



Frequently Asked Questions

How much is the millage?

This is an 8-year millage of 0.50 mill.

What is the actual ballot language?

Shall the County of Muskegon be authorized to levy, for a period of eight years (2016 through 2024, inclusive) a new additional millage in the amount of 0.50 mills (\$0.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value) on the taxable value of all property in the county, for the intended purpose of planning, coordinating and providing services to older persons in Muskegon County, as provided by Public Act 39 of 1976 (activities or services for older persons act)? If approved and levied in its entirety on December 1, 2016, this millage would raise an estimated \$2,115,870 in the first year.

What does this cost the average taxpayer?

Based on a home with a market value of \$100,000 (taxable value of \$50,000), the cost per year is \$25.00. That is \$2.08 a month, or 6 cents a day.

What will the millage pay for?

Tax dollars will be used solely to support services and activities to seniors and caregivers. Services may include: Meals on Wheels, care management services, home chore, wellness programs and health education, bathing services, homemaker services, medication management, personal care, personal emergency response systems, respite care, senior support services, medical transportation, options counseling, Medicare/Medicaid assistance counseling, expanded transportation, adult day services and congregate meals.

Who is eligible for services?

Muskegon County residents 60 and older are eligible. Some services may require an assessment of need, others do not. Services such as caregiver trainings and some other educational services are open to those under age 60.

Why is a senior millage needed?

As Baby Boomers continue to age, the older adult population in Muskegon, the state and the nation is expected to increase. The US Census Bureau estimates the percentage of Michigan's population that is 60 and older by 2030 will increase by 32% from 2012. There are almost 33,000 older adults in Muskegon County currently. The older adult population in Muskegon County is projected to roughly double over the next 20 years.

Waiting lists for services such as meals, home care and transportation continue to grow. Thousands of older adults will have a better quality of life and many will be able to stay in their own homes, which is a tremendous cost savings.

What is the value of the millage to me if I don't need services?

You may not currently need services, but you may have a family member, friend or neighbor who does or will soon need services to stay at home. Programs funded by a senior millage can help prevent people from entering nursing homes by providing services such as personal care, wellness programs, home-delivered meals, care management, respite care, transportation, and more. Many people who enter nursing homes quickly wipe out their savings and then need to depend on taxpayer dollars through Medicaid. Providing in-home services can save tens of thousands of dollars a year.

What's in it for me?

If you are 60 years of age or older, you may already have experienced difficulty in finding services that you need to help you to live in your own home for as long as you like. This proposal is to help fund and expand programs that you may need. If you are in the "sandwich generation," taking care of your own children as well as your parents, it will be easier to find the services you need to help care for your parents. If you are under 60, it is reassuring to know that the services that you will need when you attain "senior status" will already be in place for you.

Are seniors charged for services?

Due to federal guidelines, donations only are requested for Meals on Wheels and congregate meals. Other services will likely include a cost share component in order to stretch the funding further. Millage dollars would be used as funding of last resort, meaning other funding sources will be accessed first. Fees are based on income. Some may not be charged for some services, if they qualify financially.

Will the millage pay for any buildings?

No, the senior millage will fund activities and services for seniors and their caregivers. No "bricks and mortar" facilities will be funded.

Doesn't Medicare or Medicaid take care of what seniors need?

Medicare is for people 65 and older (or people with disabilities) and is basically a health plan. It provides very limited skilled nursing facility assistance and limited medical home health services. It does not provide meals, homemaking or other similar programs. Medicaid is for those who are medically fragile and financially qualify – somewhere between 100% and 135% of the federal poverty level. Medicaid also provides very limited services, and no in-home help that isn't medical.

Who decides how the money will be spent?

The Muskegon County Board of Commissioners has committed to a Request for Quotes process to name a fiduciary for millage money. They also agreed to the Muskegon County Senior Wellness Committee's recommendation that a committee representative of Muskegon County residents would review and recommend grant proposals from appropriate agencies. The committee would be made of up of seniors, at-large community members, Muskegon County Commissioners or appointees and members with grant experience. An established fiduciary organization would monitor and evaluate the providers, ensuring quality standards and development of future needs, and report back to the community regularly on the use of the millage funding. The grant process would be as transparent as possible.

What happens if the millage isn't passed?

Without a millage, waiting lists will continue – and likely grow - for programs such as Meals on Wheels, transportation, home care and other services. The needs of some frail and vulnerable seniors could go unmet, and the burden and stress on families and caregivers could increase. When services aren't available to keep older adults at home, the cost of nursing homes could be prohibitive for many. Many who enter nursing homes quickly wipe out their savings and then need to rely on taxpayer dollars through Medicaid.

What other sources provide funds for services to seniors?

Other funds include program fees, donations, third party payers, state and federal funds and United Way, among others, but these do not keep up with the demand for current services, much less allow for expansion.

How can I help?

Tell friends and neighbors about the importance of the millage, share the message on social media, help defray our printing costs with a donation. Most importantly, please remember to vote on Aug. 2, 2016!