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COUNTY BOARD SEEKS VOTER APPROVAL OF PUBLIC SAFETY TAX

Chairman says he intends to propose freezing county's portion of property tax if approved

County News: January 8, 2013

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Carlinville – On Tuesday, the Macoupin County Board adopted an ordinance that seeks voter approval on a public safety tax in Macoupin County. By a vote of 10-8, the Board voted to put the following question to the voters: “To pay for Public Safety purposes, shall Macoupin County be authorized to impose an increase on its share of local sales taxes by 0.75 percent. This would mean that a consumer would pay an additional 75 cents in sales tax for every \$100.00 of tangible personal property bought at retail in Macoupin County.”

Board Chairman Mark Dragovich said that it would be his intention to first put the question to the voters, asking them to weigh in on whether or not they feel the county should be able to collect revenue for the specific and sole use of enhancing public safety in Macoupin County. If voters were to approve the tax, Dragovich said, he would lead the effort on the Board to freeze the county’s portion of property taxes for all Macoupin County residents over the next two years.

“If voters were to approve the public safety tax at the April Consolidated Election, I will commit to bringing a measure to the Board in May to freeze the County’s portion of property taxes,” Dragovich said. “In my mind, if the county’s residents accept a willingness to help fund public safety to a greater degree, it is only fair for the county to do all it can to freeze its portion of residents’ tax bills.”

If a Public Safety Tax were to be implemented, it would not apply to most grocery store food purchases, prescription and non-prescription drugs, and medical appliances. It would also not apply to tangible personal property that is titled or registered, such as cars, trucks, boats, motorcycles, trailers, snowmobiles or other items that are currently exempt from sales tax such as farm machinery.

Dragovich said that by state law, revenue generated must be used for Public Safety purposes only, which includes crime prevention, detention, police and other emergency services. If approved by the voters, the tax could generate between \$500,000 and \$800,000 annually for public safety in Macoupin County, costing a resident on average around 33 cents per week.

The current sales tax rate for Macoupin County is at 6.25 percent which stands as the lowest rate currently in effect in the State of Illinois. Of this rate, 5 percent goes to the State, 1 percent to local government, and 1/4 percent to the County. Dragovich said that if the proposed Public Safety Tax is approved, the rate would go to 7 percent and would still make the county’s rate one of the lowest in the area. Other current rates for surrounding communities and major shopping centers are as follows:

Litchfield – 7.25 %	Jerseyville – 7.50%
Edwardsville – 7.85%	St. Louis County – 8.175%
St. Louis – 8.49%	Alton – 8.85%
Fairview Heights – 8.85%	Springfield – 9.00 %
Collinsville – 9.10%	

In today's county budget, the majority of the funds for Public Safety come from the County's General Fund with Sales taxes and property taxes providing a large portion of the revenues. Unfortunately, Dragovich said that with the closure of two county coal mines in 2008, sales tax revenues have decreased nearly \$1 million annually to the county.

"If there is one thing I believe everyone can agree on, it is the proper funding of public safety in and around our communities today," said Dragovich. "Unfortunately, it is apparent to me that Macoupin County can no longer heavily depend on consistent sales tax revenues from the county's coal mines as we have in the past to help fund quality public safety."

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