



“Countryside Living”

Chester Township

Founded 1801

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November 22, 2023

Geauga County Commissioners
12611 Ravenwood Drive, Rm. B303
Chardon, OH 44024

RE: October 27, 2023 ‘Friends & Neighbors’ Letter

Dear Geauga County Commissioners,

The Elected Officials of Chester Township are writing to express our surprise and dissatisfaction for your October 27, 2023 letter to the “Friends and Neighbors” of Geauga County. Presumably, this was mailed out to every residential home in the county, and our community would like to know at what expense to Geauga County taxpayers?

It is this board’s position that your letter, mailed before and received by many voters on or before the November 7, 2023 election contributed to the ongoing confusion related to property tax valuations, and likely had a negative impact on the levies that were on the ballot. To what degree will not be known, but what is known is that some voters brought your letter to the polls. This is evidence that your letter did have an effect on the voters and that is very concerning.

Was your letter reviewed and approved by our Geauga County Prosecutor’s Office (GCPO) and did the GCPO support this mailing just before an election? We do not take issue with the content of the letter, but rather the timing as well as the use of taxpayer dollars for communicating your personal opinions on matters that voters decide appears to be inconsistent with Ohio Law.

You are hopefully aware that Ohio Law prohibits taxpayer dollars from being used in support of or in opposition to any ballot measures? Guidance the Chester Trustees received from the GCPO advised us not to represent ourselves as elected officials in any public communications (ex: letters to the editor) regarding levies on the ballot. We see your actions and this letter as inconsistent with that advice.

Your façade of fiscal prudence in this letter is inconsistent with your actions. In case you have forgotten, the County Commissioners initial 2024 budget submittal to the Geauga County Budget Commission (GCBC) was tabled in part because of your hoarding taxpayer money (see [County Grilled over Annual Budget | Geauga County Maple Leaf \(geaugamapleleaf.com\)](#)). Of the three commissioners, only Jim Dvorak attended the hearing.

In that article, Auditor Walder is quoted as saying: "Your tax budget's a farce," he said. "You publicly advertised you passed a tax budget, (but) it's a total farce because then you have these budget hearings in ... September, October,".

A September 6, 2023 Geauga County Maple Leaf follow up article ([Commissioners' Budget Passes 2-1, with a Warning | Geauga County Maple Leaf \(geaugamapleleaf.com\)](#)) has several notable quotes:

"Hitchcock said Sept. 1 this is the first time in his memory the commission has been forced to establish a budget for a county entity."

"Flaiz said his vote is not to approve the county's budget, but to approve the budget imposed upon the county by the commission."

Strong evidence exists that the County Commissioners credibility on financial matters is questionable. Perhaps their letter was more for political purposes given that two county commissioner seats are up in 2024?

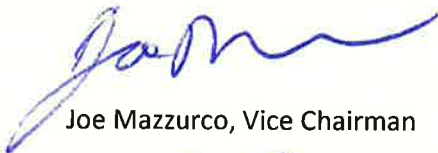
What is not in question is the action the Chester Township Trustees took, upon learning of this significant increase, passing a motion on October 5, 2023 to suspend collection of an existing police levy to offset the increase of a new police levy that was on the ballot. Acting in the interest of the people we are elected to serve, not self-interest, is true leadership.

Sincerely,

Chester Township Trustees



Craig Richter, Chairman



Joe Mazzurco, Vice Chairman



Ken Radtke, Jr., Trustee