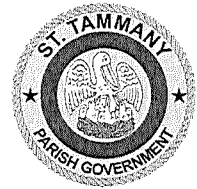


MEMO



ST. TAMMANY PARISH

Michael B. Cooper
Parish President

**TO: JERRY BINDER, COUNCIL CHAIRMAN
ST. TAMMANY PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS**

FROM: MIKE COOPER, PARISH PRESIDENT

DATE: DECEMBER 19, 2022

RE: PROPOSED NEW AND RENEWAL MILLAGE PROPOSITIONS

**CC: GINA HAYES, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
LESLIE LONG, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
KARLIN FITZMORRIS, DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
GINA CAMPO, COUNCIL ADMINISTRATOR
TERRY HAND, COUNCIL SPECIAL ADMINISTRATOR**

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As I previously stated, it is my understanding that you may be entertaining several propositions for the April 2023 ballot. I hope that you will carefully consider the necessity level of each and the possible long-term ramifications of putting any tax on the spring ballot.

In particular, I have some serious reservations and concerns regarding the following millage renewals and new millage proposition being placed on the spring ballot:

- PUBLIC HEALTH MILLAGE – RENEWAL 1.84 mills (~\$4,601,600 annually)
The Safe Haven Foundation is working to fund an educational campaign that will build up to the renewal. It was the Foundation's understanding that the renewal would not be on the ballot until 2024, thus the necessary fundraising has not yet begun. The plan includes a new website and a social media campaign followed by billboards and other advertisements. In my opinion, it will give us the best chance for the renewal to pass. Additionally, a critical piece of the Safe Haven campus is crisis services. We need time to show how many people are helped by this service in order to make a strong case for the millage renewal. We cannot tell the story before it happens. This story will demonstrate how Parish Government is a good steward of funds, and how we are leveraging (not relying) on taxpayer funds to increase access to these services.

MICHAEL B. COOPER * PARISH PRESIDENT
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- CORONER'S MILLAGE – RENEWAL 3.10 mills (~\$7,752,700 annually)
 - Millage amount – If you choose to go forward with placing this on the ballot, the amount should not be the same. The bonds are scheduled to be paid off in 2025, but could be paid off sooner. Additionally, there is currently more than \$10 million in fund balance. If placed on the ballot, it should be at a substantially lower rate and only after Parish Government has been provided with information on the intended uses for the money generated by the millage, as well as, the intended uses for the large fund balance.
 - Need for Mediation – As you may know, the Coroner lost his mandamus suit against St. Tammany Parish Government. However, he is now threatening to sue parish government for damages. We are currently working on mediation with him. We should not ask the public to vote for a millage until this matter is amicably resolved.
- FD7 MILLAGE – NEW 18 mills (~\$914,000 annually)
 Fire District No. 7 covers the largest area in the parish, but receives the second lowest revenue. They have only five fire stations and a 20 year old truck Their current millage is 20 mils which is substantially less than the surrounding fire districts. While I agree that an additional millage may be needed, now is not the time to request it. Simply put, FD7 should wait until we resolve our parishwide financial issues, then we can fully support their endeavor.

Whether new, a renewal or an extension, I firmly believe that putting any millage proposition on the ballot prior to a resolution for funding our state mandated expenses would be a bad idea, since an election for all of these may be held in the Spring of 2024 without jeopardizing a lapse in funding. We should not be supporting any taxing proposition in advance of a possible tax proposition that we, St. Tammany Parish Government, desperately need to meet our mandates. Doing so would be counterproductive. This applies to everything - the public health millage, the coroner's millage and others.

I sincerely hope that you will carefully consider the effect of today's decisions on the issues of tomorrow. I hope that you will consider the needs of the whole parish – *our* parish, *our* citizens, *our* families. The demise of the criminal justice system would injure us all.