

On November 3, 2020 voters in Cortland will be asked to approve an additional 1.5 mill levy to fund your police department. The decision by city officials to ask for additional tax dollars was not taken lightly but found to be necessary. Hopefully this letter will help you, the taxpayer, understand how the additional money will be used to continue bringing you the highly professional police services you have come to expect.

Our department has pursued and received many grants and receives funding from the Lakeview School District to provide two School Resource Officers but most of these grants have a narrow allowance for what they can be used for. One of our greatest disadvantages in applying for grants is also one of our greatest advantages as a city and that is our low crime rate. As a department, that is a disadvantage we will live with!

Ballot wording

An additional tax for the benefit of the City of Cortland for the purpose of providing and maintaining motor vehicles, communications, and other equipment used directly in the operation of a police department, or the payment of salaries of permanent police personnel at a rate not exceeding 1.5 mills for each one dollar of valuation, which amounts to \$0.15 for each one hundred dollars of valuation, for a continuing period of time, commencing in 2020, first due in calendar year 2021.

A majority affirmative vote is necessary for passage.

What will the 1.5 mill levy cost?

For every \$100,00 of assessed value it will cost:

\$52.50 per year

\$4.37 per month

\$0.14/day

What do you get?

The Cortland Police Department is a full-service law enforcement agency that provides police services to those that live, work, play, worship and study within Cortland utilizing the community oriented policing model.

The department would like to believe it is part of the reason the city has been ranked #1 Place to Retire in the State of Ohio (2015 and 2016), #1 Safest Community in Trumbull County (2015), one of the Top Ten most charming Villages/Small Cities in Ohio (2016) and one of the Top 50 Safest Cities in Ohio (2017).

How will the money be wisely spent?

The ballot articulates what the money can be used for so I would rather explain why the money is needed. Our police officers and support staff are our most valuable asset and without them there is no need for cars or other police equipment. For years, law enforcement as a whole, including Cortland, relied on volunteer, reserve officers and part-time officers to supplement full-time staff in order to fill open shifts and keep overtime costs to a minimum. Our current part-time officers are paid \$14.00 per hour with no benefits.

Nationwide there is a critical shortage of candidates for the position of full-time police officer and finding part time officers is almost impossible. Many times, the part time officers leave before finishing their field training program or shortly after completing it to go work for other departments in a full-time capacity. Most of our current part time officers are employed full time elsewhere and have limited availability. One of the main purposes of this levy is to add an additional full-time officer to our current staff of 10 full time officers. By comparison, most similarly sized communities around the state have between 12-20 full time officers.

With a call for police officers to be licensed and held to a higher professional standard, the need to move away from part time policing to full time is upon us. The practice of using reserve officers was eliminated by Cortland in 2016 due to new laws enacted governing the use of volunteer officers.

The additional monies will also be used to provide for modern, updated police cruisers and equipment. Prior to 2019, officers had difficulties communicating with the Trumbull County 9-1-1 Center because of poor radios. In 2019, the department began using the state of Ohio Multi-Agency Radio Communications System, also known as MARCS, which drastically improved radio traffic. Unfortunately, the move to MARCS came at a steep price. Our mobile and portable radios went from \$350.00 per radio to almost \$3,000.00 per radio and no monthly cost to \$10/radio per month service fee to be on the radio system.

Our department utilizes mobile data terminals to improve officer safety and efficiency, high definition dash cameras to allow for greater accountability and other equipment features on our cruisers to improve officer, prisoner and public safety. The department upgraded our computer network with enhanced cyber security to protect the sensitive data we must store.

The department implemented Lexipol policies, which are written by national legal experts on the matter, ensuring officers are in compliance with the most current laws, employing industry wide best practices and reducing liability. Scheduling software is used to better track the hours worked by officers and helps to improve accuracy with payroll. Officers have also increased training in critical areas and implemented online police training that reduces the expense of traveling to classes that can effectively be taught virtually.

All of the personnel, equipment and training improvements made, or proposed, to allow our agency to move forward costs money. Our department has not asked for a new levy since 2015 and the city leaders have worked diligently to stretch the current budget as far as it can go. We are a transparent department and can easily show and articulate to you the need for this levy. Please vote "YES" on November 3rd for the Cortland Police Levy.

I would invite anyone with questions to contact Chief David Morris at 330-638-1000 ext. 1601 or email those questions to dmorris@cityofcortland.org.