

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

**Minutes of Franklin Township
Franklin County, Ohio**

Special Meeting

**Held via Teleconference
Ohio's Open Meeting Act**

June 23, 2021

Call Meeting to Order:

Chairman Horn called a Special Meeting of the Franklin Township Board of Trustees to order at 2:04 p.m. on June 23, 2021, via teleconference (ZOOM).

Roll Call: Horn, yes; Alex, yes; Fleshman, absent.

The Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Trustee Alex

New Business:

Chairman Horn began by stating the purpose of the meeting was to possibly place a police levy on the November, 2021 ballot. He asked that a representative of the Police Department speak.

Police Department Report:

Chief Byron Smith stated it was his understanding that part of the meeting was for the public to be able to ask questions regarding the possibility of a levy so the Board can decide on what type of levy to put on the ballot depending on what the public wants.

Smith asked if there were any comments from the public.

Janet Ward, a Franklin Township resident, wanted to voice her appreciation for the Police Department and all they do for her neighborhood.

Trustee Fleshman joined the meeting at 2:11 p.m.

Administrator Mark Potts stated that the Police Department sent out a newsletter asking for opinions from the public to be sent to Potts' email address.

He stated that he had received two responses.

One e-mail from Tennie Deibel stated:

“Hello. I am a concerned homeowner in Franklin Township. I just read over the police levy newsletter. I have some concerns. The main concern that worries me as a homeowner and mother is risking losing law enforcement in our neighborhood. However, current law enforcement in the area seems a bit off to me. For example, when I drive down Harrisburg Pike or near Central Point, I see our officers handing out to the needy instead of patrolling the community. The risk of losing law enforcement worries me, however the current law enforcement job performance doesn't seem up to standards, especially for the taxes and funding the police currently have. I am not sure where my taxes are exactly going as our community needs work, so my standpoint is simple - police enforcement in our community is extremely important, however the current police situation seems wasteful and unnecessary – so at this time I personally would like to know the changes that would be made. Such a shame to see the change my community has endured with the change in police patrolling over the years.”

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An e-mail from David W. Byers stated:

“I am a huge supporter of law enforcement. I am not in favor of another tax hike. The fire levy passed a while back and the township is still short of firefighters, and I heard the possibility of firefighters still could be laid off, so where are our tax dollars going? I understand expenses, etc. Is the money being used properly? What about our roads, all the abandoned houses and neglected properties in the township that have been there for years, even decades, and not much has been done about them. I may consider voting for a police levy in the future but not this year. Thanks.”

Horn expressed his understanding of the expense of a tax hike and his concern that the township needs as much protection from the Police Department as possible.

He stated that he was in favor of another meeting between the Police Department and township residents to share opinions regarding the levy.

Trustee Fleshman agreed that public opinions should be heard.

Chief Smith voiced his concern that time was running out to put a levy on the ballot, that the deadline is August 4, 2021. He wanted to discuss the three options.

Smith stated that this was a group consensus between himself, Nick Dunn and Jeff Wilcheck.

He stated that the options would all be considered temporary. He stated that by putting a renewal of the five-year levy on the ballot, it would be pointless as the Police Department would still need to lay off officers in 2023 due to lack of funding.

Fiscal Officer Nick Dunn stated he sent to the Board a proposal for renewal of the levy with the last page of the proposal showing in a five-year projection the undesignated balances. He stated the proposal shows, if the levy passes, that by the end of 2023 there will be a shortfall of \$300,000 for the Police Department.

Smith mentioned a second option being a renewal plus 3 mills which would allow the Police Department to have twelve full-time and six part-time officers. He stated that option would not allow for very many emergencies.

He mentioned the third option being a five-year renewal with 3 1/2 mills which would have just enough funding to replace any computers or vehicles without using the general fund.

He stated the third option with 3 1/2 mills is basically the same that was asked as a permanent levy, just in a five-year temporary form.

Fleshman mentioned hearing from township residents their wish to have a timed levy. He also stated that some of the voters did not like the wording on the ballot and felt that was a deciding factor in the vote.

Fleshman stated the Township wants stability with a permanent levy but he believes there are other options. He stated he felt the township could look at

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options they have had previously such as a township-wide levy. He stated he did like the second option that would provide enough funds to replace equipment.

Smith stated that if the Board agreed with the five-year renewal with addition of 3 1/2 mills, he would ask that they pass that resolution.

Potts stated that he would e-mail Jen Huber of legal counsel asking her to prepare a resolution to present at the next meeting to get an auditor's certificate for a police levy renewal plus 3.5 mills.

Alex stated that his preference would be the first option because it would not have a tax increase for township residents.

Fleshman inquired about the difference between the second and third options.

Smith stated the difference is a half mill, that the second option may require the Police Department to ask the Board for assistance. He stated with the first option, it would be important to inform residents that if they pass it, they would lose services because there would be mandatory lay-offs. He stated his preference would be the second or third option.

Alex asked Chief Smith if he has been in contact with the FCSO regarding any assistance they could provide Franklin Township.

Smith stated that in conversation with FCSO, Franklin Township would need more money to retain their assistance and learned that the Sheriff has no interest in trying to add deputies to contract out. He stated FCSO is only required to respond to calls that do not include patrolling or non-priority runs.

Fleshman voiced his idea of having a township-wide levy which he felt would lower taxes.

Alex stated that he liked the idea Fleshman had but that Valleyview would be impacted and be opposed to it.

Fleshman and Horn stated they thought Valleyview moved out of Franklin Township. Lieutenant Ratliff confirmed that Valleyview was still within Franklin Township.

Smith voiced his opinion that the Police Department needed solidarity from the Board regarding a decision about the levy.

Horn stated that he would prefer the third option but agreed to move forward with the second option. He stated that there should also be solidarity with township residents.

Fleshman made a motion to allow Franklin Township staff to obtain the language for a resolution of the police levy, a renewal plus 3 mills, to present at the next meeting. Alex seconded the motion, stating he wanted to see the figures from the county. With no further discussion, the roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Horn: YES/ NO **Fleshman:** YES/ NO **Alex:** YES/ NO

Motion passed.

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Adjournment:

With no further discussion, Horn adjourned the meeting at 3 p.m.

Signature of file with original

Aryeh Alex, Trustee

Signature of file with original

John Fleshman, Vice-Chairman/Trustee

Signature of file with original

Ralph Horn, Chairman/Trustee

Signature of file with original

Nick Dunn, Fiscal Officer