



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 6, 2024

WORKING SESSION

I. ROLL CALL

A Working Session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on March 6, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 PM by Comm. Somerville, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte, Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville
Members Absent:	None.
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel; Alize Asberry Payne, Racial Equity Officer; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Terrence Williams, Administration; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Rose, ITS; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Bryce Allmacher, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Monica Prince spoke in support of a Washtenaw County senior services millage.

Luna asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Francine Alexander asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Jesse asked that the Mental Health and Public Safety millage funding be dedicated more towards mental health services than towards policing.

Danny Bell reemphasized the comments of previous speakers.

Lindsay Kulka asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the

programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Eleanor asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Aaron asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Dirk Mayhew asked the Board to alter the language of the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage.

Karen Holm asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Trishe Duckworth asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

Ryan Henyard said that transformative services could be funded through the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage.

Jen Heinberg asked the Board of Commissioners to delay any potential vote on the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage to give County residents an opportunity to review the programming to which those funds have been/will be dedicated.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator, and Brady Peck, Director of Operations, provided a presentation on active County millages and property tax revenues, as well as proposals from County staff for the renewal of various millages.

Peck stated that the County is increasingly reliant on property tax revenues and that the County faces significant challenges in generating revenue through new/renewed taxes due to the Headlee amendment. The Headlee amendment requires that all new millages be passed via ballot measure and causes all existing millage rates to slightly decrease year over year. Peck stated that taxable values are restricted from increasing at the same rate as real property values due to Proposal A, passed by Michigan voters in 1994. Peck said that the 50-mill limit also restricts the County from levying taxes that are consistent with increases in real property values.

DeLeeuw provided an overview of the extra voted millages (Parks Operations, Parks Acquisitions, Mental Health and Public Safety, Conservation District, Enhanced Emergency Communications, Roads and Non-Motorized Pathways, Natural Areas Preservation, and Veterans) which have been approved by Washtenaw County voters.

DeLeeuw stated that five of these millages are used to fund County operations exclusively, two are used to fund County operations and outside community service agencies, and one millage (Conservation District) is remitted entirely to an outside organization.

DeLeeuw provided an overview of a proposal for a Washtenaw County Senior Services Millage. DeLeeuw summarized three models for implementation of a senior services millage: RFPs with allocations authorized by the BOC, Administration of programming via County staff, and contracting for services to be administered entirely by an outside entity. The recommendation from County staff is to adopt a model which would involve administration through County staff with the Commission on Aging serving as an advisory body.

Comm. Justin Hodge summarized his proposal as BOC chair for bringing millage proposals before the Board. Chair Hodge noted that due to Early Voting implementation statewide, the cost of administering special elections has increased significantly; Hodge stated that it should be the Board's intention to vote to put millages on the ballot in even numbered years to avoid these costs.

Comm. Rabhi said that the Board should vote to place the Parks millages on the ballot this year so as to prevent any operations challenges that would arise from replenishing that fund balance the same year that the millage expires.

Comm. Rabhi said that any senior service millage should involve implementation through County staff, not outside entities.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the composition of Conservation District Board.

Conservation District staff stated that members are elected at their annual meetings and that voting is open to all Washtenaw County residents.

Comm. Rabhi expressed concern with the model by which the Conservation District is funded through the County millage, Comm. Rabhi said that the County have more direct oversight over how these funds are leveraged.

Comm. Rabhi stated that he disagrees with the language in the ordinance which dictates that a portion of the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage be distributed to local jurisdictions that provide their own policing services. Comm. Rabhi said that he supports amending that ordinance to distribute a large portion of these millage funds towards mental health and related supportive services. Comm. Rabhi stated that he is concerned with the way the millage funding dedicated to the Sheriff's Office has been spent.

Comm. LaBarre stated that he supports further refinement of the structures which guide implementation of the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage. Comm. LaBarre acknowledged the constraints placed upon the Board in raising additional tax revenue by past policymakers at the State level. Comm. LaBarre stated that he is willing to support a process to place the Parks millage on the ballot this year.

Comm. Scott stated that she would like to hear from Parks staff on how delaying millage renewal until 2026 would impact their work.

Coy Vaughn, Director of County Parks and Recreation, stated that delaying millage renewal would limit the effectiveness of certain contingency plans in place for major capital projects and interrupt the Department's natural financial cadence.

Comm. Hodge stated that the recommendation for delaying the Parks millage stems from the fact that its inclusion would bring the County to six total millages on the ballot this year.

Comm. Lyte stated that there are restrictions on how Mental Health and Public Safety Millage funds are used.

Comm. Maciejewski stated his appreciation for those individuals who have researched a potential senior services millage, Comm. Maciejewski expressed support for a senior services millage.

Comm. Maciejewski stated that WCSO provides important patrol services in four out of the seven jurisdictions that he represents and noted his willingness to refine the ordinance which guides implementation of the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage.

Comm. Maciejewski stated his support for bringing the Parks millage before Washtenaw County voters in 2024.

Comm. Beeman said that three municipalities in her district have police services provided by WCSO. Comm. Beeman stated that she is willing to work to adjust the implementation framework for the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage.

Comm. Sanders said that she will support the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage until there are concrete alternatives provided. Comm. Sanders stated that millage funds should continue to support policing services in the County and that there is no evidence that these funds have been leveraged improperly.

Comm. Sanders stated her support for the renewal of the Roads Millage.

Comm. Rabhi stated that his support for refining the framework for the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage is derived out of concern for process, not with individuals implementing millage funds at the Sheriff's Office. Comm. Rabhi stated that it is not his contention that Mental Health and Public Safety Millage funds have been administered improperly, but that the language dictating how the funds are programmed is flawed and should be adjusted to further support mental health and other human services needs in the County. Comm. Rabhi said that funds dedicated to Public Safety for local jurisdictions should be used to bolster County-administered services in those municipalities.

Comm. LaBarre said that he believes in the Board's ability to create a framework that is agreeable to all nine Commissioners, Comm. LaBarre reiterated that State law prevents the Board from significantly adjusting the language of any millage renewal proposal.

Jerry Clayton, Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office, stated that the public safety portion of the millage was intended to support contract policing in the County's communities. Clayton stated that the Sheriff's Office is supportive of efforts to bolster community

health services in the County, but that police have a role to play in promoting community wellness, especially in communities that have suffered from racist divestment.

Comm. Sanders asked about the fund balance of the Mental Health and Public Safety Millage.

Sheriff Clayton stated that the majority of existing funds in that balance have already been allocated, but not yet distributed. Clayton stated that maintaining a healthy fund balance is an act of fiscal responsibility.

Comm. Sanders stated that she supports increased BOC oversight of all millage funds.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the manner by which funds from this millage are distributed to CMH.

Trish Cortes, CMH Executive Director, said that funds are primarily overseen by the CMH Advisory Council and are programmed in conjunction with extensive community input. Cortes said that the majority of funds are disbursed via RFPs. Cortes said that CMH maintains a healthy fund balance from millage dollars, as well.

Administrator Dill stated the County remains a responsible steward of taxpayer money.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

Comm. Lyte, seconded by Comm. Sanders, moved to adjourn. Roll Call Vote: YEAS 6 NAYS 3 (Beeman, Rabhi, Somerville) ABSENT 0. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Annie Somerville, Chair of the Working Session
Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Bryce Allmacher, Deputy Clerk

Board Approved: March 20, 2024