

FOX RIVER & COUNTRYSIDE FIRE RESCUE DISTRICT

Referendum Ballot April 2nd

The Board of Trustees of the Fire District, in their regular monthly business meeting, voted unanimously to place our referendum question on the April 2nd Consolidated Election ballot once again. In the November general election, district residents voted in record numbers. In the November election results, our ballot question received over 4,000 votes to support the Fire Department. Our attempt last Spring missed the mark by only 32 votes. During both of our past attempts, the district residents have been given the important facts about the important reasons for the referendum.

Following each of our prior attempts, we received a great deal of feedback about this effort from district residents. We have also received comments that indicated the ballot question wording on the ballot was very confusing. In this newsletter, we can make the referendum question easier to understand by explaining why the language is put forth in this manner. The ballot question is required by law to be placed on the ballot using very specific language as defined in the PTELL law.

Removing the Confusion

The Fox River and Countryside Fire Rescue District has never had a tax increase. Our rate has been the essentially the same, except for the effects of inflationary adjustments in property values and new growth. The rate of .00267 is extremely low in comparison to all the surrounding fire department levies.

Because of the low rate, the referendum question comes out with a percentage number that *shocks* people. The fact is that we are requesting an additional 16.8 cents per \$100 dollars of assessed value, for a new rate of .00435. *The shocking part, expressed as 63%, is the fact that the small amount of our request is a high percentage because our current rate is small.*

Simply stated, 63% is only slightly under a 17-cent per \$100 of assessed value increase in your fire tax. The Fire District Board of Trustees has worked carefully to keep your fire tax rate affordable. Even with the requested increase in force, Fox River's fire rate will remain *roughly one half of our neighboring fire department rates*. Do not be confused, **we are not proposing to increase your entire property tax bill by 63%.**

What is the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law?

The Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) [35 ILCS 200/18] limits the amount of tax extensions (total taxes billed) for non-home rule taxing districts. Although the law is commonly referred to as “tax caps,” the use of this phrase can be misleading. The PTELL does not “cap” either individual property tax bills or individual property assessments. Instead, the PTELL allows a taxing district to receive *a limited inflationary increase* in tax extensions on existing property, plus an additional amount for new construction, and voter-approved rate increases. The limitation slows the growth of property tax revenues to taxing districts when property values and assessments are increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Generally, property owners have some protection from tax bills that increase only because the market value of their property is rising rapidly. Increases in property tax extensions are limited to *the lesser of 5 percent or the increase in the consumer price index* for the year preceding the levy year. The limitation for a taxing district can be increased with voter approval.

Since 1991, residents of Kane County and many other of the collar counties have followed the PTELL law. Most people do not understand the way our ballot question is being asked, but we must follow the laws. The days are gone

whereby a taxing body can ask residents the simple question, such as “Can the Fire District raise its general tax rate from .0027 to a new rate of .0044”. Instead, on this ballot, district residents will see the following language.

Fox River & Countryside Fire-Rescue District

“Shall the extension limitation under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for the Fox River & Countryside Fire/Rescue District, Kane and DuPage Counties, Illinois, be increased from the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index over the prior levy year to 63% per year for the 2019 levy year?”



YES



NO

This would be followed on the ballot with the following language which you should read before casting your vote that explains the impact of the referendum request.

“For the 2019 levy year the approximate amount of the additional tax extendable against property containing a single-family residence and having a fair market value at the time of the referendum of \$100,000 is estimated to be \$ 56.00.”



Our service area is extensive, covering almost 38 square miles and more than 26,000 residents. We provide service to the residents from two fire stations strategically located to best respond to all areas of the district. Fox River and Countryside Fire Rescue personnel respond to *nearly 1400 emergencies each year.*

Fox River and Countryside Fire Rescue District relies on our resident's support for funding equipment, vehicles and on duty personnel. In fact, we have only two sources of revenue, property taxes and fees from Ambulance and Rescue calls. Despite our financial challenges, the elected Board of Trustees for the Fire District continues to provide vigilant oversight of your taxpayer dollars. Fox River and Countryside Fire Rescue District has been recognized each year for its excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). However, during the past three years our budget has been under pressure due to rising costs on the aging fleet and equipment. There is no established capital asset replacement plan to manage these resources and address problems.

The Fire District has already been forced to reduce its work force by previously eliminating nine of the on-duty personnel.

Operating without any capital asset replacement funds in the budget continues to be a significant challenge forcing us to deal with rising vehicle costs and much needed equipment replacements for items that have gone well beyond the useful life. Staffing levels need to be restored to meet recommended NFPA safe levels. To create a sustainable future, without using debt to fund operations, the referendum provides a balanced solution.

Cut through the confusion!

63 percent is really 17 cents per \$100 EAV on your fire tax only. The proposed increase will ensure that a safe number of trained firefighters and paramedics are on duty to serve you in an emergency. Also, the needed apparatus and equipment issues will be resolved.



Please take some time on Tuesday April 2nd to vote. Whether you support or oppose the Fire District Referendum, please cast your ballot.

Fire Line

**Published by the Fox River &
Countryside Fire/Rescue District**

Administration

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Chuck Dunham – Treasurer
Thomas Mollenhauer – Secretary
Kristin LeBlanc – Trustee
James Wegman – Trustee
John R. Nixon – Fire Chief**

Phone Numbers

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EMERGENCY - DIAL 911

**THE FIRE LINE IS AN
NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU
BY THE FOX RIVER AND
COUNTRYSIDE FIRE/RESCUE
DISTRICT**

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