



Last updated 8/15/24

# F&R District Levy Campaign

## Communication plan and strategy

### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE:

Westfield Township would like to put a 2.5Mill, 5-year levy on the November 5<sup>th</sup> ballot for the Fire & Rescue (F&R) District (formed in 1975). The levy failed after two separate attempts in 2023. To pass the levy, we need a robust communications plan that reaches everyone in the unincorporated Township. The area is rural and will require voters to thoroughly understand the need for the levy and what will happen if the levy fails.

We also want to include Westfield Village in the communications as a secondary audience. Westfield Village pays for Fire & EMS services out of their general fund. This will increase their payment to the Township.

There are currently 2 different millages related to the F&R district and the F&R building affecting taxpayers:

- 2012 – The Township passed a continuous \$2.5Mill levy for the F&R District, currently collecting at an effective rate of 1.622 Mill.
- 2018 – A 20-year, \$3M bond was passed to pay for a new F&R building, currently collecting at an effective rate of 1.25Mill. (This is collected by the Township and not the Fire District.)

### Census Data (2020)

[Westfield township, Medina County, Ohio - Census Bureau Profile](#)

### RISK'S/ISSUES:

- Risks of doing nothing:
  - Levy fails and budget cuts are required.
    - Lack of reserve capital
    - Trickle-down effect
    - Potential fiscal emergency
- Risks/Issues of moving forward:
  - All township people share facts consistently.
  - Lack of support and involvement.
  - November 5<sup>th</sup> is a presidential election, will this help or hurt the levy passage?
  - Getting the correct information to voters (stop inaccurate information).
  - Reaching the unincorporated township residents is not easy in a rural township.
  - Fund raising for the levy is difficult yet needed for mailings.

### Levy Research and Objectives:

#### Research and Understanding

- Understand the community's needs, concerns, and values.

- Gather data on how the levy will benefit the Fire District and the community.
- Use outside free resources to help with You Tube videos (Career Center, F&R team).

**Actions:**

- Conduct focus groups with community members.
- Collect data on current fire department operations, response times, equipment needs, and safety statistics.
- Research similar levy campaigns in other communities and their outcomes.

**Objective 1: Establish goals for the campaign.**

- Talk about the safety concerns with the fleet.
  - Cite the NFPA standards.
  - Cite the Firehouse magazine article from January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
  - Cite the American Insurance association Special Interest bulletin No 39.
  - Cite the National Bureau of Standards Report, Sequencing the purchase and retirement of fire engines.

**Actions:**

- Set a target for the number of votes needed to pass the levy.
- Determine timeline for the campaign.

**Objective 2: Identify Target Audiences**

- Appeal to the 55 years old and up demographic.

**Actions:**

- Target the unincorporated Township.
- Keep the Westfield Villages residents informed.
- Have one-on-one conversations as needed.

**Objective 3: Craft Key Messages**

- Develop compelling messages that resonate with different audiences.
- Keep it positive. Use videos with bright light, uplifting music, and feature F&R team.
- Use videos that show the severity of motor vehicle accidents, or the gravity of fires. This can be used to emphasize the unusual character traits of the firefighters to respond and go the opposite direction of everyone else.

**Actions:**

- Highlight the benefits of the levy: improved response times, updated equipment, enhanced firefighter safety, better community protection.
- Talk about the benefits of the latest equipment.
- Use stories and testimonials from residents and firefighters.
- Address potential concerns about tax increases and provide clear explanations of the levy's fiscal impact.
- Make sure the language is exactly what we are going to do.

**Objective 4: Choose Marketing Channels**

- Select the most effective channels to reach your audience.

**Actions:**

- Utilize social media platforms to share updates and engage with the community.
- Create a dedicated webpage or landing page with detailed information about the levy.
- Distribute flyers, posters, and mailers in high-traffic areas and to unincorporate township residents.

- Engage local media (newspapers, radio, TV) for coverage and interviews.

**Objective 5: Community Engagement and Outreach**

- Foster a sense of community involvement and support.

**Actions:**

- Organize town hall meetings, and informational sessions.
- Attend local events and set-up booths to provide information and answer questions.
- Create volunteer committees to help spread the word and organize grassroots efforts.

**Objective 6: Leverage Influencers and Endorsements**

- Gain support from respected community members and organizations.
- Work with Westfield Village (Rick Robbs liaison)
- Seek endorsements from local leaders, business owners, and community organizations.
- Feature endorsements in marketing materials and on social media.

**Objective 7: Monitor and Adjust**

- Track the campaign’s progress and adjust as needed.

**Actions:**

- Monitor social media engagement, website traffic, and “clicks” from the Facebook marketing.
- Conduct periodic surveys to gauge community sentiment and adjust messages accordingly.
- Be prepared to address misinformation and respond to feedback promptly.

**Objective 8: Get Out the Vote**

- Ensure supporters turn out to vote on the levy.

**Actions:**

- Remind supporters of important voting dates and locations.
- Use all communication avenues to remind and encourage voter turnout.

**Objective 9: Post-Campaign Follow-Up**

- Maintain community trust and engagement after the vote.

**Actions:**

- Thank supporters and volunteers regardless of the outcome.
- Communicate next steps and how the levy funds will be used if passed.
- Continue to engage with the community and keep them informed of the Fire Department’s progress and needs.

**KEY AUDIENCES/ PARTNERS (who and what we do)**

Audience / Partners	Message / Resource Needs	Risks (High, Medium, Low)
Unincorporated Township Residence	Mailing, Door-to-Door visits, and calls, invite them to townhall meetings, yard signs	Medium
Village Residents	Note in quarterly bill. Attend Village meetings, yard signs. Endorsements from Village Council.	Medium
Local Businesses: Pilot, TA, Medina Sod, Westfield Group, Soccer Feeds	Visit and Fundraising	Medium (need volunteers)
Historical Society	Announcement	Low

LeRoy Methodist Church	Announcement	Low
Cloverleaf School and Board	Announcement	Low
Public	Website, social media, Yard Signs, News Paper articles and commentary, Local news, Testimonials, Newspaper Op Ed articles	Medium (need volunteers)
Tag onto events planned by F&R Association	50/50 raffle, corn hole tournament, food truck, something at Labor Day car show? Golf outing.	High (need a committee and volunteers)
Fire and Rescue team	FAQs, info to share with public, help with Door-to-Door visits	Medium (time and availability)
Township employees	FAQs, info to share with public, help with Door-to-Door visits	Medium (time and availability)

## COMMUNICATION MESSAGING & TACTICS (what is communicated and why)

- Create a working binding that includes information needed to share information consistently across all audiences:
  - Frequently Asked Questions (Terri)
  - Facts and costs of equipment that needs replaced with pictures (fire truck, ambulance, chief vehicle, est. \$1.3M) (Chief Hall)
  - Costs of equipment repairs last 3 years, finding parts in salvage yard. (Fiscal Officer)
  - Operating Costs last 3 years, show additional costs incurred with the new building.
  - Grants received in the last 3 years. (Fiscal Officer)
  - Costs to onboard a new fire fighter/EMS. (Fire Chief)
  - 5-year F&R plan (from Chief) and review of current budget. (Fire Chief)
  - What would the levy cost each household (TWP and Village). (Fiscal Officer)
  - Stats from F&R – average response time, number of calls, number of assistants, etc. (Chief Hall)
  - Current millage of other townships in Medina County (chart). (Terri & Mike)
  - Stories to share (F&R experiences, testimonials). (Terri, Comms Team)
  - What will happen if the levy fails? (Trustees)

## COMMUNICATION SCHEDULE (when)

Tactic	Audience	Channel	Target Dates	Owner	Status
Hold Townhall Meeting	Residents	In-Person	April 10	Grimm, TWP employees, Chief, F&R team	CPT
Hold Townhall Meeting	Residents	In-Person	July 29	Grimm, TWP employees, Chief, F&R team	CPT
Hold Townhall Meeting	Residents	In-Person	Oct 9	Grimm, TWP employees, Chief, F&R team	
Visit local businesses	Business Owners	In-person	July – Oct	Township Trustees, Fire Chief	
Flyer Distribution	Township Residents	US Mail	August and October	Schmidt	
Central storage of messages	Public	Westfield Township website	July - November	Grimm Twp Secretary	
Village Post Office	Residents	Flyers	July, October	Grimm	

Newspaper editorials (letter to editor)	Public	Gazette, The Post	July – November (need schedule)	Township officers and TWP secretary	
Facebook Postings and sharing	Public	Facebook pages	July – Nov, 2x weekly	Grimm and everyone	
Village Meeting	Village Council	In-person conversation	1 <sup>st</sup> Tues. monthly	Township officers Grimm	<b>CPT</b>
F&R Association meeting	Association members	In-person conversation	July – Nov Last Monday monthly	Fiscal Officer Grimm	
Flyer in Village bill	Village Residents	US mail	October mailing	Grimm, Horwedel	
Church Service	Residents	Announcement	TBD	Township Trustees	
Cloverleaf Board Meeting	Board Members	In-Person conversation	TBD	Township Trustees/Fire Chief	
Phone Calls	Key Township Residents	Telephone conversations	TBD	Township Trustees and Officers	

**Communications Team:**

Grimm, Julie Carr, Jeff Hall, Martha Evans, Carol R. Dale P., Jason Veon

**Fundraising Team:**

Township Officers, Chief and Team