

**City Council Meeting Minutes**  
**May 14, 2009**  
**Special Session**  
**5:30 p.m.**

The Xenia City Council met in a Special Session on May 14, 2009, at 5:45 p.m., in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, with the following members present: William R. Miller, John Caupp, Dale Louderback, Jeanne Mills, Patricia L. Felton, Phyllis A. Pennewitt, and Dennis R. Propes.

The agenda packet included the following information on the August 4, 2009, Renewal Levy:

- Levy Task Assignments
- 2009 – 2010 Levy Timeline
- Estimated Costs of Levy
- Draft Levy Flyer
- Draft Door Hangers
- Suggested Message for Phone Calls
- Draft Yard Sign
- Agenda item from April 9, 2009, City Council meeting

**Levy Task Assignments**

*Levy Flyers—Develop flyer for utility bills and separate flyer for door hanger.*

Mr. Percival noted Mark Bazalak has been working on the levy flyers. Drafts of the levy flyer and door hangers have been included in their agenda packet, which they can discuss later in the meeting.

*Door to Door Campaign—Drop off simplified flyer in neighborhoods a few weeks prior to election.*

Mr. Percival said the door to door campaign will be accomplished 1 to 2 weeks prior to election. Councilwoman Felton felt the door to door campaign should be concentrated in the high voting areas. Mr. Lewis said they have the voting turnouts from the last election. They also have a walking list of all the registered voters in each precinct. Mr. Percival confirmed they will visit the high impact areas and the registered voters.

*Phone Campaign—Begin calling with preset message delivered by volunteers the week before the election.*

Mr. Percival said only registered voters will be called. Councilman Caupp asked if the Code Red system could be used instead of enlisting volunteers. Mr. Lewis said no.

*Signs—Signs for renewal levy to be placed no sooner than 30 days from election; July 6<sup>th</sup> completion date should meet this requirement.*

Mr. Percival said a draft layout of the sign has been included in their agenda packets, which they can discuss later in the meeting.

*Newspaper Articles/Letters to Editor/Press Releases—Articles in newspaper, letters to editor, press releases illustrating steps taken to reduce cost and provide information on levy to be done consistently through election.*

Mr. Percival noted Liz Studebaker has already written a few articles about the levy. They will ensure there are positive articles about the city in the paper. As Election Day get closer, Letters to the Editors supporting the levy will be published.

*Key Leader/Organization Endorsements—Seek key leader and civic organization endorsements.*

Mr. Percival said they need to work on obtaining endorsements from key leader and organizations in the area between now and the election.

*Consultant and Other Budget Costs—Determine possible consultant costs and other budgetary costs for election to be presented at Council work session.*

Mr. Percival said they have gone back and forth on this issue. They want to ensure that whatever they do now will not hamper any effort for a possible police and fire levy next year. Most firms they spoke with want a one-year contract and are not interested in a short-term relationship.

*Find Treasurer for P.A.C.—Find Treasurer for Political Action Committee for renewal levy.*

Mr. Percival said Brad Montgomery agreed to serve as the P.A.C. Treasurer. Eric Montgomery also agreed to serve as Treasurer.

*Absentee Voters—Collect absentee voter lists from Board of Elections and provide information to absentee voters.*

Mr. Percival said as information on absentee voters is obtained daily, levy information will be sent, which will not be a terribly time-consuming task. Since 30% of the voters are absentee voters, it will be a critical group that they need to reach.

Councilwoman Felton emphasized that the levy information must be sent the same night that absentee voter information is obtained. They cannot wait because most senior citizens fill out and mail their absentee ballot as soon as they get it. Vice President Miller agreed; most absentee voters return their absentee ballots within 48 hours. Mr. Percival agreed.

Councilwoman Felton asked if Law Department volunteers could be in charge of the task. Mr. Lewis said they will discuss that; however, city staff cannot be used for any part of the campaign.

*Video for Channel 5—Develop video presentations for display on Channel 5.*

Mr. Percival said the informational videos will be played on a rotating basis on the City's Government Channel 5.

Councilwoman Felton asked Mr. Percival to listen to Council's feedback before proceeding any further. Mr. Lewis agreed. They have some of the same problems they had with the last levy. The law has not changed. They cannot expend any city funds or use any city staff or assets to

oppose or support passage of the levy, just like the Xenia School Board was instructed to do during their last levy campaign. The School Board raised money but did not and cannot spend tax dollars on the campaign, which the city will also be unable to do. They need to decide how to approach all these things. The Unions may be willing to contribute some of their P.A.C. money to the levy campaign. They can share informational materials, like they previously sent in the utility bills, but the information cannot say to vote for or against the levy. Hopefully, the Unions will be willing to contribute money to some extent.

Mr. Percival felt there were a lot of people that do business with the city who would be willing to contribute money for the campaign. Councilwoman Felton asked if any of that had been discussed with the Unions. Mr. Percival said he met with the Union Presidents twice about the August levy and explained the financial situation of the city, but he has not asked them for a specific amount of money.

Councilman Louderback asked how much money was needed for the campaign. Mr. Lewis said that would depend on how much they decide to do. Councilman Louderback said he did not understand the need to hire a consultant. Mr. Bazalak said a lot of the information in the agenda packet can be shared [at the expense of the City] because it does not ask voters to vote for the levy. Depending on how Council chooses to move forward, donations will be needed. Mr. Lewis thought they could get donations without asking people to vote for the levy. The reason consultants want a one-year contract is because they could be paid to run the election, but the city would not technically be paying them to do that. The consultant would almost be paid to do branding like a public relations firm does. The consultants could do polling to determine what the community wants and feels about the city and/or schools. They then pull all that information together for the city to use, which is how they get around paying a consultant to run the election. Consultants want to be involved in the entire branding process.

**Estimated Costs for Levy**

Levy Flyer	\$ 1,500 for printing
Door Hangers	\$ 100 for blank hangers and shipping
Yard signs	\$ 1,500 for single color (e.g. blue signs with white lettering)
Consultant	\$15,000
Absentee Mailings	\$ 500 for postage
Election expense	\$ 8,000 (assuming we split the cost w/schools)
Misc.	<u>\$ 400</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,000</b>

Mr. Percival noted the two biggest costs are the \$15,000 consultant fee and \$8,000 election expense fee (which will come out of the city’s budget.) They can probably pay for the levy flyer (\$1,500) if it is viewed as informational material. The door hangers should definitely say “Vote Yes” but the \$100 cannot be paid with city funds. Mr. Bazalak said the door hangers will most likely cost more than \$100. Michelle Johnson, City Clerk, designed the template and was going to print the door hangers in-house. However, with the latest information they received, they will have to contract out the printing unless they can find some volunteers.

Mr. Bazalak said Ms. Johnson, Mr. Lewis, and he developed the sign templates. They all felt the verbiage needed to be as brief as possible in order to get the point across. He noted the example shared with Council is only a draft.

Councilwoman Felton asked how many yard signs could be purchased for \$1,500. Mr. Lewis said the price they got was \$3.68 each. Councilman Caupp estimated they could purchase at least 500 signs. Councilwoman Felton asked which company would be used. Mr. Lewis said the price he quoted was from Patriot Signs. Vice President Miller said AEG Signs near Athens, Ohio, could print the signs cheaper. Councilman Caupp said he used a sign company in West Chester. The signs were very heavy, very durable, with heavy gauge wires that withstand the wind, and they were pocket signs (no staples needed). Mr. Lewis said the signs from Patriot Signs had no staples. He asked Vice President Miller and Councilman Caupp for phone numbers of the companies they mentioned. They would like to get the best sign at the best price.

Regardless of the price, Councilman Louderback said he would not agree to have a company outside Xenia print the yard signs. Screen Play and Ad Leap Promotions make yard signs. Mr. Lewis said the only man from Xenia that advertised he did political signs was listed in the telephone book. He left two phone messages but has not yet received a return phone call. Councilwoman Mills said Trophy Sports does pocket signs. Mr. Lewis said they could call local companies to get prices.

Councilman Caupp said no local company does pocket signs. The local companies contract with an outside company and add 5% or 10% to the price. Councilman Louderback said he did not want to run a Xenia campaign with a Cincinnati sign company. Councilwoman Felton said that would happen anyway because the local company orders signs from an outside company. Councilman Louderback said he did not care because a Xenia company would receive the money. Vice President Miller noted the Xenia company would only receive 5% of the money. Councilman Caupp stated signs can be ordered on-line. Councilman Louderback said he would object if the signs are purchased outside Xenia. Mr. Percival said they would contact Trophy Sports, Screen Play, and Ad Leap. Councilman Caupp thought they need to look at the cost difference. Vice President Miller said if there is a huge cost difference, they will have to purchase the signs from a company outside Xenia. If not, he did not care.

Mr. Percival said the \$1,500 estimated was for approximately 500 signs, but he was not sure they needed 500 signs at this point, which is something they need to discuss. Mr. Lewis said since it costs \$1,300 for 250 signs or \$1,500 for 500 signs, they might as well order 500 signs.

Vice President Miller noted if the Issue number is on the yard sign, it cannot be used again. Councilwoman Mills said the School Board did that but later regretted their decision. Mr. Lewis felt the Issue number needed to be on the signs. Mr. Bazalak said they could order 250 signs now and order more later. Mr. Lewis did not think the vendor would do that because of the setup costs. Councilwoman Felton noted setup costs should be a one-time charge.

Councilman Louderback wondered if they needed to hire a consultant. Mr. Percival said they may want to revisit that issue during the Police and Fire Levy campaign.

Vice President Miller asked if they could hire a campaign manager. Mr. Lewis did not think that was the problem. Everyone present knows how to run a campaign. They are looking for a consultant who has been successful in working with multiple levies and knows the pitfalls they need to avoid.

Councilman Louderback asked if the school levy would be on the August ballot. Mr. Percival said no. He talked with Dr. Lewis yesterday. The School Board is meeting tonight. Dr. Lewis' opinion was that the State was going to give them another shot in November and that they were going to rework the entire project. In order to significantly reduce costs, they will not build a new high school and will make improvements at the elementary schools. Councilman Louderback said he heard that would still cost \$30 million. Mr. Percival said the term is "segmenting," which is the term the Greeneview School Board used. They will not move Central Middle School to Xenia High School, they will not build a new high school, and they will only make improvements at the elementary schools. Councilman Louderback asked how much money was requested last time. Mr. Percival said \$80 million. The school levy will be on the November ballot.

Councilwoman Felton asked if the election expense would be more than \$8,000. Mr. Percival said yes; the election expense would be \$15,000, assuming there are no other issues on the ballot. There may be other issues on the ballot that were defeated last November but he did not know if they would be on the August ballot. He noted if there are other issues on the ballot but they are not voted on in Xenia precincts, we will still pay the full election expense to open up all the Xenia precincts.

Mr. Percival said they need to know if Council wants to use yard signs, which he thought they did; however, 500 signs may be too many.

Mr. Percival said postage was estimated to cost \$500 and miscellaneous costs were estimated to cost \$400. Mr. Lewis said the \$500 in postage was to mail information to absentee voters. Mr. Percival said without the \$15,000 consultant fee and the election cost, the costs are estimated to be around \$4,000. They have done a lot of exploration but are not sure a consultant is a necessity for the Renewal Levy at this point. As Mr. Lewis noted, they wanted a consultant to ensure they do not make any major faux pas that will negatively affect the police and fire levy effort. Mr. Lewis agreed. He reiterated that everyone present could run a campaign. He wanted to ensure the Renewal Levy is not over-sold in case they need to ask for another levy in the spring.

### **Levy Timeline**

Mr. Percival said they need to submit the ballot language to the Board of Elections by May 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Bazalak said the ballot language has been submitted. Mr. Percival said if the Renewal Levy is not approved in August, they can work toward the November 3<sup>rd</sup> date. After that, the next opportunities for passage of a police and fire levy would be February 2, 2010, or May 4, 2010. He was not sold on the February date, because it is almost impossible to get anything done since they cannot get the information out. It is difficult to put signs in the ground in the middle of winter. They believe once the Renewal Levy is approved, they should look at May 4, 2010, for a

police and fire levy. Mr. Bazalak thought they need to think about how a successful school levy may affect the city's future levy campaigns.

***Levy Flyers—Develop flyer for utility bills and separate flyer for door hanger.***

Mr. Percival said since the levy flyers are informational only, they can be mailed with the utility bills. They will not say "Vote **Yes**." The flyer answers questions and explains where the money is coming from and where it is going. Mr. Bazalak said the same type of paper (heavy, glossy paper) used before most likely will not be used this time. The company had problems using their folding machine to fold the flyers because of the paper used. They will discuss the type of paper that will work in the company's folding machine.

Mayor Pennewitt noted in the middle section of the flyer, it states "*NO ADDITIONAL COST TO TAXPAYERS!! The City has not received a tax increase since 1991, and voted property taxes have not been increased since 1959.*" In the third column under "Questions and Answers," it states, "*Deficits are projected in 2009-10 and beyond. Unless major changes in State and Federal funding occur, the City will face a bleak financial future.*" If the Renewal Levy fails, she asked if there would be sufficient revenue to assure our citizens of the same quality and quantity of services they have received in the past. She presumed the answer is "No."

Mr. Lewis said there is no guarantee citizens will receive the same level of services even if the Renewal Levy passes. Mayor Pennewitt asked if a study had been done to decipher the reduction in manpower, and if so, when will that decision be activated. She thought the citizens need to know what the ramifications will be if the Renewal Levy fails. Even if the Renewal Levy passes, it will still not be enough money for the city to operate like it currently does. She did not think citizens understand the ramifications if the Renewal Levy fails.

Mayor Pennewitt noted the flyer states, "*Even with this request, we will still strive to provide the most economical and efficient services possible.*" Mr. Percival said that is their job. Mayor Pennewitt said she felt the citizens need to understand how serious this problem is. The material does not state the facts in such a way as to make the citizens wake up and say, "Oh my gosh - this is what can happen!" Mr. Percival said he is not a sensationalist. He is not going to run out and say, "The sky is falling!". He does not believe that is the right way to do business. You tell people the truth, and if they agree with you, fine. If they don't, they don't. Mayor Pennewitt said she was not suggesting they lie. You tell the truth; however, there needs to be some way to simply state the serious financial situation the city is in.

Mr. Bazalak said that is why they discussed hiring a consultant, but they were not sure they wanted to spend \$15,000 of the taxpayer's money. He thought Mayor Pennewitt and Mr. Percival each had valid points. Council needs to determine where they want to go.

Councilwoman Felton said they were assuming citizens will read all the information in the flyer. She did not think most people paid any attention to the literature. Mr. Lewis thought one out of ten people will read the flyer. Councilwoman Felton thought that "*NO ADDITIONAL COST TO TAXPAYERS!!*" should be emphasized.

Councilwoman Mills said they do not have a crystal ball to know exactly how to proceed. They don't know the ramifications if the Renewal Levy fails. Mr. Percival said that was explained at

the work sessions. They have a plan for what the ramifications will be if the Renewal Levy fails. Councilwoman Mills understood there were ramifications and that the city has a plan, but they do not need to blackmail or threaten voters. Mr. Percival said it is a difficult situation. Councilwoman Mills said the back of the flyer states, "This Levy Renewal will generate approximately \$409,000 for critical services, such as Police, Fire, Streets, and Parks and Recreation," which is true, but she thought they should tell citizens that the Renewal Levy will not bring in enough money to run the city (and keep our head above water) and that voters will be asked to pass another levy for police and fire later. Mr. Percival said he did not know how to state it. However, passage of the Renewal Levy will barely allow the city to keep their heads above water. As they move forward, they know additional revenues will be necessary in order to continue the same operations they are currently being provided. He thought the only way to sell an additional levy would be to highlight safety services (Police and Fire).

Vice President Miller noted the flyer contains a pie chart entitled "How your tax dollars are spent" which shows: Police (30%); Fire (26%); and Dispatch Center (8%). He asked if the Dispatch Center was part of Police and Fire. Mr. Percival said no; it is part of safety services. Councilwoman Felton noted 8% is only the city's share for the Dispatch Center cost, not the total cost. Vice President Miller said in order for citizens to know that 64% of their tax dollars are spent on safety services, the pie chart should show the combined costs. The slice could be **Safety Services** - 64% (Police 30%; Fire 26%; Dispatch Center 8%), which may have a greater impact on the public. Citizens would also clearly see from the pie chart that 9% of their tax dollars are spent on streets. Councilman Caupp thought Vice President Miller had a valid point.

Mr. Lewis agreed the flyer should clearly state even if the Renewal Levy is passed, it will not fix the city. If he voted for the Renewal Levy, he would wonder why five months later the city was asking him to vote for a Police and Fire Levy when he already voted for the Renewal Levy.

Mr. Bazalak thought the '\$64,000' question was how to do it. He understood people may perceive it as blackmail. He thought they were trying to relay the information to the public, which is their job. Councilwoman Felton thought the information should be relayed according to the citizen's mindset and budget, and not the city's. Citizens care about their checkbook and their services. Mr. Bazalak said he understood that, but you get what you pay for. Mr. Lewis thought they needed to be careful about what is perceived as blackmail, which is a very delicate line.

Vice President Miller did not think it was blackmail if they are just telling the truth. President Propes said the perception is that it is blackmail. Vice President Miller said if the public thinks it is blackmail when it is the truth and the levy fails, and then services are cut that they stated needed to be cut to provide a balanced budget, then it is not blackmail. President Propes agreed it is not blackmail, but they will be combating the perception that it is blackmail. Vice President Miller said he often tells people that the city does not run on \$409,000, but it helps. If they don't have the \$409,000, the city will suffer.

Councilman Caupp said the facts are the Renewal Levy means no new taxes and no increase in taxes. Councilwoman Mills agreed the flyer should clearly state those facts, but the public also needs to know that passage of the Renewal Levy will not fix the hole in the city's deficit.

Councilman Caupp thought educating the public was fine and the flyer was great, but most people will not read all the information in the flyer. They may only look at the pie charts.

*Door to Door Campaign—Drop off simplified flyer in neighborhoods a few weeks prior to election.*

Mr. Percival asked for opinions on the door hangers.

Councilman Caupp thought the bottom of the door hangers were “too busy.”

Vice President Miller said he would greatly reduce the logo on the top. Mr. Percival said the logo is where the hole for door knob is located. Vice President Miller said NO NEW TAXES! should be the first thing the public reads, not the last thing, which should be followed by “Vote for Issue \_\_ August 4<sup>th</sup>, and all the text should be the same color. Mr. Lewis thought the door hangers should be blue and white if they only want to use two colors. Using multiple colors increases the price significantly. Mr. Bazalak again reminded those present that the three door hangers are just examples.

Councilwoman Mills asked if Council liked the yard signs. Mr. Lewis thought the less information on the signs, the better. Otherwise, they are too hard to read. Councilwoman Felton agreed. Councilman Caupp thought having the Issue Number on the sign was important. Mr. Lewis agreed. Councilman Caupp thought the date should be removed so that the sign reads,



Councilwoman Mills asked if four members of Council liked Councilman Caupp’s suggestion for the yard sign. President Propes asked Councilwoman Felton for her opinion. Councilwoman Felton said she was not sure; she needed to think about it.

Mayor Pennewitt thought the Issue Number should be larger. Mr. Lewis said if the August 4<sup>th</sup> date was removed, the Issue Number could be enlarged. Councilwoman Felton said there are only one or two issues on the entire ballot. Mr. Bazalak said the Renewal Levy may be the only issue on the ballot.

President Propes asked how Council felt about the door hangers. Councilwoman Felton thought the door hangers should match the yard signs, the city’s logo at the top and information on the bottom of the door hanger should be removed, and they should only use two colors. The door hangers could be white with blue letters, although she was not sure door hangers worked. Councilman Caupp said door hangers are cheap to print. A huge stack of door hangers can be printed for \$100. Councilwoman Felton said she was not arguing that point, but she was not sure how effective they were.

Councilwoman Mills asked who would walk the neighborhoods. If the city is going to ask for a Police and Fire Levy in six months, police officers and firemen should walk the streets at that time. Councilwoman Felton asked if that was allowed. Mr. Lewis said police officers and firemen could walk the neighborhoods for both levies but they cannot do it while on duty or while in uniform. Councilwoman Mills thought it would be better if police officers and firemen walked the neighborhoods when they campaign for the Police and Fire Levy. Police officers and firemen could wear a union t-shirt and distribute door hangers while off-duty.

President Propes summarized the suggestions:

Door hangers: (1) remove much of the information; (2) move NO NEW TAXES to the top; (3) make the door hangers look like the yard sign.

Councilwoman Mills thought the information on who to call for questions should be left on the door hangers. Councilman Caupp thought the signs must also contain the financial disclosure on the bottom.

Councilwoman Mills said many people told her they don't look at the information in their water bill. Mr. Percival said many people told him they did not see the flyer in their water bill. Councilman Louderback found that hard to believe. Councilwoman Mills said it is no different than when she gets her VISA bill. She pulls out the part she needs to pay the bill and throws away the other 15 pieces. Councilwoman Felton said she does the same thing.

Mr. Bazalak clarified "Vote for Issue \_\_\_" should be on the door hangers and yard signs. They will need to get donations to pay for those. Mr. Percival said once they have a number, he will ask the Unions for a donation. Door hangers are inexpensive. Sandy Schmidt from PIP can print the door hangers on thicker [card stock] paper. She does a good job.

Flyers: Mr. Percival clarified that under the flyer heading "How your tax dollars are spent," the pie chart would be changed so the slice would show **Safety Services** 64% - (Police 30%; Fire 26%; Dispatch Center 8%). Councilman Caupp thought they decided not to do that yet. Councilwoman Felton agreed they should wait to do that for the Police and Fire Levy.

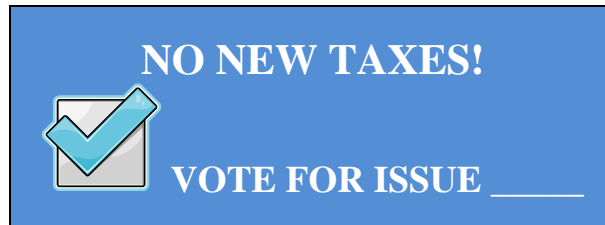
Councilwoman Felton referenced the pie chart entitled "Property Tax Distribution." She thought they need to emphasize how much the City of Xenia receives from the Property Tax Distribution, which is 9%. Councilwoman Mills agreed. President Propes did not think the Xenia Community Schools would like the pie chart because it shows that they receive 64% of the money collected from property taxes. Mr. Lewis thought the pie chart shows that the City of Xenia is not being greedy, particularly if both issues are on the ballot at the same time. Councilman Louderback agreed.

Mr. Percival suggested pulling out the slice from the pie chart that shows how much the City of Xenia receives and enlarging that slice. Council agreed. Councilman Caupp said many people think that the City of Xenia gets a lot of money from property taxes, but the pie charts shows that is not true in comparison to what others receive.

Councilwoman Felton thought the 1% "Other" slice in the pie chart did not clearly show who receives that money. Mr. Percival asked if the 1% "Other" slice should be combined with the

5% “Greene County JVS” slice to total 6%, which would un-clutter the chart. The City of Xenia 9% slice would be pulled away from the pie chart. Councilman Caupp said he liked Greene County JVS being separate because it shows that Xenia Community Schools receive even more taxpayer money (a total of 69%). Mr. Percival said the 1% “Other” slice could be combined with the 5% “Greene County JVS” slice to show a total of 6%.

Mr. Percival wondered if they wanted to have the checkmark next to the word “NO” on the yard sign. It bothered him psychologically. Councilwoman Felton suggested the sign read:



Mr. Lewis said they would create two mock-ups of the sign. Mr. Percival liked the suggestion to use the blue and white colors. President Propes said Council can make a decision after they see both examples. Mr. Percival said the adjustments would be made and shared with Council.

The Special Session was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Michelle D. Johnson, Clerk  
Xenia City Council

Dennis R. Propes, President  
Xenia City Council