



TALBOT COUNTY PROPERTY TAX REFERENDUM COMMITTEE

215 Bay St. Easton, MD 21601 **MINUTES**

November 19, 2019

Present – Bill Boos, Pamela Clay, Susan Delean-Botkin, Ron Engle, Joe Gamble, Kelly Griffith, Ronald Johnson, Henry Leonard, Brad Miller, Corey Pack, Laura Price, Clay Stamp, Angela Lane, Alex Glessner and Anthony Kupersmith

- I. Welcome and Introductions – Committee members introduced themselves.
- II. Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Kelly Griffith and seconded by Susan Delean-Botkin to approve the minutes of October 21, 2019. All committee members voted to approve the minutes; there were no objections or abstentions.
- III. Committee Comments/Brainstorming – prior to reviewing the Ballot Question Language, Ms. Delean-Botkin requested to have a general discussion on the tax cap.

The discussion included:

- The majority of Talbot County residents do not understand the tax cap.
- Citizens want Emergency Services – but are not willing to pay for them.
- Citizens do not know how their tax dollars are spent.
- Who actually votes – what is the demographic and geographic makeup of the voter?
- How to have voters respond to a ballot question with a rational/educated vs. an emotional response?
- How to educate voters?
- How does voting for this question help or “cost” me?
- How are we going to talk to voter – What is the message? Message needs to be specific and simple.
- Voters are generally OK with paying more in taxes – but not too much more.
- Use “Revenue Enhancement” or other term instead of higher taxes.
- Can we have a carve out for a Public Safety Tax?

The Committee discussed an education campaign:

- Inform voters of the restriction that having that tax cap have put on the County interns of services that they cannot offer or expand.
- Discussion need to be about needs and must be quantitative.
- Ask citizens what services are the willing to give up to avoid paying higher taxes.
- Reach out to Agencies/Departments that provide services and identify needs/services that are not being provided or should be enhanced.
- Determine capital equipment needs of these Agencies/Departments

The Committee discussed how to set up an education campaign:

- Step 1 – What is the Tax Cap?
 - 1 page fact sheet
 - TV (MCTV and Comcast), radio and newspaper ads
 - Social Media
 - Town Hall/Community Meetings
 - Website
 - Brand Name – “CAPS OFF”
 - Campaigns could/should include:
 - Same message for everyone
 - Before and after questionnaires for Town Hall and Community meeting to gauge understanding of the Tax cap and the challenges it poses to County Government
 - This Week’s Tax Cap Question

IV. Public Comments

Susie Hayward from Mid Shore Board of Realtors noted that in the last election, 3,000 people did not vote for or against the ballot question; this probably indicated that they did not understand the question.

V. Next Steps:

The Committee decided that a December meeting is needed. Ms. Lane will send out possible dates for a December meeting and advise the committee of the date for this additional meeting. The main objective of the next meeting will be to continue to brainstorm as many feasible ideas as possible and review the Ballot Question Language.

Upon motion by Sheriff Gamble, seconded by Mr. Leonard, the Committee voted to end the meeting at 5:40 p.m.