

## Sylvan Township Townhall Meetings

September 15, 29 and October 13, 7:00 pm

Before being sworn in as Washtenaw County Commissioner for District #1, I was approached by several Sylvan Township residents informing me that they were going to be assessed by the county anywhere from 18 mills for three to four years or a one-time assessment of 62 mills on their properties. These people were very upset and were fearful of losing their homes and properties. Shortly after taking office, I asked for and was granted a meeting with the County Administrator and the Assistant Administrator on this subject. They shared with me that the township was going to default on their bond payment in May of 2011 and the county was going to have to enter into a default judgment against the township. (Since this time the township has made their May payment and will make their November 2011 payment, but will default on their May 2012 payment) This would allow the county to levy a special assessment on the tax payers of the township and the levy could be as high as 18 mills for 3 to 4 years or 6 to 8 mills for 15 years. At this time I stated that many people will not be able to pay such an assessment and would lose their homes. I asked if the county had considered helping the people of the township by smoothing the payments out to 20 years at a lower millage rate. Both Administrators said that the county would be open to my suggestion and they asked me to propose this idea to the township. After this, I took time to research the water system problem for several weeks and I learned that not only did the township owe \$13.756 million dollars for principle and interest on the water system, but also \$1.25 million to the county for money paid to the township for unpaid special assessment charged to the developers which was overturned by the courts. Through my research, I learned the history of the water system and found that the township came to the county with a request for assistance of \$7.5 million for a sewage transport system and \$5.0 million for their water system. The water system bond was approved by the county in 2001 and was refinanced in 2010 for a lower interest rate from 4.81442% to 3.788% with interest only payment due for years 2010 through 2013 and interest and principle payments from 2014 through May 2026. The unpaid property taxes were due immediately to the County Treasurer and the township is being charged 2.83% mandatory interest on this amount. I was first contacted by the township through their legal counsel Mr. Peter Flintoft. He asked me to share my plan with him. His reaction to the plan was also positive and we arranged a meeting of the County Administration, the County Legal Counsel, the County Treasurer, the Township Clerk, the Township Supervisor, Mr. Flintoft, and myself. The meeting went well and ended with the request that I present my plan at a township board meeting. The presentation was made at their next township meeting at which the public reacted very favorably. With this success, the township agreed to meet again and at this meeting it was agreed that the township would hire a financial advisor to calculate the least amount of millage to be levied to pay off the debt and not tie up too much of the county's capital. The financial advisor and myself worked the figures and the property growth and devaluation assumptions over the 20 year period of the plan plus the amount of county capital that will be tied up and for how long. After several hours, the final figure of 4.75 mills was established and a final meeting of the county and the township was set. At that meeting, the rate of 4.75 mills was agreed upon along with proposed ballot language. The township had pre-scheduled a special meeting to consider the ballot language for the millage according to the law and at that meeting the ballot language was unanimously approved and registered with the state for this November's election date.

I have found that the more people know the facts of the millage and the consequences of its failure, the more favorable they become. That is why three informational Town Hall meetings have been scheduled for September 15, 19, and October 13, at 7:00pm at the Washington Street Educational Center Auditorium in Chelsea. Peter Flintoft, the Township Legal Counsel, and myself, County Commissioner, Rob Turner will moderate these meetings. I hope to see many Sylvan Township citizens at these meetings.