

## Ways & Means Committee Minutes

Honorable Council  
City of Newark, Ohio  
July 7, 2025

The Ways and Means Committee met in Council Chambers on July 7, 2025 with these members in attendance:

Beth Bline, Chair  
Bradley Chute, Vice-Chair  
Mark Labutis

We wish to report:

1. **Ordinance No. 25-19** An ordinance levying an additional income tax of one-half of one percent for the purpose of raising general operating revenue for the operation and maintenance of essential municipal services, including but not limited to, police and fire services, public safety initiatives, and street repair and maintenance, on all salaries, wages, commissions and other compensation earned by the residents of the City of Newark; on all salaries, wages, commissions and other compensation earned by non-residents of the City of Newark for work done and services performed or rendered in the City of Newark; on the net profits earned on all businesses, professions, or other activities conducted by the residents of the City of Newark; on the net profits earned on all businesses, professions and other activities conducted in the City of Newark by non-residents and on the net profits earned by all corporations doing business in the City of Newark as the result of the work done or services performed in the City of Newark; requiring the filing of returns and furnishing of information by employers and all those subject to said tax; imposing on employers the duty of collecting the tax at the source and paying the same to the City of Newark; providing for the administration, collection and enforcement of said tax; declaring violations thereof to be a misdemeanor, and imposing penalties therefor, and declaring an emergency.

**David Rhodes, Service Director** - First of all, I want to congratulate you. That was one of the longest ordinances that I've heard a committee chair read in a long time. Mark Guthrie, a former city councilman, said asking for more taxes is about as much fun as eating asphalt on rye bread. And that's one thing Mark and I certainly agreed on and still do. We're asking for a small increase in the city's income tax of 0.50%. Here's the good news. City Council doesn't make that final decision, nor does the administration. The taxpayers do. So, all we're simply asking you to do is pass this on to full Council so we can get it to the Board of Elections so that the citizens of Newark can decide whether or not a tax increase is warranted.

**Ms. Bline** - Okay, so that's the reason for the emergency?

**Director Rhodes** - That's the reason for the emergency. It has to be at the Board of Elections by August 6th to make the November ballot.

**Brandon Metzger, Fire Chief** - Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to speak with some brevity, some brief comments. On behalf of the fire department, I'm here to speak in support of the legislation.

A lot of good investments over an extended period of time are going on here. I mean, you can see it all around. I think that not only on behalf of the fire department, but we operate with the maximum efficiency that we possibly can for a long period of time, and it's to a point where I think this is justified. As we look towards the future and the growth, and more importantly, the sustainability, it gives us an opportunity to at least take this to the voters or the taxpayers and ask them for an opportunity to increase and support the financial means of the city, not only for now, but for the foreseeable future. So, I'm just asking you to support this and push this on. Thank you.

**Mr. Rath** - Two questions for you. One, how much additional income for the city do you anticipate this generating? And two, who is going to lead the charge and conduct the campaign?

**Director Rhodes** - I'll answer the first question. It's merely an estimate, about \$8 million. Second question on who's going to lead the campaign...

**Spencer Barker, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Councilmember** - To answer that second question, members of council, I know Councilman Marmie is going to come speak, myself. Councilman Houser, we've all kind of talked about this. Councilman Houser and I are going to open a PAC to help campaign for this, to get this towards the voters and get them the information they need.

**Doug Marmie, 6<sup>th</sup> Ward Councilmember** - The biggest thing is the City of Newark cannot put forward any kind of funds for a campaign. So, it has to come from private donations from a PAC or something along those lines as far as if any kind of campaign for or opposed to it. So that has to come from outside entities in order to do that. Now just like the chief just pledged his support of it and stated that he wants it, I believe that those of us on Council and those other entities within the city, I believe that they may speak forward and bring themselves forward and show support of it. I know that I am going to pledge my support towards it and the reason why is because we are facing a huge deficit going into next year. We cannot continue to provide the services that we currently have at the income levels that we currently are receiving. Without that there will be a reduction of services and we do not want that for the citizens of Newark. Our safety forces are our biggest expenses. They take up the largest portion of our budget. We need our safety forces. So, we need this increase in order to help support that and to continue that for the city of Newark. It's not even a matter of trying to do more for the city of Newark. We want to do the same and make sure that we're doing it in the proper manner. So that's what we need from those other individuals on Council, the administration, all of our unions, and all of our city employees. It's up to them to do that. I'm not going to say that they're definitely going to do that, but I feel strongly that we're going to bond together and we're going to go together on this and in support of making sure that we continue to make Newark the great city that we have and continue the services that we currently are providing.

**Steven Smith, 237 Violet Ct.** - This will be very brief because Mr. Rath basically asked my question. So, I'll just say that I appreciate this action I see as being fiscally responsible. As Mr. Marmie said, this is a very highly needed, very important service that we provide for the citizens of our city. I've thought for a long time that while we paid a lot of lip service to how much we appreciate the fire department and police department, there was a problem with following through for their compensation. So, I definitely want to support this myself. Thank you.

**Kevin Garwick, president Newark Firefighters Local 109** - I rise in support of the legislation. Like Director Rhodes said, it's never easy to ask for a tax increase. It's not easy for me as an advocate for workers to have to advocate for a tax increase on wages, but I've seen the investment that the administration has made in the city not only in development and infrastructure, but also in the safety forces and the employees of the city. So, I feel we have a lot of momentum right now as a city and to keep that momentum moving forward we need to pass this increase, and the firefighters will stand behind it and support it. Thank you.

**Sergeant Clint Eskins** - Good afternoon everybody. I'm the Gold Unit representative for the FOP Gold Unit. On behalf of our unit, we also support this measure. We realize that it's going to take additional funds to be able to move this city forward. Not just for the safety forces that obviously we represent, but as a city as a whole and for the community. So, we support it and stand by you in that decision. Thank you.

**Mayor Jeff Hall** - Thank you. I surely want to thank our safety force, our unions and Mr. Smith to jump in in a positive way. I think Mr. Smith, fiscally responsible, and that's what this is really about. We see it from our angle and you know my background is accounting, so I get a little nervous when money's too tight. We have not had an income tax percent increase for I believe 23 years in this town and I kind of want you to set and think a little bit how Newark's changed in those 23 years. We've grown quite a bit. Recent polls, you know populations are one thing, but there is cost that comes with a larger city in a growing city. We are 16th largest in the state of Ohio and if I would go through quickly starting with the largest city which of course is Columbus these days. Let's not forget it used to be Cleveland many, many years ago and they dropped in population because they weren't a desirable city and that's not an angle we want to go. But tax rates, I also want you understand in those big cities Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, they have a lot of big corporate employers that have big gross paychecks. All income tax is a gross paycheck times a percent. Columbus per capita, per population gets two dollars for every dollar we get. So that's just literally taking your amount of collections and dividing it by your population so you know it's because they're two and a half percent income tax and they're also high gross paychecks, but if I go through them starting with number one and just drop down to Newark this is what the tax rates are right now. Two and a half, two and a half, 1.8, two and a half, two and a half, two and a half, two and a half, two and a half, two and a half, two, 2.75, 2.4, 2.25, 2.25, two, and then Newark at 1.75. So, then you're still going to have some higher rates below us too. People enjoy, I say safety forces and it's well said. Mr. Marmie said it and thank for him coming up here and we've had some good conversations with employees and with Council, and we appreciate that as your viewpoint of what you think is needed at this time. If we want to continue to keep offering these services we have to do that. People in this town, I believe, call 9-1-1 and they get a response and a response that makes them more comfortable for the situation they're in. We want that to continue. That's critically important in a community this size. This is not excess money. This is money to keep operating. So, there'll be a process through it completely. I appreciate if Council would support this to move it to the next level. We can set and answer questions, and anybody that has any input at all we're happy to do that. Our records are open book, so we can talk about anything. Any questions for anyone now? Thank you very much.

**Doug Vermaaten, Deputy Fire Chief, 909 Jean Ct.** - I come to you tonight as a deputy fire chief, but as a citizen of the city of Newark. I am 100% behind and I'm going to encourage every citizen of this city to be behind the idea that we need to increase this income tax because if the city is going to continue to blossom and prosper as the way we have already been doing, this is the only way forward for the future of the city. Thank you.

**Mr. Labutis** - I just wanted to thank everyone for coming up and voicing your support for this. As Mr. Rhodes said, this isn't fun to ask for additional money. I appreciate that, but at the same point this is where we're at. Also, I want to make sure everyone understands that each of the departments have been fiscally responsible in reducing their expenses as well, so that it's not just on the income but also the expenses as well and trying to control those. I appreciate all the different departments doing that over the past couple years to make each tax dollar we get stretch to the most that it can actually stretch.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Chute, Motion passed 3-0**

2. **Resolution No. 25-46** A resolution providing for the submission to the electors of the City of Newark, Ohio, of the question "Shall the ordinance providing for a one-half of one percent additional levy on income for the general revenue fund of the city for the operation of essential municipal services be passed?" and declaring an emergency.

**Director Rhodes** - Beth, I think that says it right there.

**Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Chute, Motion passed 3-0**

Meeting stands adjourned.

Beth Bline, Chair