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Anderson voters approve parks, public safety, aggregation

Sheila Vilvens, svilvens@communitypress.com 12:06 p.m. EST November 9, 2016



(Photo: File)

Anderson Township voters deliver solid victories for three community issues appearing on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Levies for Anderson Township Parks and Anderson Township public safety each passed with more than 60 percent voter approval. Anderson Township voters also soundly supported the township's electric aggregation issue.

Public safety levy

"I personally feel humbled by the support of the community," Township Administrator Vicky Earhart said.

The 3.55-mill public safety levy approved by voters is to fund police, fire and emergency medical services. It is expected to sustain the township's safety services needs for at least another five years.

Passage of the public safety issue allows the township to maintain its current levels of staffing and allows for improvement of the services offered, Earhart said. Additionally the township's public safety professionals need to respond to the ongoing heroin crisis, identify ways for improving services for the community's senior citizens and to continue working with area youth.

"To me this gives us the time and finances to do those things," she said. "We are not going to spend wildly and we are going to continue to look for ways to cut costs. That's one thing I'm committed to doing...but this gives us the breathing room to continue the current level of services and look for ways to improve."

Earhart expressed her gratitude to the public safety levy committee, especially chair and treasurer Anne Zimmerman, and the residents who were involved in helping with issue.

Parks levy

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Anderson Park District Director Ken Kushner expressed his gratitude for the community's overwhelming support which, he said, is ~~different than it was 40 years ago. When the first parks levy ran in 1980 it passed by a slim margin – just 25 votes, he said. Back then Anderson Township still had a lot of farms and open space.~~

"It's just incredible to live in a community that has the assets that this community is letting us have," Kushner said. With the Great Parks levy also passing, Anderson residents can enjoy two great park systems

The 1.9-mill, 10-year operating levy for the parks replaces an existing 10-year levy approved by voters in 2008.

During its Nov. 15 meeting, Kushner said the Board of Park Commissioners is expected to rescind the 2008 levy and move forward with the new, 10-year levy.

"We already planned out the next 10 years and now we can make it reality with some of the infrastructure, jobs and maintaining the things that we built that are highly used by the public," Kushner said. "That's what it's all about, maintaining and enhancing what this community gets through its park system."

Levy Chairwoman and former longtime park board Commissioner Nadine Gelter was pleased with the election results and pointed out that the parks garnered about 7 percentage points more support for this issue than it did in 2008.

"In the end, it was our group of committed volunteers who pushed us over the top," she said. "They worked tirelessly in placing yard signs, attending sign waving events to show their support to their fellow township residents and even standing in the rain on Election Day, and so much more than can be listed," Gelter said in an email.

Aggregation

Passage of the electric aggregation issue is something that may provide residents with an additional opportunity to save money, Earhart said.

With passage of this issue Anderson Township can form an aggregated buying group on behalf of its residents and small businesses. Negotiations will allow a bulk price on electricity for township residents who choose to be in the program.

Next steps for the township include several public hearings, approval of a broker for the development of plan of operation and governance, and eventual consideration by the PUCO.

“This process will take an estimated three to four months to get through,” Earheart said. At the end of the process, the township can deliver good electric rates to residents.

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