FY) came from the following sources:

- Hamilton County Mental Health Levy \$33,190,847 (40%)
- State of Ohio \$21,805,463 (26%)
- Federal Government/Medicaid \$25,882,215 (31%)
- Other \$2,247,313 (3%)



95% (\$79.7 million) of the FY 2006 budget of the Mental Health & Recovery Services Board was devoted to services for children and for adults with severe mental disabilities.

The administrative efficiencies achieved through the recent merger of the Mental Health and Alcohol & Drug Addiction Services Boards will generate approximately \$800,000 to go directly towards services each year.

Sources: Mental Health Works, Inc. and Cincinnati Enquirer

**The Excellence in Government Panel urges the Cincinnati Association
to endorse the Hamilton County Mental Health Services Levy.**

Issue 29 – Senior Services Levy (Hamilton County)

As with the Mental Health levy, this is also a renewal of a levy passed in 2002 at a slightly increased millage to account for increased demand for service as well as inflation.

The 1.29-mill elderly services levy (1.16 mill renewal, 0.13 mill new) would raise \$21.9 million annually for services for seniors. It would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home in Hamilton County \$26.51 annually (\$3.85 more than now).

The levy supports services -- primarily the Elderly Services Program (ESP) -- which enable older adults to stay safely in their homes, preserve their independence and dignity, and avoid unnecessary and costly nursing home placements. It serves those who are not eligible for other community programs (e.g., Medicaid). The services include home-delivered meals, home safety repairs, transportation to medical appointments, homemaker and personal care help, adult day care, respite for caregivers, and case management. To be eligible for service, the individual must be 65 or older, a resident of Hamilton County, and need assistance with at least two normal activities of daily living (e.g., bathing, homemaking, or grocery-shopping). Individuals agree to participate in cost-sharing on a sliding fee scale.

In 2006, ESP served almost 8000 clients. Half lived alone. 86% had severe disabilities. 55% were over 80 years old. 73% were female. Their average annual income was about \$18,000. They shared about 25% of the cost of their care.

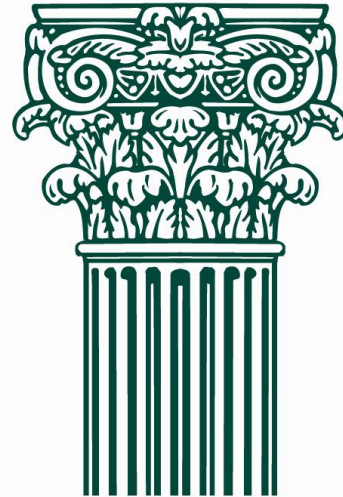
The need for service is growing.

- Ohio has the 6th largest aging population in the U.S., and Hamilton County the 2nd highest in Ohio.
- 145,000 residents -- over 1 in 5 -- is age 60 or older
- by 2020, the age-60+ population will increase by 20%
- there is a shrinking pool of potential caregivers
- federal funding is flat

Elderly people of modest means should not be forced to live in institutional settings if they want to remain in their homes and can do so with some assistance. ESP provides that assistance. The Council on Aging does a fine job running ESP. The tax levy funds are money well spent.

Sources: Council on Aging and the Cincinnati Enquirer

The Excellence in Government Panel urges the Cincinnati Association to endorse the Hamilton County Senior Services Levy.



Cincinnatus Association Information

MISSION: The Cincinnatus Association believes that the quality of life in the City of Cincinnati and in the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area is among the highest in the United States and can be further improved. It is the mission of the Cincinnatus Association and its members to initiate, recognize, participate in and promote projects that improve the quality of life for all citizens in this region through the study of critical issues confronting the region, engaging community leaders and shaping public policy.

NEWSLETTER: This Newsletter is distributed periodically during the Association year and is intended for Cincinnatus Association members' general information only. Members are welcome to share it with invited guests and others as they feel appropriate. Newsletter submissions should be sent to Roger Smith at Cincinnatus_Assoc@hotmail.com.