

April 08, 2014

News Release

For Immediate Release

Springfield voters support renewal of Police-Fire Pension Sales Tax

Springfield voters have approved the renewal of the City's existing 3/4-cent Police-Fire Pension Sales Tax. With 100% of the precincts reporting, 76.2% of voters supported the continuance. Final results are pending the Greene County Clerk's certification. The tax is projected to generate about \$145 million over five years to help fund a shortfall in the Police-Fire Pension Plan. The tax will sunset in five years, or whenever the plan is 100% funded, whichever comes first. The City will continue to annually contribute 35% of payroll of those employees in the closed plan, and police officers and firefighters in the plan will continue to contribute. Their current contribution rate is 14% and is recalculated every three years. These contributions will continue until the plan (not the tax) ends.

“First and foremost, I’d like to thank our citizens who voted for this renewal. I’m hopeful this show of support reflects the City’s credibility ... we said what we’d do and we’ve done what we said,” said City Manager Greg Burris. “The competitive advantage this will bring Springfield may not be realized for a few years, but it will be significant when we will be compared to cities who are not facing up to this debt.”

Fire Chief David Hall says the tax is critical to the Fire Department, in addition to the other City Departments. Without it, the City would have had to increase its annual contribution to the plan by \$9 million, out of a \$73 million General Fund budget, requiring the City to reduce public safety and many other public services.

“With its passage, we will be able to continue the level of service that the citizens expect from their city,” Hall said. “We are currently in the process of testing for future firefighters to begin the recruit academy later this year. With the continuance of this tax, we will be able to continue with filling those positions.”

Police Chief Paul Williams said the passage allows the Police Department to continue with crime prevention and other programs aimed at curbing the crime rate. He says in many ways the department has been “on hold” as they awaited the outcome of today’s vote. “We can now move forward with the initiatives currently in place, as well as work to implement additional plans to positively impact crime and enhance the quality of life in Springfield,” he said.

“Thank you to the citizens of Springfield for acknowledging the efforts of their City leaders to keep the commitment made in 2009 and for once again expressing their confidence in us to diligently work to resolve this issue, while ensuring that the funds entrusted to us are used in the most efficient and effective manner possible,” Williams continued.

Pension Board Chairman and citizen Charlie Cowherd expressed his gratitude on behalf of the board. "We appreciate the confidence that the community has placed in the Board to be good stewards of the tax revenues this vote will provide. The Board is dedicated to protecting the assets of the Plan so that the promises to each participant in the Plan are kept."

Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens echoed a sense of gratitude.

"I want to thank the voters of Springfield for continuing to support our efforts in public safety. A vote such as this, shows that voters educated themselves on the issue and voted accordingly," Stephens said.

Greene County voter turnout was about 9.6%, which is down from the 12% turnout in the last municipal election in April, 2013.

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