



West Licking Joint Fire District

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October 28th, 2024

To the Residents of the West Licking Joint Fire District,

I hope that you had a safe and fun weekend. As we mentioned in Friday’s letter, today we will give you some specific details regarding the District’s operating budget, specifically the levies and missed tax income.

The Fire District’s revenues and expenditures.

Let’s start with a quick revisit of how we receive our funds. We operate from two types of levies: General and Special funds. All District levies are pulled from property taxes. No income tax and we are almost always excluded from tax abatements, Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), and Community Reinvestment Area (CRA).

General funds can be used for any expense the District incurs. Special funds include items that are substantial in cost but more importantly investments that the District will use for a period of ten years or longer.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
General fund revenue **	\$9,578,971.97	\$9,773,899.45	\$10,730,258.61	\$12,337,312.91	\$13,685,650.78
Capital fund revenue **	\$1,173,549.14	\$1,194,347.41	\$1,203,230.23	\$1,245,388.07	\$1,374,979.33
Intergovernmental receipts	\$1,022,684.20	\$1,042,492.40	\$790,963.06	\$901,015.00	\$995,150.36
EMS billing revenue	\$1,313,103.40	\$1,194,578.15	\$1,422,266.50	\$1,521,010.77	\$1,831,981.73
Corona Virus/ARPS fund			\$773,464.18		
Other, misc. non-operat	\$203,834.61	\$392,597.41	\$750,756.58	\$275,065.41	\$596,325.23
Interest	\$137,798.83	\$27,980.67	\$4,387.57	\$117,123.90	\$402,205.18
Total	\$13,429,942.15	\$13,625,895.49	\$15,675,326.73	\$16,396,916.06	\$18,886,292.61
General fund expenditures	\$10,320,414.98	\$11,335,851.18	\$12,321,115.48	\$12,776,100.27	\$16,548,761.70
Capital fund expenditures	\$869,262.73	\$1,206,365.95	\$1,834,969.75	\$1,521,582.15	\$1,700,116.53
EMS fund expenditures	\$1,501,297.26	\$1,346,679.48	\$1,315,599.37	\$1,456,926.73	\$1,566,439.78
Corona Virus/Arps Exp				\$309,888.36	\$463,575.82
Total	\$12,690,974.97	\$13,888,896.61	\$15,471,684.60	\$16,064,497.51	\$20,278,893.83

**** Indicates the voter approved levies only.**

Revenue via property tax is unique, in that it doesn’t have guarantees from year to year. Rather, county assessments and agreements from local jurisdictions dictate what funding reaches the fire department. These are challenges faced by the fire district on a yearly basis. For example, the district brought in \$827,000 less in property tax revenue than what was estimated by the auditor in 2024. If recent patterns are any indication, these numbers will continue to increase.

Fire District missed opportunities for funds

Our unprecedented growth brings a unique impact to the communities that we serve. The entities in our District must weigh the positives of new jobs and economic boom versus the bad of providing infrastructure and upkeep these systems need. There are a few ways to give incentives to developers to bring jobs and housing to the area. In most cases, these incentives negotiate away property tax, the major source of revenue for our District. Below are examples of programs currently being used within the district, which affect our overall revenue.

1. Abatements are financial incentives used by governments to reduce or eliminate taxes for a specific period.
2. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a public financing method that is used to subsidize redevelopment, infrastructure, and community improvement projects like water and sewer services.
3. Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) are designated zones where municipalities offer property tax incentives to stimulate investment and revitalization in underdeveloped areas.

These tools are used by communities served by your fire district; in turn, the property tax funding that would be received by the fire district is negotiated away. Most of the time, the district is unaware these negotiations are underway because Ohio law does not require a city, village, or township to notify us or include a fire department in funding negotiations. Simply put, the District does not have a seat at the table.

This is an issue we take seriously and have spoken to local and state representatives to address and voice our concerns. This problem doesn't just affect our jurisdiction but all fire, EMS, and police departments that operate via property tax funding. Public safety tax dollars shouldn't be used as a negotiating chip.

Currently, the fire district is involved in three abatements. The fire district receives anywhere from 3 to 4 percent of the income tax generated from workers in those designated zones, depending on which Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) it is pulled from. In 2023, the fire district received roughly \$200,000 in revenue from those zones. Generally, that amount flexes mildly from year to year. While we appreciate being included, the \$200,000 does not balance with what we lose.

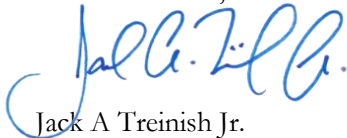
In 2023 the District lost out on nearly 4 million dollars. **In 2024, per the Licking County Auditor, the District is set to lose \$4,001,281.62.** Again, we have no say in these matters.

The utilization of TIFs and CRAs have a unique effect on the Fire District, as they can and are placed on residential developments. These are put in place to help a developer or community put in infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer. Oftentimes, taxpayers within these residential developments are unaware that their tax money is being diverted away and reallocated to other projects, as it shows on their tax bill going to the fire district. On a more positive note, we do have some abatements coming to end-of-life, which have stretched over the last 15 years. However, there are no more of the negotiated TIFs, Abatements, or CRAs coming off till 2036, with some stretching out past 2040 with more to come.

Overall, adding housing and commercial developments does not automatically increase Fire District funding, as often we are unaware of the incentives that have been put in place.

We hope this clears up some of the questions that you may have. Please look for our next letter on Wednesday that will explain the District's yearly carryover and steps we have taken to keep expenditures down.

Yours in service,



Jack A Treinish Jr.

Fire Chief

Proud Resident for over Twenty Years

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