

Anderson fall ballot includes parks, safety, energy

Sheila Vilvens, svilvens@communitypress.com 1:47 p.m. EDT September 21, 2016



(Photo: File photo)

Levies for the park district and township safety services along with an aggregation issue are among questions Anderson Township voters will consider on the fall ballot.

Anderson Township Park District (Issue 51)

Keeping with a tradition established in 2000, the Anderson Township Board of Park Commissioners decided to place a 1.9-mill, 10-year operating levy on the presidential ballot.

"They wanted the most voters as possible to decide on this issue," Park District Executive Director Ken Kushner said. "That's when you get the most voters."

The park district's last levy, approved in 2008, was also 1.9 mills for 10 years and is scheduled to expire in 2018. Passage of the new levy will result in the park board rescinding the 2008 issue, Kushner said.

The ballot language is a little confusing, Kushner cautioned. Since the new levy is on the ballot two-years before the existing levy is scheduled to expire, the ballot will read for "additional" money. However, the existing levy will be rescinded and the new levy will not provide additional money, he said. It will replace the existing levy.

Levy passage means that the park district can continue operating and maintaining its eight community parks with a total of more than 500 acres for the next 10 years. The park district's operating levy has remained at 1.9 mills since 1992.

Anderson Township public safety levy (Issue 30)

Township voters will consider a 3.55-mill public safety levy to fund police, fire and emergency medical services.

The last public safety levy considered and approved by Anderson Township voters was in 2008. Since then, law enforcement expenses alone have risen from \$2 million a year in 2008 to more than \$3.3 million a year in 2015. In March 2015 the township paid about \$400,000 more than the previous year for police services through its contract with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. The increase was the result of the county determining it could no longer cover a portion of police services in townships.

The 2008 levy was projected to have a five-year life and was stretched to eight, at least one year too many, according to Anderson Township Trustee President Andrew Pappas. The board of trustees seriously considered placing the issue before voters last year, but delayed it with the use of tax incremental financing (TIF) dollars to offset some of the public safety costs, he said.

"Finally it became apparent that the costs were what they were and we had to just say, 'OK, we can't continue to use TIF dollars to plug this hole,'" Pappas said. "The levy should be self-supporting and pay for the services we're getting. I don't think it's correct to supplement TIF for levy. When people want the best police service possible, you need to know the cost and be able to pay for it."

Public safety is the primary job of the trustees, Pappas said. The heroin epidemic continues to place even greater demands on the sheriff's department and safety services in general.

If approved, the levy would cover the costs of fire, EMS and law enforcement operating including the salaries of 65 full-time firefighter/paramedics and 35 police officers. Most equipment purchases including fire engines and police cruisers will continue to be covered by TIF dollars.

If the levy does not pass, the township will be faced with making decisions on how to reduce costs for safety, Pappas said.

Electric aggregation (Issue 31)

The Anderson Township Trustees have considered electric aggregation for a while, Pappas said. Representatives of townships participating in electric aggregation say that the program is successful and saves taxpayers money on their electric bills.

"Anything we can do to save our residents money, we should probably do," he said.

Anderson Township residents will have the opportunity to vote this fall on whether to support a township-wide electric aggregation program.

A yes vote proposed electric aggregation means Anderson Township will have permission to form an aggregated buying group on behalf of its citizens and small businesses. Negotiations would allow a bulk price on electricity for those township residents who choose to be in the program.

If the measure passes, individual consumers would need to opt-out of the township-negotiated price and continue with their own chosen supplier if they do not wish to participate.

If approved by voters, residents would not see a change in their electric services. Duke Energy would still deliver service and bill residents for energy provided. Energy Alliances Inc. would provide consulting services for the aggregation negotiations.

Anderson Township Park District levy

What it is: Issue 51, proposed tax levy (additional) - 1.9-mill, 10-year operating levy to replace existing levy expiring in 2018 (passage of the new levy will result in the existing levy being rescinded by the park board).

Who pays: Anderson Township residents

How much it costs homeowners: \$66.50 per \$100,000 valuation

How much it will raise: About \$2.2 million annually

Anderson Township public safety

What it is: Issue 30, proposed tax levy (additional) - 3.55-mill public safety levy

Who pays: Anderson Township residents

How much it costs: \$124.25 per \$100,000 valuation

How much it will raise: About \$4.3 million annually

Anderson Township aggregation

What it is: Issue 31, proposed electric aggregation

Who gets it: Anderson Township residents and small businesses.

How does it work: If approved it would provide the township permission to form an aggregated buying group on behalf of residents and negotiate a bulk price on electricity. Residents would have to opt-out of the program.

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