

Springfield Service Reduction Plan

The City of Springfield is committed to providing excellent services to residents; however, the community is at a crossroads financially. A temporary 0.4% earned income tax increase will be placed on the November 8, 2016 ballot. It is necessary to develop a service reduction plan so that citizens are fully aware of what is at stake on November 8.

The City Commission is dedicated to providing residents with all the necessary information about this issue. There are several key points that need to be understood regarding our current funding, the temporary 0.4% earned income tax increase, the benefits to the community if it passes, and the resulting cuts necessary if it fails.

78% of the City's General Fund operations are funded by a local 2.0% income tax. Springfield receives very little in property tax revenue with only three mills available for operations, all of which is dedicated to the Police Division. City government cannot collect sales tax, as this is a tax that can only be collected by the State and county governments. In addition, the City of Springfield is not eligible to receive any of the casino revenues.

In terms of expenses, 80% of the City's General Fund expenditures go to fund police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), 911 dispatch, and municipal court operations. The City Commission has very little ability to adjust costs in these areas due to minimum staffing levels for police and fire. These staffing levels are set by the City Charter, and were voted in by the community. State law provides municipal courts with the autonomy to set their own budgets, even though the City Commission is responsible for funding them.

The State of Ohio has greatly reduced revenue to cities over the last 10 years. The reductions in state revenue sharing have placed many cities throughout the state in fiscal stress. These state cuts impact Springfield by over \$3.5 million every single year. This picture is clear when comparing \$5.4 million in state revenue sharing in 2007 vs. \$1.7 million today (2016). The loss of this funding is the single largest reason for this community's current fiscal crisis.

City Commission and staff have been proactive in trying to deal with these fiscal challenges. Steps to limit and reduce spending began more than 10 years ago and include holding expenses nearly flat and reducing staffing by 20% (135 fewer positions). These job cuts have occurred across the entire organization.

It is City Commission and staff's priority to ensure that every citizen is aware of the facts about the five-year, temporary earned income tax issue. This is an important decision that will affect everyone who lives or works in Springfield. Below you will find information related to the passage or failure of this issue.

If the Temporary 0.4% Earned Income Tax Passes:

Safety

- Police, Fire, and EMS will have the critical funding needed to keep our neighborhoods safe.
- The Safe Streets Task Force will be reinstated, with an additional six police officers added to counter violence and the heroin epidemic in our community.
- Johnny Lytle Avenue Community Police Substation and its community policing programs will continue to operate and serve neighbors and organizations.
- Fire Station #5 will remain open to respond to your individual, family, and business fire and medical emergencies.
- Investments will be made in much needed equipment for Police, Fire, and EMS.

Streets

- The Neighborhood Streets Improvement Program will be re-established, targeting priority residential streets.
- \$2 million per year will be dedicated to street restoration.
- Streets will improve, making Springfield a better place for our residents and more appealing to new businesses.

Jobs

- The “Springfield Strong – Economic Recovery Initiative” will continue helping to create a welcoming environment for businesses to locate and invest in Springfield.
- Visit <https://springfieldohio.gov/economic-recovery-initiative/> to read more about the initiative.

If the Temporary 0.4% Earned Income Tax Fails:

Police Division Cuts

- Emergency response times will be slower.
- Up to 10 of the current 11 civilian positions in the Police Division will be cut, taking officers off the street to fill these positions.
- The Johnny Lytle Community Police Substation will close.
- Community safety service programs will be eliminated.
- The Safe Streets Task Force will not be reinstated.
- Officer shift staffing will be reduced.

Police operations are critical to the viability of our community and will be greatly impacted if the levy fails. On average, the Police Division is able to respond to calls for service within five minutes. If the levy fails, up to ten civilian positions will be eliminated and officers will need to be pulled off the streets to cover these duties. This will result in an increase in response times. The Division will not be able to respond to certain calls for service such as barking dog/animal nuisance complaints, non-injury motor vehicle crashes, and business and residential alarm calls. It should be noted that community outreach and community relations’ activities would also be severely reduced. The affects of this will be hard to measure, but will impact the community for years to come. Neighborhood relations and community/relationship building among citizens and police officers are fundamental to Springfield’s success.

Fire Rescue Division Cuts

- Response to emergency calls will be delayed.
- Programming for fire safety will be reduced.
- An EMS Response Unit will be eliminated.
- Fire Station #5 will close resulting in noticeably slower response times to those currently served by Station #5.
- Replacement of aging equipment will be further hindered.

Fire and EMS operations are critical and greatly valued services that will be significantly impacted if the levy fails. The closure of Fire Station #5 will increase response times within the district it serves by an average of two to four minutes per response. Also, community fire and EMS outreach and community relation's activities would be severely reduced. This programming is vital to the community in terms of fire and EMS education and prevention.

Streets

- The Neighborhood Streets Improvement Program will not be reinstated.
- Streets will continue to deteriorate.

Parks and Recreation

Funding to National Trail Parks and Recreation District (NTPRD) will be reduced by \$350,000, drastically impacting the ability to provide recreational amenities and opportunities to the community.

Additional Major Cuts

The city has reduced positions by over 20% the past 10 years and now operates with 135 fewer positions.

Up to 25 additional positions will be eliminated across all other city departments. In addition, city services will be reduced as well. This is necessary to reduce costs by an additional \$1.5 million.

Below is a summary description of city departments and services that will be affected.

City Manager's Office – This department is responsible for managing and directing all operations and economic development activities for the city. As a department, it directs operations of the Springfield-Beckley Municipal Airport and Ohio Air National Guard facilities, the Emergency 911 Dispatching and Communications Center and several city-owned industrial parks. Staffing in this department has been reduced considerably compared to recent years. Any further reductions will have long-reaching impacts on our community's ability to attract new or expanded businesses and manage operations. Long-term, sustained economic development activity is critical to insuring the future health of our community.

Community Development Department – This department is responsible for planning and zoning, code enforcement, building regulations and inspections, plan review, minority business development, community relations, fair housing, mediation services, housing rehabilitation programming, and neighborhood services. Staffing in this department is down considerably compared to recent years. Further reduction of staff in this department will result in slower responses in reviewing plans, responding to complaints, assisting citizens with neighborhood issues, reduced or slower demolitions of dilapidated housing, and other neighborhood services.

Engineering Department – This department is primarily responsible for plans, designs, and specifications for public infrastructure projects such as street and bridge construction, sidewalk, curb and gutter work, bike paths, utilities (water/sewer) construction projects, traffic control, and storm water management. Staff also reviews and inspects all privately installed public improvements. In addition, this department oversees the various public utilities (gas, electric, and telecommunications) that work in the public right-of-way. Staffing in this department has been reduced to below desired levels, and any further reductions will result in being less responsive to citizens, contractors, and utility companies.

Finance Department – This department is made up of several divisions including income tax, revenue collections, utility billing, accounting, treasurer’s office, purchasing, information technology, and the SCAT bus system. Public Safety critically depends on information technology for immediate response to 911 services, phone systems, and in-car connectivity. The Finance Department has seen substantive cuts to its staffing across all divisions in recent years and struggles to keep up with current service demands. Further reductions in this department will impede our ability to collect revenue and pay for necessary goods and services, thus increasing operational costs.

Law Department – This department consists of a civil division in City Hall and the City Prosecutor’s office located at municipal court. The department represents the city in all legal matters, labor negotiations, contract issues, and litigation as well as prosecuting all cases in municipal court. This department also prepares all legislation that goes before the City Commission. Further reductions in this department would result in delays in prosecuting criminal cases at the municipal court.

Personnel Department – This department responsible for all hiring, promotion, compensation, and classification of the city’s workforce. It is responsible for labor relations, employee benefits, compliance with labor and employment laws, workers compensation, safety program coordination and employment records. Staffing in this department has been reduced to below desired levels and any further reductions will make it more difficult to attract, retain, and train a well qualified workforce.

Service Department – This department’s responsibilities include the public water, sewer and transportation infrastructure, as well as maintenance of public buildings, grounds and fleet. Much of this department is funded through charges for utility services, gasoline taxes, and vehicle registration fees; however, these funds are restricted and cannot be used to support general city operations. Staffing in this department has been reduced to below desired levels. Further reductions will result in the reduced maintenance to city owned property, including the core block and downtown fountains, elimination of public trashcans downtown, and reduced or eliminated decorating for Holiday in the City. Additionally, fleet maintenance services will be further reduced delaying the repair of all city vehicles including critical police, fire, EMS, and snow removal equipment.

Springfield Beckley Municipal Airport – The city operates a full-service airport with over 1800 acres and two runways, one of which is nearly two miles long. There is a staff of three full-time positions as well as seasonal positions that are critical to airport operations in the warmer months to keep up with mowing and maintenance. At a minimum, seasonal positions will be reduced or eliminated, which could hinder the ability to attract businesses and additional aviation activity at the airport.

For additional information please feel free to call the City Manager’s Office at (937) 324-7300 or visit our website at <https://springfieldohio.gov/springfieldstrong/>.