
From: Susan Sandberg
Sent: Tuesday, August 1, 2017 8:43 AM EDT
To: Allison Chopra
Subject: Fwd: revised
Attachments: PS LIT comment.docx

FYI - comments I'm prepared to make at the next PS LIT meeting explaining the reasoning behind my vote.
Susan

On Sun, Jul 30, 2017 at 12:25 PM, Susan Sandberg <sjsandbar@juno.com> wrote:

When I said that a lot has changed since the start of the Public Safety Local Income Tax one year ago, here's what I mean:

- Monroe County government needs every PS LIT dollar we can give them! I know how strained the Justice System is in meeting the overcrowded conditions in the Monroe County Jail. I served on an inter-governmental task force on Community Justice issues convened by Judge Kellams. I knew that problems existed years ago when I volunteered in the jail for Addicts in Recovery. I know how critical it is to develop a work release program. I know how stressed the court system is to provide programs to divert, to rehabilitate, to deal with the local conditions impacted by State and Federal law. A recent HT article on Saturday, July 29, described the stress Monroe County government faces in managing Justice issues. Current jail problems are largely driven by the opioid crisis. Overcrowded conditions are bad for inmates in the Monroe County Jail and negatively impact public safety of the entire community. Sheriff Swain came directly before this body to say how critically important it is for him to have the PS LIT dollars he requires to ensure county-wide public safety.
- The City of Bloomington in Monroe County also needs PS LIT dollars for new community strains! I experienced the "Crisis on Kirkwood" both as an elected official and as a resident taxpayer. Our downtown commercial core and surrounding neighborhoods have been hit by a perfect storm of homelessness, addiction, mental healthcare deficits and bone grinding poverty. Bloomington faces challenges to identify resources and take action to stop violence, crimes, and the human suffering that we see on our streets every day. Bloomington needs to identify funds in the City budget to expand services of the Shalom Community Center to address one end of this crisis. On the other end, the Bloomington Police Department, including the new Downtown Resource Officer program was already stressed to the max. To protect and serve, they need more officers, more physical resources and more public support. While PS LIT dollars are only earmarked for first responders and justice needs, having those additional dollars available takes the pressures off the strained City budgets for public safety. I talk to our Police and Fire first responders, and I know how hard they work on the front lines of this community crisis. They are dedicated, well-trained public servants, but they can only operate so long under emergency conditions without feeling the strains. It is time for Monroe County taxpayers, including those residents of Bloomington, to accept the challenges of our regional problems.
- You heard it right here. Councilmember Scott Oldham says the City of Ellettsville needs every PS LIT dollar they can get to provide for the safety of his Monroe County constituency. Stinesville benefits from a small portion of the PS LIT allocations, but their taxpaying residents will certainly benefit from the modernization and unification of the Dispatch Center services. All residents of Monroe County will benefit.
- And this is the last, perhaps most significant change in the past year. We experienced a difficult and sometimes hurtful annexation process that was stopped short of reaching the goals of ensuring that public safety and other services extend throughout our growing community. Annexation could have provided for emerging and growing needs for more police and fire service that was well-funded, professionally equipped and trained to protect residents and property. But as we all know, that local process was cut out from under us in an 11th hour play by the Indiana General Assembly. Home rule has been seriously undermined for us all, and we now live with those consequences.

I will always join the call for more civility in our inter-governmental communications, and for better coordinated systems to evaluate public safety needs. I welcome better accounting systems for tracking the outcomes of funding decisions to direct future allocation of scarce resources. But this is only year two of the PS LIT committee, and we have a long way to go in perfecting this decision-making body and tightening up the funding criteria. I will strongly support that future rounds of township applications for PS LIT funding be limited to one-time material needs such as equipment and not for personnel salaries that would not be sustainable under a competitive grant process.

In the meantime, given how much has changed in the past year, I'm voting for the improvement of our county-wide communications system for Dispatch. That is critical county-wide public safety infrastructure that must come first. This year in the long-term best interest of the entire county, the remaining PS LIT dollars need to go to the four governing entities: Monroe County government, the cities of Bloomington, Ellettsville and Stinesville.

In future rounds of the PS LIT, I look forward to considering the individual needs of the Monroe County townships and their hard-working trustees, staff and volunteers. I recognize their growing needs with shrinking resources. With every year we hear these PS LIT appeals for funding, we become more informed. I have become increasingly concerned about the obvious need for more unified collaboration and efficiency. I thank township leadership for their loyal dedication to their constituents. We are all in this Monroe County boat together, and this year we must all pull together for the greater common good.