

Special Working Council Meeting, December 6, 2005, of the Newtown Village Council was called to order.

Councilmembers Present:

Doug Evans
Tracy Hueber
Mark Kobasuk

Debbie McCarthy
Ken Pulskamp

Absent: Greg Thomas

Mayor: John Hammon

Solicitor: Doug Miller

Fiscal Officer: Keri Everett

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss finances and to discuss the Fire Levy.

Doug Miller, Solicitor:

- It seems some think that we will still be collecting on the Levy until June 2006. That is not true. As of December 31, 2005, you will not be collecting from the other Levy. A couple of weeks ago, at a special meeting, you passed a Resolution accepting the rates and amounts that the county Budget Commission gives you. Those rates give the amount they are **estimating** that your Fire Levy will raise, which I believe is \$270,542. That would include the rollback the state pays, includes the personal property, and the personal property reimbursement. They estimate at 94-95% collection, allowing for those who will not pay their taxes.

Mr. Pulskamp: But, we will be collecting the \$270,542.

Mr. Miller: That is their estimate, it could be more, could be less. On the amended contract we have when our Levy went from 8.0 mills to 5.5 mills. The amount estimated that the 5.5 mil Levy would raise was \$416,552. We said, "we will pay you everything the Levy brings in," that estimate being the \$416,552 and we divided that by twelve and that is what the monthly payments were. We said, "if it happens to be less than that, then we only pay what it brings in." We said, "if the net amount of the Levy drops below \$386,552 (both of these numbers were based off of the original contract when we thought we were paying the 8 mills). The minimum amount they were saying could be raised in the contract, before we re-negotiate or see what we're going to do, was \$386,552. The difference between the minimum amount you have to come up with and what they are saying the Levy will generate is \$116,000. We need to talk to the Fire Company about this, but we're discussing our side of the negotiation in public so everybody knows where we're coming from. According to what we said in the contract, you need to find \$116,000 before we get to the point where they are saying, "we have to talk."

Ms. Hueber: We need to come up with the minimum of this at least for a couple of years because then Fire District was going to put on an "overall" Levy to then cover this. This was the plan in two years.

Fire Chief, Tom Driggers: We're going to put on Levy in 2007. We are going to go five years from the date of contract, which was the understanding of how long the Levies would be in effect.

Mr. Miller: that was the original plan. If you put another Levy on next year, let's say you need to raise \$116,000, regardless of when you put it on, May would be the earliest, you would not collect it even if you pass it in May you wouldn't start collecting it until 2007. In which case, you'd collect it for one year and then the Fire Levy would pass and then you would do away with it.

Mr. Evans: With the School Levy being on too.....

Ms. Hueber: Then a lot of people would vote for fire and safety versus the school sometimes. A lot of people are taxed to death on schools, depends on how it's worded and how much people go out.

Mr. Miller: If you took your budget and supplement \$116,000 out of the General Fund. The problem would be if the Levy doesn't produce the \$270,542 that they are estimating, let's say it is \$265,000 then we're back into this situation with the Fire Company, we need to talk. That becomes a little problematical for the Fire Department because they're trying to set a budget and they need to know where they are.

Ms. Hueber: We're here to discuss where we can come up with the money and how much. What we figure out tonight will have to be faxed over to the Board of Trustees then they will have to look to see if there is anything they can adjust. Then we'll come together.

Mr. Miller: What I'm saying tonight is, "if you find \$116,000 then I don't know if there is anything we have to go talk about tomorrow night because we're at the minimum level."

Mr. Kobasuk: Doug, then they would have to accept that \$386,522?

Mr. Miller: We're all in the same boat together so I hate to use the term "accept that," but that was certainly the intention that they would not have a problem with their budget if we were funding them the amount of \$386,522. Our minimum amount was dropped from \$590,000 to \$386,552 when the Fire District started collecting the 2.5 mills in Newtown.

Mr. Pulskamp: Mark, the contract price was established by what we told them as Council what we wanted for staffing. We wanted three people 24 hrs per day, seven days a week with one paramedic. The budget for the Fire District is very tight, there is no frivolous spending there.

Mr. Evans: John, what did the fire department cost us before we had the contract with them?

Mayor Hammon: You had 4.5 mills. That's what your income was from the fire department.

Mr. Pulskamp: It was around \$300,000. We didn't have full coverage, the difference is night and day. We were paying Anderson for paramedic service. But when we were doing our own, we had so many staffing problems.

REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY APPROPRIATION BUDGET FOR 2006:

Fiscal Officer, Keri Everett: If we have to pay the current contract amount of \$416,552 and subtract the \$270,542 which is the amount that we would collect from the 3.5 mil Levy, that would leave us with \$146,010 that would have to come from the General Fund. I put that as part of our transfers out from the General Fund. I estimated what I thought the beginning balance would be in the General Fund and added what I estimated our 2006 revenue would generate. That of course gives us our total revenue estimated for 2006, which is \$2,124,783.53. I estimated our 2006 General Fund expenses to be \$2,120,168.27. The difference only leaves us with a surplus of \$4,615.26; which includes satisfying our commitment to the fire contract. My opinion you would have to go through with the appropriations on what we already are committed in some of the projects and doing and go from there. I want to make sure I didn't miss anything and see if there is something that can be lowered to make up for that.

Mr. Pulskamp: So the \$146,020 can actually be dropped to \$116,000 and give us a surplus of \$34,000 right off the top.

Ms. Everett: Absolutely, I based it by the \$416,552.

Mr. Pulskamp: I don't want to see anything happen to the Fire District, I don't want to see anything happen to our contract, I want to keep it going. For the three years that we've had a district-wide and everything else for the Village, I think the residents are extremely happy with it. We need to keep this going. The first thing I am looking at is garbage pick-up, \$105,000 estimated from Keri. There's \$105,000 of our \$116,000. We are one of the very few communities that pay for garbage pick-up. We have no General Operating Levy, it comes out of our General Fund. That is the first one that we can go back and put on the residents.

Ms. Hueber: We could do it for two years.

Mr. Miller: Did we not have some money left over from the EMS fund?

Ms. Hueber: \$18,000.

Mr. Miller: I was thinking it was \$45,000.

Mayor Hammon: We just spent some for hydrants for Ragland Road.

Ms. Hueber: The hydrants came to \$10,000.

Ms. Everett: It was my understanding that has to be used on EMS supplies and how they can justify that money is going just to that.

Mr. Miller: It can only be spent on EMS expenses, but cannot be spent on Fire. I would think they could justify some percentage of their bill as strictly EMS. As long as we're getting something from them that says, "your EMS expenses are x-amount of dollars." You will probably find greater than 50% of their expenses are spent on EMS.

Chief Driggers: We spend \$12,000 to \$14,000 per year on EMS supplies alone. We can set up a General Fund for EMS supplies and take that money and save it to pay the EMS bills.

Mr. Pulskamp: Tom, the money can be for a paramedic salary, it doesn't have to be just supplies.

Ms. Hueber: We only have about \$7,000.

Solicitor Doug Miller:

- **Trash Collection:** Would the Village provide the service through Rumpke and bill everybody or you're just no longer picking up garbage.

Ms. Everett: I have talked to Rumpke. They could take over billing or I could do it in-house and we still pay them. You have to understand they will not take on any bad collections. If they don't collect from residents, we still have to fulfill that contract amount because it's our contract. We have that contract for three years.

Ms. Hueber: If we get it in the newspaper that this is going to be a temporary thing; unless we decide we want to keep it that way. Then use the additional money for other things like we were going to do with the "operational" thing. Once this kicks in, in two years, that was the whole purpose of making it "operational," then when their levy kicks in we could either not collect or we could spend it on things within the Village. So, we notify the newspaper that we will be billing and say why, that they needed it and we need to meet our contract and that this is going to be going on for three years and this will be dropped when theirs kicks in.

Mr. Pulskamp: I guess we could have Doug look at the Rumpke contract.

Mayor Hammon: I don't agree with that because you'll have to pass something and you'll have to change that in two years if you want people to vote for it. I think that is going to put a bad taste in some people's mouth. It is a two-way street, I see this as a negotiation back and forth.

Mr. Pulskamp: John, our number one thing at this table that we should be responsible for is providing for the safety of our residents and fire and police are the number one issues. We as Councilmembers need to sit here and do this and if it means putting the cost for trash pick-up back on the residents because we have not had an Operating Levy for how many years and we need that money to pay for our fire protection.

Ms. Hueber: But they were already paying it, they are really not paying anymore money. They were already paying it up until January 1, 2006.

Mr. Pulskamp: If we need to have the solicitor look at the contract and go back and look at the Rumpke contract, because they're coming to us wanting more money for garbage pick-up. We can go back to them and tell them that we need to review the contract, that we have a contract with a set fee and get rid of that loophole if they don't collect from the residents. If people want their garbage picked up, they pay for it, if they don't pay for it, they don't get it picked up.

Mr. Miller: If people don't pay, you could take them to court if you got a judgment and then you could file a lien against their property. There is a specific statute that says you are allowed to do that. Where I live, I pay Rumpke, the community does not provide that service.

Mr. Pulskamp: The only people I know that don't pay are the Village residents of Newtown.

Mr. Kobasuk: Keri, when you talked with Rumpke, what was the estimation of non-collectibles?

Ms. Everett: We didn't go there because when I first brought that up, the feeling was that we were not going to do that to our residents so I didn't elaborate with him about having our residents pay for it. I just asked him a few general questions because we are currently in a three-year

contract with them. I just asked if anything could be done at this point or if we had to wait until the contract is up.

Mr. Kobasuk: I would assume that you are going to have a fair amount of people that aren't going to pay and you'll have a big collection because people are use to not paying.

Ms. Everett: The attitude of these Village residents is that their taxes are paying for it.

Ms. Hueber: Maybe we ought to break that attitude, everybody else pays for their garbage.

Mr. Evans: We are wanting to be different here and we're not talking about that much money. For us to go back to the voters and spank them because they didn't get the right message on the levy and for us, as a council to do that, I tend agree with John that it might be sending a bad will on our part to go back to them for the \$116,000. We ought to just tighten our belt a little bit and maybe figure it somewhere else and use that as a last resort. Wait the two years and see what happens. We're only talking about two years and I think it's a bad thing to go ahead and charge them for it, then all of a sudden not charge them.

Ms. Hueber: Okay, how much was that island we were going to do on SR32?

Ms. Everett: I already got rid of that.

Mr. Pulskamp: Keri, in the capital improvement fund, you have \$350,000 appropriated for property improvements?

Ms. Everett: Yes that is for E-Check. Like I said, you guys have to go through this and figure out what you want to do and what you don't want to do.

Resident Curt Cosby: I agree with John and Doug, I think telling the residents they have to pay for trash pickup is going to leave a very bad taste in their mouth. Especially if you do that, I don't think you go back in two years and change it again. You could possibly find yourself in a similar situation two years from that and start yanking it again. I don't think it's a good idea to yank it in the first place. To pick up on what John said before, there may be some degree of negotiation to be done with this contract. I'm a little bit surprised that we don't do an Executive Session, and maybe we can't, but is until we negotiate for a contract, is that not grounds for Executive Session Doug?

Mr. Miller: Not in this case.

Mr. Cosby: Maybe there is room for negotiation. I know you said Ken, they are at bare bones, but we're looking a belt-tightening situation for Newtown. Perhaps there is some negotiation to be done with the Fire District, that they may have to tighten the belt, maybe we look at the services provided and maybe there is some room in there for that to be achieved.

Mr. Miller: There's probably room for that to happen, if you want to live with a different staffing level. In other words, if you say "we'll only have two people in the Village of Newtown." They may then be able to reduce the contract. I think that's what you're talking about when it is saying "if it goes under \$386,000, we need to talk." What we need to talk about is we're not going to have the level of service that you currently have. That may be what you want.

Ms. Hueber: If we want to cut it, then we want to cut it. But, I know I would rather pay for my garbage pick-up then have my house burn down in the middle of the night.

Mr. Cosby: That's an extreme statement and maybe an inaccurate one, I don't know. I think the fact is that you're looking for \$116,000 and I'm also hearing the possibility of some negotiation and part of that belt-tightening, that's at least what we should look at, in-part. Yes, try and come up with some money, but in-part looking at some negotiation with the Fire District. I think it would be prudent to check that out and negotiate.

Mayor Hammon: We need to explore everything and make sure we make wise decisions.

Mr. Cosby: Absolutely, explore all options.

Mr. Pulskamp: Curt, I hear what you're saying. Between Tracy and I, we have been on that board since it's been in existence, since the three communities joined together. I know what's in that budget. I know what they need expense wise. The only way that it's going to be cut is we would have to lower our level of service. The trustees will sit down and negotiate with council that's what is going to happen. We will end up cutting services to the residents.

Mr. Cosby: I still say we should be looking at this like John said. We're at a point where we need to examine this, on all levels, not just what our budget is but what our relationship is with that and what they provide and what will it cost us? We should keep an open mind on this and sit down and talk and if they tell us they are at bare bones, let that come out in some degree of negotiation.

Ms. Hueber: If they can cut, they would save us money on our \$116,000. Are we going to get the same service for \$386,000? That we definitely will, so they will only negotiate down from there, we still have to figure out where we're going to come up with money. Do we want to cut any of our services? I'm pretty happy with full-coverage. That was the whole purpose of it. Like our police force, putting two cars on at all time. It was so we were covered 24/7 in this village. From that point on, if we want to cut I'm sure they'll negotiate, if we only want two people in there and don't want the third person that price will probably come down. Do we really want that?

Ms. Everett: What I'm hearing is you are perfectly happy with three people over there, you're not happy with two, but then you gave the example that you don't want your house to burn down. Three people are not going to save your house, if your house is truly burning, if I'm not mistaken, I think they staff two in a squad and that would leave one for the engine, you have to have more on the engine. You're going to get people from over there coming anyway, if you're going to save your house if it's on fire. I'd like for the fire fighting expertise to say what we're really getting out of three, what are you really getting or do you still need more people from there to come with what we're still wanting, as in a house burning down.

Ms. Hueber: We're talking three people because we as a village require three people. If we say we want two, that's our choice.

Chief Driggers: Let's take Curt back to the formulation of Newtown joining the Fire District so he can understand the balance of finance. When Newtown approached the Fire District in late 2002, we had in regards to our contract in additional levies, 9.0 mils of collections, effective rate was like 7.7 or 7.6 mils. Let's use 9 mils as a base figure, when Newtown joined and requested membership information, they had already passed those levies equaling 8 mils. The effective rate was 7.8 at that time, just under the 8.0 mils that you can collect, we're already getting either 7.6 or 7.7 mils, Newtown's 8.0 mils actually going to come in the 7.8 mils so you had balance in

taxation throughout the district. That's what made this a financial burden, Newtown had those supposed levies in place for five years. We had the other two communities, we had that money in place cause our 2.5 mil is a continuous levy. Based on other levies and other funds that are being collected, we were set for a indefinite period of time. The only reason we agreed with the five years because Newtown had a five-year commitment to the 8.0 mil levy. We're only like one or two-tenths of a mil difference between the other two communities and Newtown. They each contributed 9.0 mil of their evaluation. So obviously the 8.0 mil, and the effective 7.8 was very parallel and actually it's a little over 40% of the amount of money coming into the Fire District.

Mr. Cosby: How does that relate to coverage? How is Newtown's amount of coverage compare to their coverage as far as expense ratios?

Chief Driggers: We are required by law by the taxing authority to assess cost based on property evaluation bills. We don't have the ability nor is there any legal thing I know to allow the Fire District to charge the community based on anything other than property valuation.

Mr. Evans: Are we getting our 40% back?

Chief Driggers: No, you are probably getting about 60% back or more. You are getting more for your money than you ever got before? I believe in my estimation as a professional firefighter that you are getting more than what you put in to the fire department.

Mr. Pulskamp: Correct me if I'm wrong Tom, we have three communities joining in the Fire District and we have two fire houses. I think what Curt is looking for, if we're putting in 40%, are we getting our 40% equal out of it? The one thing you have to look at is the Fire District is not a political subdivision, politics do not play into it. There are three communities with two firehouses, is Columbia township or Fairfax raising heck because they don't each have an individual fire house in their community? They are getting the service and coverage. We have a firehouse in our community, we're getting the service and coverage. If something big happens over at Fairfax, the guys from here are going to go and help. I will agree with Tom, I've seen the budget and the expenses. Yes, our amount amounts to about 40% of the budget, but I guarantee you more than 40% of the bills come from Newtown.

Chief Driggers: If it were possible to re-negotiate and I don't speak for the board, Tracy is a board member. They are not in a position to re-negotiate because if they were to re-negotiate with Newtown, we have the same obligation to re-negotiate with Columbia township and the Village of Fairfax. So, by re-negotiating those costs, our expenses for the most part are fixed expenses (i.e. staffing, liability insurance, etc.). Obviously we have no adjustments, other than reduction of service. Sitting down and thinking about re-negotiating this amount of money with Newtown, isn't a practical issue because we'd be forced to do the same thing with two other communities.

Mr. Evans: What you're saying, if we re-negotiate that you're fine with the \$386,000.

Chief Driggers: I'm not fine with it, but I don't have any choice, it's the contract amount.

Mr. Kobasuk: Chief, can I get some clarity on that. When you talk about having to re-negotiate with Fairfax and Columbia township, why does that necessarily have to be if we were just talking a little help; try to share the burden. You know we're going to take a hit and cut something, could we get you to come under a little bit \$386,000 if we found some of the other adjustments. Why does that necessitate having to re-negotiate with everybody else?

Chief Driggers: I didn't say it had to. You have equal representation on the board, the members of each community balanced. Based on conversations I have with the Board President and I know John has had the conversation as well, I don't think they are going to be in a position to re-negotiate with just Newtown. There's no way we can do it based on the fixed items in the budget.

Mr. Kobasuk: Can you explain that because Keri raised a good point.

Chief Driggers: Keri is talking about efficiency of two firemen versus three firemen. We run at a bare minimum now based on standards provided by NFPA. They recommend four firefighters per apparatus, we don't have that, except in the evenings sometimes we'll have what we call POC's, or volunteers that will come in and help staff the equipment. Last night we had five people in the Firehouse, two were volunteers. None of these volunteers live in the area, these people are living outside the Fire District and coming to work for us and we pay them a stipend. Our stipend is budgeted for \$35,000 a year for stipend for the volunteers. So they come in basically for about \$2.00 an hour to help us out. We ran last night with five people but many times the minimum is three, we won't go below three.

Mr. Kobasuk: Is it a state minimum?

Chief Driggers: That's our minimum. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends four. We are already below recommended standards. Scientifically, a fire doubles in size every three minutes. So the longer you delay your response and the longer it takes to get the appropriate amount of staffing on the scene and the state does require two in and two out. So if you put two people in the fire, we have to have two people outside the fire. If we put four people in the fire, we have to have four people outside the fire. The Ohio Industrial Commission requires that. Those aren't our standards those are standards we have to live with. So putting two people in that firehouse and expecting them to be an efficient firefighting force isn't realistic.

Mrs. McCarthy: Tom, do we always have three at the firehouse?

Chief Driggers: A minimum of three, never less. If someone calls off, we bring people in on overtime to make sure we keep the three.

Mrs. McCarthy: On the average since we've been a district, normally what do we have over there?

Chief Driggers: Four on the average, many times it is more than four.

Mr. Evans: Let's say tonight in Ivy Hills we get a fire and that comes across the broadcast, you have four guys and they go and other people come from over there. Did other people hear it on their pagers?

Chief Driggers: Yes, we do have a recall system of other people off-duty. They get there and it is a fire of enough volume in size they will use their resources, we use mutual aid and we will do a re-call of our own personnel because there are no more volunteers that live in the area.

Mr. Kobasuk: In your professional experience, do you think we need three people minimum there?

Chief Driggers: There is no way you can operate effectively with less than three. Just this morning, we had a car accident with a person trapped in the car at SR32 and Roundbottom Rd. There was probably eight or nine of us there, from both stations and had to cut this lady out of the car. You can't do these tasks with two or three people.

Ms. Everett: That was my point, you need both stations anyway.

Chief Driggers: This job is dangerous enough and when you expose your employees to unnecessary dangers because of things that don't necessarily have to be, it's not the way to operate.

Mr. Kobasuk: You convinced me.

Ms. Everett: I have put things on here that we've talked about and things that we have committed to and deleted some things that we talked about. You need to go through and look at what you hold as a priority or what you think could be put on the back burner because of the situation. That's your job, I just put things down that we've talked about and things that we have committed to that we can't change.

Mr. Kobasuk: Keri, could we possibly start with the capital improvement fund, there are pretty big numbers there. Could you just walk me through.

Ms. Everett: The \$927,518.51 on the SR 32 Alignment is stuck, we can't do anything with that one. The island (Town Entrance) at SR 32, I took from \$25,000 down to \$5,000 just in case there is something that we have to pay for. The \$350,000 for (Property Purchase), we're talking about the E-Check building, I don't know if that is still a priority. That is for this council to decide.

Mr. Pulskamp: We did talk about the E-Check building, but we also talked about putting bonds out and floating loans, not paying for that out of the Village fund.

Ms. Everett: Both have been talked about, the decision has not been made. That is up to this Council. The \$10,000 (Cemetery Fence), that has always been there because the project was started and never finished.

Mr. Kobasuk: What was the project?

Mr. Pulskamp: The arches at the entrances, that will probably never happen because it's very hard to do to get the trucks in and out of there and we're afraid it will be ripped out.

Mr. Kobasuk: Why can't we take from that?

Ms. Everett: It's been in there because Charlie has ideas of what he wants in that entrance. I put it in there every year for that. He feels he was promised that whatever. The \$75,000 (Parks), we talked about the bathroom at Short Park. That was an estimated cost.

Mr. Kobasuk: I think we could skip the bathroom.

Ms. Everett: This is a Council decision to make. The \$100,000 (Streets, Highways, Curbs), such as the contract w/Brandstetter & Carroll), to pay \$4,000 to have the streets and curbs surveyed, so I put money in three different locations for that project to get off on its' feet.

Ms. Hueber: I think we need to keep that.

Ms. Everett: The last one \$100,000 (Miscellaneous Contracted Services), this is basically for times we need surveys or when we have to ask people to do easements here. I even took that number down some because we only spent around \$46,000 of it in 2005.

Mr. Kobasuk: The \$75,000 in the (Parks), is that all for the bathroom or for other improvements?

Ms. Hueber: That is a flood plain bathroom and very expensive.

Mr. Pulskamp: Mark, I agree with you. The \$75,000 could be put on hold for at least two years.

Ms. Everett: It's a Council decision, someone just make a motion if you want to put it on hold and it's a majority decision.

Mr. Kobasuk: To have fire protection, I guess the bathroom could be one of the first things to go.

Mr. Pulskamp: There is \$350,000 in (Property Purchase), we can take a chunk out of that.

Ms. Everett: As you will notice on the first page, I gave my best estimate of what our beginning balance, what we would carry over from this year would be.

Mr. Evans: John, you haven't said anything. What is your two-cents worth?

Mayor Hammon: I think for us to sit here and suffer for two years is not correct. I think the board ought to come back and put the Fire Levy on next year, bump that up a year and work with us. I don't believe that we're going to be able to pass the Fire Levy in this town. Especially with Forest Hills, whether it passes in May or not, it's still going to be there. I think the board needs to come back and look at the situation and re-examine it. I talked to Ted, he has made some promises to the Fairfax residents, but this is a tough situation for all of us. We're going to have to do this.

We're not talking about just this year, we're talking about next year doing the same thing over and over again. You start talking about putting projects back two and three years so the town is going to be somewhat hit by that. The other thing we had talked about the CRA and giving people tax breaks, that is taking money out of the pocket so you're not going to have that growth for the future if you go ahead with that. It's my belief we need to go ahead and talk to the board and let them see what they can do and they need to come back and make an offer. Yes, we can make it up for a year, I'm willing to tighten the belt and do it. The fact of the matter is it is going to be tough on us for two years. That's just an option. I know the agreement was to go to 2007, but we have the right to ask them to bump that up a little. That way all of the residents are treated fair.

Mr. Evans: Mr. Miller, what is your two-cents worth?

Mr. Miller:

- The first question I had is if you want to put another Fire Levy on in the Village in May, you need to get going soon because the Resolution would have to be at the Board of Elections mid-February. Before you did that, you would have to pass your Resolution have Hamilton County Auditors certify to you what the different amounts would run. You would need to do something by your first meeting in January, at least that request from the County Auditor.
- My other concern would be regardless of when the Fire District is going to go for their Levy, whether 2006 or 2007. If you all of a sudden tell the residents they have to pay for their own garbage, their reaction may very well be, "well fine, we're paying this so you don't need this Levy." I don't know how people would look at that. I agree with John, to investigate with the district the idea of moving the Levy up a year from originally thought. I don't know that would play in the other communities.

Ms. Everett: But, you're willing to ask us, (not you personally) to put on a Levy for maybe just one year when you know it's a five-year Levy. You're acting like it's a big thing to ask them to

move theirs up, but you have no problem asking us to put one on for a year and once they put theirs on, we would not collect ours.

Mayor Hammon: We have an obligation, we have to meet somewhere.

Chief Driggers: And we have an obligation, and we are willing and I think that your idea of moving the Levy up a year probably makes tremendous sense. This is my own personal opinion, I don't speak for Ted Shannon or the Board members. I think sooner the Fire District becomes its' own tax collection point, the better off we'll be on all matters of the budget.

Mr. Pulskamp: I agree.

Mayor Hammon: I had said that, there is a whole series of options that I looked at and everything we have talked about is something we have to consider. The one thing I will tell you, the way the state is now collecting taxes, the millage will have to be higher. We can't go for 4.5 mils or we'll come up short money because collecting personal property is being phased out and you'll need to put another .5 mil in or 1.0 mil in to cover that. An 8.0 mil will probably have to be a 9.0 or 10.0 mil Levy to make the same dollars because the state is changing it.

Mr. Miller: In other communities, do they all have Fire Levies?

Chief Driggers: Columbia Township is strictly "Fire Levies." Fire Levies can be "continuing," they all have been passed as "continuous."

Mr. Miller: Will it really matter to them?

Chief Driggers: No, other than a rate increase. Fairfax is operating with a 2.5 mil Levy that we passed several years ago and then they put on .25% or .50% Income Tax generating over \$300,000.

Mr. Miller: Is that their whole income tax?

Chief Driggers: No it is not.

Mr. Miller: They just dedicate one-quarter of it to Fire.

Chief Driggers: They raised it for that purpose, it went on the ballot and passed to be raised for the purpose of allotting money for Fire.

Mr. Miller: It's not like somebody else has a levy expiring in 2007 and that's why you're waiting that long. You were simply waiting because that's when our Levy would have expired. That's why the contract ended then because it was a five-year Levy, but it seems to me that the circumstances have changed. It may very well be time to move it up to 2006.

Mayor Hammon: It brings uniformity across the board to the District.

Mr. Darwin Brooks: So from what I have heard tonight, the options are to negotiate with the Fire Board and reduce service.

Ms. Hueber: We don't want that.

Mayor Hammon: Certainly we would like to have some consideration, if they could cut something, what could they do to possibly help our situation. Take a look and see what they can do. I talked to Ted and he will need to go back to his people and community.

Mr. Pulskamp: Our other option is if the Board comes back and says they can't do anything financially for us, then we as Council will come up with the money for this coming year. We'll need to basically come up with \$116,000 over our Levy to live up to our end of the agreement for the contract for one more year. We're going to have to realize that they'll have to step us and also move the Levy up. From what I get from talking to everybody, we're all happy with the Fire Board and the Fire District. We want it to continue, we want the protection and we want that for the Village residents. We will dig deep in our budget and cover this year and our next thing is to talk to the Fire Board about moving up the Fire Levy to 2006, I think it should be done in May and not November. If it doesn't pass in May, then we try again in November.

Mr. Miller: But you still have 2007 to do it when you have to get it passed. Because now your 3.5 mil would be dropping off too.

Ms. Hueber: When the Fire Board goes after this, they are responsible for advertising and getting the word out going door-to-door. That would also benefit us because we didn't communicate our Levy very well since we could not advertise in the paper.

Mr. Miller: They're not allowed to spend taxpayers money either on it. They have a built-in manpower there that will help.

Mr. Kobasuk: Doug, would you just clarify one thing for me. We talked about the district-wide Levy passing in 2006, the money starts coming in, in 2007. So we just need to find cuts and get through one year.

Mayor Hammon: That would take the burden of two years off of us down to one year.

Mr. Kobasuk: It makes sense doesn't it.

Mayor Hammon: I think this is the fair way to do it. I feel it really brings the district together because with one community in trouble, the other needs to kind of give. We're all working together. The Board will meet tomorrow night, then we'll hear their answer and start negotiations. If all of council shows up, you can sit and listen but you can't interact and make a decision.

Mr. Miller: No you can't make a decision, but it is a public meeting. It is just not called as a council meeting.

Ms. Hueber: Mark will be there representing me and Darwin will be there also.

Mr. Evans: If you guys are on the Fire Board and you are also councilmembers, is that a conflict of interest?

Mayor Hammon: Hopefully, they would take the personal aspect out of it and take the council's opinion to it. That is part of your job to take your opinion out and force the council's opinion.

Mr. Pulskamp: At the same time, as you're sitting on the Board of Trustees, you are there as a trustee and not as a councilmember.

Mr. Miller: What are the options?

Mr. Pulskamp: The are options are:

1. See what the district can do for us knowing our situation and how expenses can be cut.
2. Ask the district to bump up putting a district-wide Levy on the ballot as soon as possible in 2006 so there would be a second chance in 2006, if needed.

If none of those happen, the Village looks at our budget pick out the \$116,000 and start re-negotiating.

Mayor Hammon: In 2006, we have the burden for that, no matter what they do. That's why we asked them to sit down and see what they can do. Chief, I don't know and I'm not going to operate the department for you but maybe shift a man here or there. I don't know. That's even if they put it up for 2006. That just keeps us from going down two years down the road fighting this batter. If the Levy doesn't pass in 2007 then we'll be struggling in 2008 also.

Ms. Hueber: The best case scenario here is the combination deal where we come up with the \$116,000 this year from our own budget, which is the total amount we are obligated to meet the \$386,000. In response, we would like them to come back and put this on the ballot as soon as possible.

Mr. Miller: This is something that has been a win-win for all three communities and we're all in this boat together. Everybody needs to realize that and work together. I think John's idea of putting it on the ballot for 2006 would be great. I think Chief Driggers is right, the sooner they start collecting their own money, they're on their own and take the communities out of the deal. The better off everybody will be. It's a matter of how we're all going to work together to get it worked out.

Chief Driggers: I have been the Fire chief of this district for ten years and I think I know the Board. I know I will do everything I can and I think I have certain influence with some of the board members, based on common sense and approach. If you can find a way to meet your obligation and ask the board if they would consider running a Levy in 2006 for 2007. I think that's really all you have to ask.

Mr. Kobasuk: I like that first point though, try to get a little help.

Mr. Miller: The need to explore the possibilities of somehow reducing the expenses. As far as the Levy Chief, if we had only had a three-year Levy, everybody would have been planning on putting that Levy on next year. It was strictly because of our timing and our timing has now been moved up.

Mr. Pulskamp: We as council have to approach the Board to say, "is there anyway you can help?" If the Board comes back and says there is no way that their budget is stretched as much as possible, but they will put the Levy on in 2006. You will have to do what you need to do to live up to the contract or we'll go back to the drawing board.

Mayor Hammon made a motion to adjourn meeting. Ms. Hueber seconded the meeting. All Aye. Motion Carried.