

Resolution -- That the Cincinnatus Association endorse the Family Services and Treatment levy, Issue 6, to fund services for persons who would otherwise be incarcerated for drug or alcohol offenses.

Issue:

This levy promotes public safety by funding programs for prevention, treatment, and recovery of individuals with substance abuse and mental health problems.

This is a straight renewal of the levy in place 2009-14. It will raise about \$6.2 million per year for the next five years. It will cost the owner of \$100,000 property \$10.20 per year. The rate will remain at 0.34 mills, so it will not increase the property owner's taxes.

We endorsed the last such levy in 2009. It barely passed, by 52% to 48%.

Discussion:

Because it is a flat renewal and there will be no significant "carry-over" funds to support services (as was the case last time), all current levy programs will actually suffer a 9.5% reduction, which will be particularly difficult in the face of the current opiate crisis.

The levy funds support services such as:

- 1617 Reading Road-- chemical dependency education and treatment, relapse prevention, and vocational and educational services
- "Turning Point" -- residential treatment program for adult males convicted of multiple DUIs and other chemical dependency related offenses
- ADAPT/Drug Court – comprehensive treatment for certain drug offenders in lieu of jail
- "Re-Entry" -- a program helping inmates transition back into society
- "Drug Free Communities" -- a grassroots effort to prevent substance abuse among youths and to fight drugs in neighborhoods.

Many of these services are provided by Talbert House, which receives about half of the levy funds. Outside expert reviews of such services conducted for the Hamilton County Tax Levy Review Committee were supportive of the quality and effectiveness of such services.

We are not aware of any organized opposition to Issue 6.

Recommendation: The Excellence in Government Panel and Executive Committee recommend that the Cincinnatus Association endorse Issue 6.

Resolution – That the Cincinnatus Association endorse the Health & Hospitalization levy, Issue 7, to fund indigent medical care in Hamilton County.

Issue: The current 3-year levy has brought in about \$40 million per year. We endorsed this levy in 2011. It passed by a large margin. This would be a straight renewal. The cost for \$100,000 property value would be \$51.11 annually.

Discussion: In general, expenditures fall into two categories:

- medical care, including dental and mental health services, for indigent residents of Hamilton County at
 - University of Cincinnati Medical Center -- \$15 million
 - Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center -- \$4.8 million
- other medical care provided at County expense – about \$21 million

Here is a list of funds used for medical-related expenses in various County operations:

- inmate medical care (Sheriff's Department)
- extended detoxification program (Mental Health & Recovery Services Board), using a network of contracted prevention and treatment service agencies
- medical screenings and physical exams for juveniles at Hamilton County's youth detention facility and Hillcrest training school (Juvenile Court)
- tuberculosis control (Hamilton County Health District)
- alternative interventions for women with mental health and substance abuse problems (Probation Department)
- costs incurred for attorneys, doctors, security personnel, and various court costs (e.g., clerk and magistrate fees) in civil commitment proceedings involving mental health and disability evaluations of indigent people (Probate Court)

In addition, health care is provided through several non-profit organizations:

- St. Vincent DePaul charitable pharmacy
- Strategies to End Homelessness (case management and medical care for the homeless)

It was hoped that the levy could be cut substantially if the Affordable Care Act and Ohio's Medicaid expansion would reduce the incidence of uninsured medical expense. The County's expert consultants cautioned that a cut would be unwise at present. The actual effects of the ACA are not clear yet. Many indigent patients treated using levy funds are still uninsured. Dental and much mental health care is not covered. Medicaid expansion in Ohio is uncertain beyond mid-2015. The federal subsidy for "Obamacare" insurance policies provided under the federal registry to Ohio residents is in legal jeopardy. In the meantime, the two hospitals are doing whatever they can to get uninsured patients into programs now available to them. The County will reevaluate the situation as it develops in the next couple years.

We do not anticipate any organized opposition to Issue 7.

Recommendation: The Excellence in Government Panel and Executive Committee recommend that the Cincinnatus Association endorse Issue 7.

Resolution -- That the Cincinnatus Association endorse Issue 8, the proposed Hamilton County sales tax increase to raise funds for restoration of Union Terminal.

Issue:

If approved, Issue 8 will increase the sales tax for the next five-years by a quarter-cent. It will raise about \$170 million, to be devoted to fixing Union Terminal “for generations to come.”

Discussion:

Union Terminal is considered a “cultural icon” and an architecturally significant building in our area. It serves as home to the Cincinnati Museum Center, including the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, the Cincinnati Historical Society, the Children’s Museum, an Omnimax theater, etc. It is widely recognized, and has been confirmed by construction experts, that Union Terminal needs massive and costly structural repairs if it is remain open.

A Cultural Facilities Task Force chaired by former P&G CEO Bob McDonald studied the building’s condition and made recommendations for its renovation. The County Commissioners accepted those conclusions and agreed to put a sales tax increase on the ballot in order to fund the needed repairs. The Cincinnati Museum Center Board of Trustees reviewed the County’s proposal and concluded that they would be able to pursue full restoration of Union Terminal using the proceeds from the sales tax increase and private donations, historic tax credits, and grants which will be available to them. They issued a statement which summarized as follows:

[We are] confident that sales tax revenues and short-term financing products can be paired with private philanthropy and other grants to accomplish the full project and scope recommended by the Cultural Facilities Task Force. This completely restores Union Terminal, funded with \$170 million from the proposed sales tax, \$5 million already granted from the State of Ohio, \$24.5 million in historic tax credits, and \$7.5 million in private sector gifts.

The Cincinnatus Association played a major role in creation of the Cincinnati Museum Center and has always supported it. The Museum Center is a major contributor to the quality of life and economy of our community. Its future is in jeopardy unless it undergoes major structural repairs. The proposed plan to invest over \$200 million in making such repairs is a reasonable solution to this problem. We should go on record as supporting this plan.

There was opposition to the original proposal for a longer sales tax increase to fund renovation of both Union Terminal and Music Hall. The County has been widely criticized for scaling back the Task Force’s proposal by removing County tax support for Music Hall. This is not a reason to deny an endorsement of Issue 8. In addition, we note that, with removal of Music Hall from the proposal, no significant organized opposition to Issue 8 is anticipated.

Recommendation: The Excellence in Government Panel and Executive Committee recommend that the Cincinnatus Association endorse Issue 8.