



Residents of Mount Healthy,

As has been discussed greatly over the past few years, Mount Healthy is in a tenuous situation regarding our fire department. Service calls have increased 16% since 2012, making us the busiest station in Hamilton County, yet our department hasn't asked the taxpayers for an increase in funding since 2004 when voters approved the current 5 mil levy. Demand for service has increased while funding has not.

For decades, our city has utilized part time employees and relied on mutual aid from neighboring districts to respond to emergency calls. This model often leads to short staffing and has kept us as the only department in Hamilton County not meeting the certification required to provide Advanced Cardiac Life Support to our residents. In 2017, we began experiencing mutual aid refusals from other districts and Springfield Township has now notified us that they will no longer respond to our mutual aid calls when their capacity is lower than 50%. North College Hill has discussed the possibility of billing us for calls they provide into our jurisdiction. This is not to say that I blame our neighbors at all, in 2019 alone we received 100 more mutual aid runs from neighboring departments than we provided. This is not mutual, and is not fair to their departments or taxpayers. Additionally, this is not fair to our own residents who have experienced delayed services and unfortunate outcomes that could have been prevented had we been fully staffed.

We attempted to fix these problems by merging our fire department with North College Hill's fire department and creating the Hilltop Joint Fire and Rescue District. After two failed attempts at the ballot in 2019, that initiative was abandoned and we began to consider other options.

On January 28th of this year, we held a public hearing with a standing room only crowd to consider the two options of either passing a levy to improve our own fire department or passing a levy to shutdown Mt. Healthy FD and contract with Springfield Township to provide fire and emergency services. The feedback received at that hearing and the subsequent City Council meetings was nearly unanimous that we should put a levy on the ballot to increase funding for our own fire department.

Council immediately got to work and created a plan to fully staff and fund our department and determined that this will require the passage of an additional 12.9 mil fire levy. This levy will be on the ballot during the August 4th special election and we encourage everyone to vote. This tax increase is not insignificant, but is necessary to provide quality service for the health and safety of all the residents of Mt. Healthy. Here is what passage of the levy will fund

- The hiring of 7 fulltime Firefighter/Paramedics and part time staff at competitive wages
- The ability to run 2 ambulances and respond to fire calls every hour of every day
- Certification as a full-time paramedic department with the ability to provide Advanced Cardiac Life Support

In addition to the levy, the City of Mt. Healthy will also continue to apply for all grants available to defer local costs and extend local funding needs as long as possible. This includes the Federal SAFER Grant which we hope will partially offset full time salaries for the first few years if awarded. Passage of the levy will allow us to fund capital expenditures such as trucks and equipment when replacement is required but will not fund the building of a new fire station. Contrary to what some have said, this will not fund the construction of a new Fire Station and our City has no plans to do so.

So what will this cost us as taxpayers? The table below shows the tax increase for homeowners in Mt. Healthy based on various market values as determined by the Hamilton County Auditor:

<b>Market Value</b>	<b>Cost per Mil</b>	<b>12.9 mil Annual Increase</b>	<b>12.9 mil Monthly Increase</b>	<b>12.9 mil Daily Increase</b>
\$120,000	\$42.00	\$541.80	\$45.15	\$1.48
\$100,000	\$35.00	\$451.50	\$37.63	\$1.24
\$90,000	\$31.50	\$406.35	\$33.86	\$1.11
\$80,000	\$28.00	\$361.20	\$30.10	\$0.99
\$70,000	\$24.50	\$316.05	\$26.34	\$0.87
\$60,000	\$21.00	\$270.90	\$22.58	\$0.74
\$50,000	\$17.50	\$225.75	\$18.81	\$0.62
\$40,000	\$14.00	\$180.60	\$15.05	\$0.49
\$30,000	\$10.50	\$135.45	\$11.29	\$0.37

Some have asked why we have chosen to put this on the August ballot and not wait until November. That is an important question that I am happy to answer. When a levy is passed, funds aren't dispersed to that City until the next calendar year. If this levy passes in August, it will give us 5 months to begin the preparations and planning necessary to implement the newly funded department in 2021. If it fails, we will have one more attempt in November to pass the levy and still collect the new funds in 2021. If we wait until November and it fails upon first attempt, we would be forced to put it back on the ballot in the 2021 primary which means we wouldn't collect any new dollars until 2022 if it passes at that time. This issue became urgent in 2017 and we cannot keep kicking the can. Another year of failed service puts the health and safety of residents at risk and we need to find a solution. Four years of planning and proposals is enough and we cannot risk putting it off another year.

This is a lot to digest and I'm sure many residents will have questions before the election on August 4th. We have created several avenues for these questions to be raised and those options are listed below:

- Watch the video created by City Manager Bill Kocher, Finance Chair Bob Parsons, Fire Chief Steve Lawson, and myself at:  
<https://www.icrctv.com/video/mt-healthy-fire-levy-information-video>
- Ask questions or give feedback during the Public Input portion of the July 21st City Council meeting livestream at: <https://www.icrctv.com/community/mt-healthy>
- Email us your questions:
  - Fire Chief Steve Lawson [slawson@mthealthy.org](mailto:slawson@mthealthy.org)
  - Mayor James Wolf [jwolf@mthealthy.org](mailto:jwolf@mthealthy.org)
  - City Manager Bill Kocher [bkocher@mthealthy.org](mailto:bkocher@mthealthy.org)
  - Finance Chair Bob Parsons [rparsons@mthealthy.org](mailto:rparsons@mthealthy.org)

Thank you for considering this issue, we look forward to answering your questions over the coming weeks and encourage you to vote on August 4th.

Sincerely,

Mayor James C. Wolf