

Public Safety Millage Renewal

Ten years ago Ann Arbor Township voters first approved a 3.98 Public Safety millage request for police protection and operation of the Ann Arbor Township Fire Dept. for five years. Voters approved a 5-year renewal request in August 2011. That millage expires on December 31, 2016.

Township voters will be asked on August 2, 2016, to renew this 3.98 Public Safety millage for another five years without increase.

This millage pays for our contract with the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Dept. to provide police protection, and it covers all costs associated with the Ann Arbor Township Fire Dept. including the provision of emergency medical services.

Even though the Township continues to lose property through City of Ann Arbor annexations, we do not anticipate the need to increase this

dedicated millage beyond the rate approved by voters in 2006. This is due to several initiatives that have contributed to keeping our Fire Dept. costs down while maintaining good service. One page 2, there is a Q&A with information on these efforts and the millage request. We encourage all residents to become well-informed on this issue and vote.

Ann Arbor Charter Township Board of Trustees



December 2015 Ann Arbor Township Training Burn

Dixboro Road Shared-use Trail Plan

Anyone who drives on Dixboro Road between Geddes and Plymouth Roads has experienced its heavy traffic during morning and afternoon rush and significant traffic at other times moving through the densest population in the Township. Owing to the lack of right of way and significant slopes on both sides of the road, there is no feasible way to provide sufficient marked lanes for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and wheelchairs are even more disadvantaged.

In 2015, after public hearings, the Township

amended our Master Plan to emphasize the need for non-motorized pathways and we adopted our first Five-Year Recreation Plan. A top priority of these plans is to work with the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens on development of a 14-ft. wide, multi-use paved trail through woods and fields parallel to Dixboro Road between Geddes and the Botanical Gardens parking lot.

We have obtained more than \$1.5 million in grants and other donations for this project, and assuming a successful completion of the fund-raising campaign, we expect to break ground next year.

Public Safety Millage Renewal Questions & Answers

Voters in Ann Arbor Township will have the opportunity on August 2 to cast their vote on the requested renewal of the Public Safety millage.

The ballot proposal reads:

Shall the existing previously voted increase in the authorized charter millage for Ann Arbor Charter Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan of up to 3.98 mills for police and fire protection services, which expires on December 31, 2016, be renewed and levied for another five years (2017 through 2021 inclusive) in an amount not to exceed 3.98 mills on taxable real and personal property (\$3.98 per \$1000 of taxable value) to continue to provide funding for operating, equipping, upgrading, maintaining, constructing, purchasing or any other purpose authorized by law for fire or police protection services, raising an estimated \$2,013,000 in the 2017 calendar year?

YES

NO

Q | Why 3.98 mills? How was this number determined?

This millage goes to a dedicated Public Safety Fund, of which 2.49 mills funds the Fire Dept. operations and 1.49 mills covers our contract with the Washtenaw County Sherriff's Dept. for deputies to patrol our Township. We collaborate with Superior Township to share deputies, extending our hours of coverage without adding to our costs.

Q | What has Ann Arbor Township done to control Fire Dept. costs?

During the last five year renewal period, we sought and obtained several grants totaling \$555,000; one has allowed us to add to our ranks of on-call paid firefighters, which supplement our full-time staff. That grant covers recruitment and training costs, and initial results are promising as we look to continue and expand on-call personnel. We also receive rental revenue from wireless service providers for a cell tower located at Fire Station #2 and another located at our water tank that is used to purchase fire engines, trucks and other pieces of large equipment. In addition, the Board of Trustees, led by Trustee Ken Kohrs, conducted a comprehensive review of possibilities to consolidate all or parts of our Fire Dept. operations with those of Superior Township. While it was a valuable exercise, no significant cost savings were identified.

Q | How does our tax rate for overall township services compare to our neighbors?

We continue to provide good service at a millage rate that is lower than the city or township taxes imposed by most of our neighboring communities. Below is the 2015 millage rate for city or township taxes on homes with principle residence exemptions (this does not include millage rates for schools, library or county services):

City of Ann Arbor	16.4436
Ypsilanti Township	14.2681
Northfield Township	7.0251
(includes 0.8358 building bond)	
Pittsfield Township	6.5916
Superior Township	6.0522
Ann Arbor Township	5.4181
Dexter Township	4.9534
Scio Township	2.5547

Ann Arbor Township Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program - Ten Years Later

In 2003, more than 80% of Ann Arbor Township voters supported a 20-year millage to fund a Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program. More than 10 years later, 1,110 acres have been voluntarily preserved in the Township's designated agricultural preservation area north of US-23/M-14. About 16% of protected lands include natural features such as woods, wetlands and streams.

Landowners volunteer to place their property in the program. A seven-member Farmland and Open Space Preservation Board, appointed by the Township Board of Trustees, works with farmers and property owners, and determines which parcels are appropriate for the program. With support from local land preservation consultant Barry Lonik and others, the Preservation Board determines a fair price for a parcel's development rights based on appraisals. In exchange for payment, landowners sign a permanent deed restriction called a conservation easement that is recorded at the Washtenaw County Register of Deeds and runs with the property in perpetuity.

The historic Kapp family farm was the first completed project in Nov. 2006. Since then eight other projects have closed, creating two large blocks of contiguous protected land. The west block with 620 acres is located south of Joy Rd., which is the Township's northern boundary. It includes land on both sides of Whitmore Lake Rd. and US-23.

The 450 acres in the east block are south of Pontiac Trail on both sides of Nixon Rd. This includes a 153-acre parcel that was donated to the Township as part of Northbrooke, a clustered residential development proposal,

and it is leased to Michigan Food and Farming Systems. MIFF runs the Tilian Farm Development Center on this parcel. Tilian is a farm business incubator where currently a dozen or so young men and women are learning organic farming methods.

About \$3.2 million of township millage funds have been spent so far, and more than twice that amount has been matched by a federal grant program, the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt program and/or Washtenaw County Parks. Some landowners agreed to sell development rights at less than the value determined by an independent appraiser. Administrative costs account for 13% of total expenditures with 87% of millage funds used directly for Purchase of Development Rights.

Some protected properties have changed ownership since joining the PDR program, including two purchased by organic farmers.

We are more than halfway to the Township's goal to protect 2,000 acres. The Preservation Board meets at Township Hall every other month on the fourth Monday at 7:30 p.m. Please contact Township Supervisor Mike Moran at 734.663.3418 for information about any aspect of the PDR program.



Roadside sign used to identify protected farmland

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Township Updates

- Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America is proposing to expand its facilities in the Ann Arbor Township Technology Park by another 112,800 sq. ft. to house powertrain testing, in addition to a recent \$75 million expansion for chassis dynamometers and other equipment. Eighty-five jobs are expected to be added to the existing 445-person workforce. An additional result of this expansion was that the Township was awarded a MDOT grant of \$507,500 to upgrade Tech Park roads.
- Beztak is proposing to build a senior residential development with 200 dwelling units for people aged 55 and older, and 80 beds of assisted living. All Seasons of Ann Arbor is proposed for 31.66 acres located on the southeast corner of Geddes and Dixboro Roads.
- The largest solar array in the state was erected last fall by DTE Energy on land owned by Dominos Farms Land Development at 3603 Earhart Road near M-14. The structure has more than 4,000 solar panels which can power 185 homes.
- In a recent report on its national survey of community-based food systems innovations, the Wallace Center at Winrock International in Arlington, VA, recognized Ann Arbor Township for creating lasting change. The article states: "As we dove into the 800+ innovations surfaced through this scan...it became apparent that amongst the strategies used to create food system change; local policy innovation can be an effective tool to create lasting, systemic change. With the Minnesota Food Charter and Ann Arbor Township, the innovation lies in the process and extent to which community was engaged and helped shape the policy process."