

Village of Hanover
Special Meeting
November 4, 2018
Fire/EMS Levy

Mayor Jeff Collins called the Village of Hanover Special meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Council Present: Brandon Hale, Sue Spaulding, Chester Flowers, Scott Ball, Chris Felumlee, Donna Renicker.

Mayor Collins informed the purpose of this special meeting was to discuss the Village of Hanover EMS/Fire Levies as it pertains to the recent video released on social media that informed Hanover citizens of double taxation. He stated the video did have accurate data, but we are not comparing apple to apples. We are not the highest taxed, but we are high on the list.

Mayor Collins opened the floor to Council and those in attendance to share questions, concerns, and feedback.

Citizen Jeff Hanger asked if Hanover Village residents were paying both Village and Hanover Township Fire/EMS tax. He stated that in 1972 the first fire levy was placed on the ballot and we have been doing it ever since. He further stated Village levies should not be increased only the townships to make it more fair. Citizen Esther Weeks asked why she was paying both and later stated the tax is not problematic as she paid \$196.00 last year. Brad Cottrell from the Licking County Auditor's Office was present and applied his expertise on the matter. He stated that Hanover Township and Hanover Village overlaps and we do pay taxes to both. He indicated that anytime property is annexed without a conformed boundary it is still in the township. Mayor Collins stated that Hanover Village tried to implement a Paper Township/Conformed Boundaries and we were unable to do so. Cottrell further explained millage and how it works. JoLynn Torbert, Treasurer of Licking Valley School explained how millage can be misleading. How 1 mill can be a certain amount for one school and then 1 mill can be worth so much more to another.

Councilman Flowers noted that Hanover is paying the most out of all the different entities contracted with Hanover Vol. Fire Dept. Perry Twp only pays 2.5 mills. He also stated that it is very rare for citizens to vote down a fire/EMS levy on a ballot because safety and security is important.

Citizen David Decker the creator of the video shared on social media was present. He informed the goal of the video was to be accurate and true, not misleading and deceptive. He had no intent to shut down a fire dept or to reduce their force. The video was to determine if we are paying a reasonable amount for fire/ems support in the Village of Hanover and questioned if we are being taxed fairly? He provided comparisons between properties on Sunset Drive that have comparable property value yet are divided by the township/village line. The property that resided on both village and township ground paid approximately double compared to the property that only resided in the township. He disagreed with Mayor Collins stating that council does have control whether they put levies on the ballot or not. He shared additional tax comparisons of Hanover

Village resident's verses Hanover Township residents. Brad Cottrell verified the comparison information. Decker stated that he is confident Hanover Vol Fire Dept Chief Brian Spellman can create a solution and work this out. He questioned if the village was being fiscally responsible. He questioned if the Village had a contract with Hanover Vol Fire Dept. He questioned the Village's authority over the fire dept. It was clarified that the Village does have a 5 year contract with the fire department and the fire dept is a corporation so they run themselves.

Heath Smith and Jim Davis, Hanover Township Trustees were present and Davis informed that Hanover Township has not had a problem with Hanover Vol Fire Dept service or transparency. Smith proposed the idea of increasing the township levy amount and decrease the village's levy amount to make a more even playing field.

Citizen Swisher stated that she is willing to give up the \$27.00 a month or whatever low fee it is to insure that Hanover Vol Fire Dept service stays in the village. They bring value.

Citizen MaryAnn Spellman stated that she receives a reduction in homeowners insurance because a fire station is nearby.

Clerk/Treasure Nicole Gieseler stated that her office is held at the fire station, which houses the Hanover Vol Fire Dept. The men and women who serve this community are good people. They work hard, care for our village, and there is no drama that she can see behind the scene. In all practically the amount on the ballot for Tuesday is approximately \$30,000.00, which could be quickly spent with staffing expense and equipment maintenance. A representative from the Licking County 911 Call Center was present at a recent council meeting and shared with Council that Hanover Village Fire Dept has great run times compared to other local fire stations. Even though she does not care to be double taxed, there is confidence in the service Hanover Vol Fire Dept provides the Village and is grateful for what they do.

Chief Brian Spellman took the podium and shared his disappointment with Decker in his handling of this situation. No attempt for a conversation with him or Council was made prior to release of the video on social media. He felt this should have been handled differently by Decker as things are handled differently in Panther Country. It would have been wiser to go to the Council and address his concern and offer to help or provide a solution before going to social media. He stated the video was set up to cause the levy to fail. Spellman stated he has dedicated 24 years of his life to the community. No one wants to pay taxes, and stated Decker's tactics were low and petty. He stated Decker should have come to him to discuss. Spellman stated it is true that their finances are tight. Their ambulance alone brings in a bill of \$50,000.00. Chief Spellman noted that the video Decker created stated that Hanover Vol Fire Dept did not answer questions that the entities they serve have. Hanover Twp Trustee Jim Davis responded by clarifying that they have not had a problem with Hanover Vol Fire Dept and that they do have open communication.

Citizen Sherry George asked what would happen if the \$30,000.00 being received from this tax levy renewal did not pass on Tuesday. Chief Spellman responded that Hanover Vol Fire Dept would be here. It will cause things to be even tighter but they are determined to remain. Later George advised that what Decker presented had nothing to do with the public or the good of

Hanover Village residents, but more to do with a behind the scenes conflict with Madison Township.

Jolynn Torbert informed that if the money goes away you have to have a plan in place. In addition, she thanked Hanover Vol Fire Dept for all of their service that they have provided to her home in Perry Township.

Citizen Jennifer Collins asked if it was common or uncommon to be double taxed. Cottrell responded that there are other entities that are double taxed such as Hebron and Buckeye Lake.

Councilwoman Renicker noted that this should not have been posted on Facebook as it was.

Citizen Cecile Pletcher reminded the Village of how the fire department was started and how they raised money through donation to build the fire station. Fundraiser were the main financial support. When she moved into the Village, it was important for her to have a fire station close. She is very proud of the young educated men and women who serve and who use what they have learned to help the community in our time of need.

Councilwoman Spaulding informed that she knew that Hanover residents were being taxed by the both the Village and Township and no known actions were taken. These men and women work very hard for little pay, many with multiple jobs and she thanked them for their service and the great job they have done.

Citizen and Licking County Commissioner Duane Flowers stated that he knew there was going to be a problem back in 2011 and this is the reason he encouraged previous mayors to peruse the Conformed Boundaries. He works with Homeland Security and stated they do give praises to Hanover Vol Fire Dept and they do not praise all. In regards to the double taxation, we all need to pray about it and make the best choice on the ballot Tuesday for each of our families.

Mayor Collins asked for a motion to adjourn, motion made by Councilwoman Spaulding, 2nd by Councilwoman Renicker, all Ayes.

Mayor Collins requested that the Village of Hanover Council move into executive session sighting the Village Officer Handbook, Preparing for conducting or reviewing of negotiations and bargaining.

Councilman Ball made a motion to end the executive session, 2nd by Councilman Felumlee, all Ayes.

Councilman Ball made a motion to adjourn the special meeting, 2nd by Councilwoman Renicker, all Ayes.

Mayor Jeff J. Collins

Clerk/Treasurer Nicole D. Gieseler

