

November 20, 2018

Mayor Bennehoff and Members of City Council-

At a Council meeting on August 7, 2018, you had before you RESOLUTION 2018-12 that provided for submission to the voters of an ordinance to increase the city's income tax. There was an extended discussion of that resolution by Council members and citizens present at the meeting. At the close of the public comment portion of the meeting with regard to this issue members of council addressed the same.

During that discussion Councilman Newcomb commented:

"When I look at taxes, I don't look at taxes in isolation. One thing I looked at was the schools. On average our taxes went up \$800 with Berlin High School. In the next 5 years, we are going to have 1,400 additional students, so I would expect that we are going to have another increase in our property taxes to fund additional schools. Given that, I don't want to impose an additional burden upon the citizens. So I will be voting against the Resolution."

In somewhat lengthy remarks Councilman Swartwout commented:

"I still maintain my belief that I expressed at our special meeting that there is no need to rush this on the ballot this fall. . . . There are a lot of questions that we can get a better handle on as this is presented to the community as a solution. . . . why wouldn't we want to examine that impact (the possible construction of an OSU medical facility) further to demonstrate whether this is still the best solution going forward? We can put something on the ballot in the spring. We could put something on the ballot next year. This doesn't have to go on right now. Wanting to further vet the proposal is not something I will apologize for. When we are asking for even one dollar more from the citizens of Powell, it's important to me that in my mind what we have is the best solution and I don't know if I can come to that conclusion right now. . . . I just would like for us to take the time to vet this proposal as much as we possibly can. . . . Those are great questions that we need to address and right now I don't know if we have a better answer for anyone other than someone has to sacrifice. I believe we need a better answer than that. . . . I don't know if we have all of these answers yet, and I think these are answers that we need to have because I feel there is a good chance that we will have the discussion I want to have now in December. While I know there is support now, I would caution and say let's wait and vet this further. . . . As we move forward with the vote, I think it's important to convey that this is not a vote by us, as a Council, to raise taxes. That's not what it is at all. It is a vote to present this proposal forward to the voters so that they can have the say. It's up to the voters, it's not up to us. This just allows the voters to have a say on the matter. This is a very important clarification to make. So while I might think it might need more time and while I think it might serve a better chance of success

with more vetting, at the end of the day all we are doing is saying is you make the decision.”

Councilman Lorenz also discussed this issue at some length:

“... I am not an obstructionist either. I am not a fool. I know something needs to be done. I applaud the Task Force. They did what they needed to do. They gave us something. No solution will be perfect, but I don't know that we need to rush into it. I understand the sense of urgency. We've been talking about it for 9 years. If we wait another six month (*sic*), that's fine. I have a problem with the credit situation because I think it is out of whack. It is the first thing that the constituents that I speak to bring up, and I think that needs to be examined further. If that means we wait a little bit longer and take a few more months to examine that and straighten it out....The Task Force gave us something, it's our job to pick it apart and put the best thing out there. I'm not sure what's here is the best thing to put out.

... In theory this is the best time to go out there because of mid-terms, but I am not going to withdraw my [credit] amendment. But at the end of the day, I will not stand in the way and I will leave this up to the people to vote on.”

Having heard these comments and considered the comments made by other Council members the Council then voted to approve the resolution by a 6-1 vote.

It was quite clear to me that Councilmen Newcomb, Swartwout and Lorenz were not in favor of the income tax increase. Councilmen Swartwout and Lorenz suggested that there were other ways and/or options available to the City to address the infrastructure maintenance issue and therefore no ballot issue should be presented to the voters until these had been considered. Accordingly, I am strongly recommending that Mayor Bennehoof appoint a 3 member committee consisting of Councilmen Newcomb, Swartwout and Lorenz. They believe that there are other ways to address the problem. So let them have a reasonable time, say 6 months, to review possible solutions and report back to the Council and the public as to what they are.

Thank you for your time.

Mike Jones

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