
Who's on Stark's primary ballot?

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The deadline for candidates' names and issues to be placed on the May 7 ballot was 4 p.m. Wednesday.

CANTON Stark County's largest library district, a city, three villages, a school district and three townships will ask voters to approve tax increases this May.

Most voters in Stark County will decide May 7 whether to grant the Stark County District Library an additional levy. A similar proposal was defeated in November.

The library district covers Stark County except the Alliance, Marlinton, Louisville, Northwest, North Canton, Massillon and Minerva school districts. It is seeking an eight-year, 2-mill levy for general operations.

If approved, it would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$70 a year and generate \$11.21 million a year.

But the library district's board has indicated that if the new levy passes, they would repeal its current 1.7-mill levy to avoid overlapping collections. So passage of the new levy would mean a net increase to the owner of a \$100,000 home of \$22.38 a year and additional revenue of \$3.3 million a year.

Library officials have said with state funding being less reliable, new levy money would fund improvements such as a roof replacement at North Branch, modernizing library space configurations and constructing a new Sandy Valley branch.

- The only countywide issue is a renewal for another 10 years of a 1-mill levy that helps fund programs of Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery.
- In addition, Canal Fulton, Brewster, Hartville and Navarre are seeking higher income tax rates.
- Perry Township is asking voters to approve two tax increases, one for roads and one for more police officers.

Trustees are proposing a new five-year, 5-mill road levy.

If approved by voters, the owner of a \$100,000 home would pay \$175 a year to contribute to the estimated \$2.95 million a year the road levy would raise, according to the Stark County Auditor's office. However, trustees have pledged that if the levy is approved, they would spend the new levy dollars on repaving roads and hire another full-time road department employee. They say they would repeal Perry Township's current 1-mill and 2-mill road levies. Those two existing road levies now cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$56.75 a year and raise \$1.14 million. Therefore, the net increase would be \$118.25 a year. The net increase in revenue would be \$1.81 million a year.

Perry Township Police Chief Mike Pomesky wants to hire five more full-time and three part-time officers and add a canine unit and more police radios and vehicles.

The proposed five-year 3.9-mill police levy would raise \$1.73 million a year and cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$82.56 a year. They also are seeking renewal of another police levy, a 3.49-mill levy coupled with a 2.5-mill increase, which total 5.99 mills that would last five years. The net increase is \$107.54 a year for the owner of a \$100,000 home, which totals to \$1.47 million more a year.

- Plain Township and Lake Township are seeking tax increases to fund park operations.

Plain's additional five-year, 1.5-mill levy would raise \$1.16 million a year and cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$52.50 a year.

Plain Township officials have said with the state cutting back funding to local governments and eliminating township estate taxes, they have to turn to the voters to maintain an expanding park system.

Lake Township trustees are asking for approval of a 10-year, 2-mill levy to fund the construction and maintenance of a park off Midway Street NW. If approved, it would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$70 a year and raise \$1.6 million a year.

- Tuslaw Local School District's is asking for a new 3.3-mill emergency requirements levy for general operations.

If approved, it would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$115.50 a year and raise about \$753,000 a year.

Superintendent Melissa Marconi said an emergency levy means that the district cannot receive more than the \$753,000 a year even if more property taxpayers move into the school district, which has about 1,400 students.

She said the district has substantially reduced its request from past ones voters rejected in recent years and cut \$900,000 from a budget of \$15 million by laying off teachers and teacher's aides and increasing class sizes.

Marconi said the cuts are not enough to get the district to fiscal sustainability.

Here are some highlights of the primaries for elected office:

- Paul E. Ray, of Alliance, who ran for governor in 2018 as a Democratic candidate and garnered 1.38 percent of the vote, is running for mayor. He's in a primary contest with David Smith of Arch Avenue to be the Democratic nominee to challenge Republican incumbent Alan Andreani, who doesn't have a primary challenger. Ray said he's running on an "Alliance first," platform where he would make the city "citizen friendly and visitor friendly." Smith is a U.S. Army veteran who's run for council twice who says he will help create jobs.

- Canton Mayor Thomas Bernabei, elected as an independent in 2015, is running for re-election as a Democrat. Vincent Watts, former head of the Canton Urban League, is challenging him. No Republican filed to run.

- Former Canton Law Director Joe Martuccio is challenging incumbent William V. Sherer II for Canton Council president in the Democratic primary. The members of the Stark County Democratic Party Central Committee who represent Canton election precincts appointed as Canton Council president Sherer to succeed Allen Schulman, who died last year. No Republican filed to run.

- Canton Auditor Richard Mallonn, a Democrat, has no primary challenger, but Republican Jeff King is set to face Mallonn in the fall.

- In Massillon, Republican James Haavisto will challenge Democratic incumbent Kathy Catazaro-Perry for mayor. Republican Sarita Cunningham, seeking to keep her Massillon Ward 1 council seat, will have to fend off a primary challenge by Mark Lombardi.

- Democratic attorney Joel C. Fichter and Republican attorney Andy A. Ginella will face each other to succeed retiring Massillon Municipal Judge Roland Centrone. Centrone, 73, can not seek another six-year term under Ohio law because he's over 70.

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Correction: The members of the Stark County Democratic Party Central Committee who represent Canton election precincts appointed as Canton Council president William V. Sherer II to succeed Allen Schulman, who died last year. A prior version of this article gave the incorrect elected body that appointed Sherer.