



WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP

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Do Whitewater Township Residents Want Continued Ambulance Service?

The Facts

Ambulance Millage Proposal as it Appears on the 11/04/2014 Ballot

Shall the tax limitation imposed under Article IX, Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution in Whitewater Township, Grand Traverse County, Michigan, be increased by 1.5 mills (\$1.50 per \$1,000 of taxable value) and levied up to that amount for a period of four (4) years, 2014 through 2017, inclusive, for operating and maintaining ambulance service, raising an estimated \$274,119 in 2014?

- 1) The ambulance service has been operating since 1977 and is staffed by “Paid on Call” personnel.
- 2) Paid on Call personnel wear pagers to alert them when help is needed. They voluntarily wear the device and are not paid to do so. If the pager is activated and personnel are available to respond, they are paid hourly while serving the community.
- 3) Whitewater Township owns two Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances. The proposed millage will staff one.
- 4) The Paid on Call service expends approximately \$43,000 annually, as follows:
 - 1) Ambulance personnel = \$13,591
 - 2) Facility operating costs = \$ 3,900 (shared with fire department)
 - 3) Vehicle operating costs = \$ 9,213
 - 4) Management personnel = \$12,364 (ambulance coordinator)
 - 5) Employer costs = \$ 3,764 (Social Security, Medicare, Work Comp)

\$42,832
- 5) Sources of Funding: The ambulance service is currently funded through billing fees and yearly appropriation from the General Fund.
 - a) Billing Fees: Ambulance bills are generated upon transport of patients. No charge is generated when the ambulance service goes on a call but does not transport a patient. The typical transport generates a bill in the neighborhood of \$600. Reimbursements vary greatly between insurance companies. Some insurance companies pay a significant portion of the bill. Medicare reimburses only \$210 of the billing fee. Per Medicare guidelines, the \$210 must be accepted as full payment, resulting in the remainder of the fee being written off by the ambulance service operator (Whitewater Township).

- b) Appropriation from the General Fund: Each year during the budget adoption process, the Whitewater Township Board allocates funds to be transferred from the General Fund to the Ambulance Fund. In fiscal year 2013/2014, \$25,000 was transferred between these funds to support the ambulance service.
- 6) State law demands all Basic Life Support ambulances be available to respond 24/7/365. Two personnel are required per ambulance to transport patients. The proposed millage will staff one ambulance.
 - 7) The Paid on Call system is missing up to 25% of the monthly calls for help. Here are a few reasons:
 - a) Paid on Call personnel work other full-time jobs. Four out of 10 active members live in the township. Of those four, 3 work outside of the township.
 - b) Continuing education to maintain an EMT license has become more demanding in both time and money.
 - c) The annual number of calls has increased.
 - 8) If Whitewater Township Ambulance Service is unable to respond, the next closest ambulance is in Acme. Acme residents pay NorthFlight EMS to have an ambulance at their station 16 hours per day. For the remaining 8 hours, this ambulance is stationed in Traverse City.
 - 9) Upgrading the ambulance service to meet state requirements and better serve the community will cost approximately \$332,000 annually, as follows:
 - 1) Ambulance Personnel = \$246,000
 - 2) Facility operating costs = \$18,000
 - 3) Vehicle operating costs = \$10,000
 - 4) Management Personnel = \$13,000 (ambulance coordinator)
 - 5) Employer costs = \$45,000 (Social Security, Medicare, Work Comp.)
 - 10) The proposed millage funds will be spent on a dynamic plan open to review with regard to effectively serving the community in a fiscally responsible manner and begins with:
 - a) Creating two new job descriptions, Duty Crew and Pager Duty, and hiring 12 to 18 new personnel.
 - 1) Duty Crew personnel man the ambulance in 12-hour shifts and are paid an hourly wage.
 - 2) Pager Duty personnel will be located within 10 minutes of the ambulance station during their shift. They will be paid a stipend for the responsibility of responding to all ambulance calls during the shift, plus an hourly wage if activated.
 - b) Design a 12-hour shift schedule comprised of one Duty Crew and one Pager Duty person. If no Pager Duty personnel are available, open shifts will be filled with Duty Crew personnel.
 - c) Invest in internet-based scheduling software to streamline the scheduling process, making it easier for personnel to fill schedule vacancies.

- 11) In the short term, the Whitewater Township Board will continue the longstanding tradition of supporting the budget shortfalls of the ambulance service. Once the plan is operational, the Board will continue to look for fiscal efficiencies.
- 12) You can calculate how much the 1.5 mills will cost you annually. Locate the taxable value of your property on your last tax bill. Divide the taxable value by 1000 and then multiply by \$1.50. (Ex: \$100,000 of taxable value. $\$100,000 \div 1000 = 100$. $100 \times \$1.50 = \150.00 cost.)

Please feel free to call a Whitewater Township Board member if you have any further questions.

Whitewater Township Board