

**CITY OF OBETZ
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**



SPECIAL MEETING OF AUGUST 5, 2025

The special meeting of August 5, 2025 was held at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers at the Government Center, 4175 Alum Creek Drive, with Mayor Angela Kirk presiding.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Boumis called the roll. Mr. Michael Flaherty – present; Mr. Robert Kramer – present; Mr. Guiles Richardson – present; Mr. Derek Varney – present; Mr. Mike Kimbler – present; Mr. Todd Gibbs – present. Also present were Gene Hollins, Esq., Law Director; Stacey Boumis, AICP, Clerk; Mike Confer, Police Chief; and, E. Rod Davisson, Esq., City Administrator.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Boumis read the title of Resolution 02 – 25: A Resolution Providing For The Submission To The Electors Of The City Of Obetz, At The General Election To Be Held On Tuesday, November 4, 2025, An Ordinance To Amend Section 182.012 Of The Codified Ordinances To Increase The City Income Tax Rate From The Current Rate Of Two And One-Half Percent (2.5%) To A Rate Of Three And One-Half Percent (3.5%), To Become Effective On January 1, 2026, To Dedicate The Revenue Resulting From The One Percent (1.0%) Increase To Safety Services, To Continue To Allow A Full Credit For All Taxes Paid To Any Municipal Corporation, In This State Or Elsewhere, By A Resident, Or By A Pass-Through Entity Owned, Directly Or Indirectly, By A Resident, On The Resident's Distributive Or Proportionate Share Of The Income Of The Pass-Through Entity, And Declaring An Emergency.

Mr. Davisson stated Resolution 02 – 25 was passed at the last Council meeting to primarily fund the Obetz Police Department and other safety services. The Resolution was submitted to the Franklin County Board of Elections who suggested some clarifying language. We would like to add their clarifying language to make sure our ballot language remains intact Mr. Davisson discussed the changes. The Resolution puts a 1% safety levy on the November ballot. Currently the City has a 2.5% income tax. This increase puts the City at 2% general income tax and 1.5% safety levy. The clarifying language makes those numbers clear. It also makes sure that it is understood that the City gives a 100% credit for income taxes paid to other municipalities.

Mr. Gibbs stated the presentation last meeting was amazing. He then stated he was at a 0.5% income tax increase until that presentation, then he voted for a 1% income tax income. He also noticed the gallery change. He stated he wants to look out for the wellbeing of the taxpayers and ensure businesses want to come to Obetz. He then stated a .5% would be more feasible for everyone. He moved to amend the Resolution to change the 1% to .5%. He stated the .5% has a better chance of getting approved. Not everyone comes to the meetings and asks a lot of questions. People think the .5% is too high.

Mr. Davisson gave a presentation. He stated in 2016, Obetz created a .5% safety levy. He

discussed the increase in costs for operating the Police Department and the amount of money generated by the current .5% safety levy. The City is faced with declining or flattening revenue. AI reduces the number of people working here and the City is practically built out. As of this year, the estimated cost of the Police Department is \$4.3 million dollars. The current levy will raise approximately \$2.4 million dollars. There is a \$2 million dollar gap. The money has to come from somewhere. The money comes from other areas of City operations – parks, streets, recreation, events. Mr. Davisson stated the 100% credit is a big deal. The City has approximately 8500 residents and 195 pay anything back to the City. Obetz has one of the lowest income tax burdens in the State of Ohio due to the 100% credit. Safety service costs continue to increase. The current levy cannot cover the cost. Mr. Davisson then discussed the options – a 1% safety levy; a 0.75 safety levy; and a 0.5% levy. Another option is to eliminate the credit. This does not have to go to the voters. There are over 200 cities in Ohio that offer no income tax credit. This would create a high burden on the residents. He continued to discuss income tax credits and options. The City of Lockbourne has a 1% municipal income tax and offers no credit. He discussed State changes that impact municipal income tax collections. He then discussed when the various safety levy options fail. A 1% safety levy creates an independent Obetz and allows the City to conform its boundary and leave the townships. He stated the City of Obetz supplements the income of Hamilton Township. Obetz provides 40% of the revenue to Hamilton Township. If Obetz wants to be completely independent, the 1% income tax levy is what is needed. Mr. Flaherty stated Obetz does not know what the State is doing with property taxes. What happens if the State abolishes property taxes? Mr. Davisson stated townships are primarily funded by property taxes. If townships go away, the fire department will go away. He then discussed various property tax changes considered by the State of Ohio.

Gary Baker, a resident, stated people should pay for parking at ZucchiniFest. Don't get rid of the cops. Mayor Kirk stated changes are coming. Nothing is off the table. Mr. Baker stated Obetz still has crime and he would rather pay for the ZucchiniFest. Mayor Kirk stated the Obetz police work hard and it is fair to ask the residents what they want. Mr. Davisson stated the levy gives residents the opportunity to decide where they want to spend their money.

Becci Thacker addressed Council. She stated we don't know what is happening with State property tax reform yet. If the townships lose funding, could the City annex the fire stations? Mr. Davisson stated the City has a water and sewer service area agreement with Columbus that limits where Obetz can annex. He discussed the constraints to annexation. There is no scenario where the City could annex a station. When the City leaves a township, the City could get some of the equipment. Mr. Davisson discussed State property tax reform. Ms. Thacker asked if property taxes aren't eliminated and Hamilton Township continues, what happens. Mr. Davisson discussed starting an Obetz Fire Department and the cost of leaving the townships. Mr. Ricky Seidle, a resident, asked what happens if the City and townships part ways. Council discussed what services the townships provide residents and what it costs residents. Mr. Gibbs stated a current Hamilton Township Trustee admitted on the record that it is not fair that Obetz residents pay for services they don't get.

Ms. Thacker asked if Obetz would absorb Reese. Mr. Davisson stated that would be expensive.

Obetz shouldn't absorb Reese or The Meadows.

Ms. Bonnie Wiley, a resident, stated the State is going to increase sales tax and everyone will get paid. It is not true that the schools will fall apart. Mr. Seidle stated there is no plan in place if property taxes are abolished. Ms. Wiley stated Columbus does not want to build a fire station on the far south side. Columbus won't contribute.

David Humphries, a resident, stated the City has to make up the income stream. Mr. Davisson stated sales taxes hurt the poor the most. The State won't care how each community will want to run the schools. The safety levy spreads out the burden. Residents should get to decide.

Mr. Humphries asked if Council could remove the credit if the 1% levy fails. Mr. Davisson stated yes. He then stated removing the credit hurts the residents; the levy is predominately paid from employees and corporations. Mr. Kramer stated Council has no appetite to take away the income tax credit. Mr. Davisson polled the audience. The majority of people in attendance support a 1% safety levy.

Mr. Andy Borders, a resident, asked if Obetz will need more money if property taxes go away. Mr. Davisson stated the City will need more money to run the fire department. Mr. Davisson discussed services. Ms. Wiley stated she can't believe the administration doesn't have a plan and Council is voting blindly. People can't afford a tax hike. This is unnecessary. Mr. Davisson stated Ms. Wiley was wrong. The City has a plan. Mr. Davisson stated these are the numbers. Mayor Kirk stated the numbers don't lie. This is a guess of what is to come. Nothing is malicious. Everyone wants a great City.

Mr. Varney asked for the "vote no" crowd, what do we anticipate. Mr. Varney stated there is a \$1.9 million dollar deficit for the police today. What does the new Obetz look like? He then stated no one is declaring war on Hamilton Township. Mr. Davisson shared a business segment analysis for the City. The City is built to lose tax money. It buys and provides services the residents want. A summary of the analysis is below:

- Concession program - lost \$30,000 in 2024; small markup and don't sell a lot. The City is employing neighborhood kids.
- Fortress Obetz – lost \$307,000 in 2024 after all the money the City got for rentals. Need to charge more for services. Mr. Davisson provided examples. This is a place where Obetz kids get to play free.
- Obetz Athletic Club – haven't increased cost since it opened. Has all new equipment. Lost \$214,000 in 2024. This could go to a keycard system.
- Lost \$348,000 on the parks and this doesn't include mowing them. The City spent one million dollars to mow City property including parks in 2024.
- Recreation lost \$265,000 in 2024.
- Youth athletics lost \$162,000 in 2024.
- The ZucchiniFest lost \$588,000 in 2024.

To cover the police gap, the services above will need cut. The City can stop all its services or charge for services. Mr. Flaherty stated the City gets tax money to provide these services. Mr. Davisson stated there are a million ways to cut this down. If the public says "no", Council will need to figure out what gets cut. The City can cover the gap in the police budget but everything will need cut. Mayor Kirk stated everyone has a different idea of what needs cut. It is a balancing act.

John Flynn, a resident, asked if Obetz had crime statistics for Canal Winchester. He wanted to know how Obetz compares to Canal Winchester since they don't have their own police department. He stated a lot of police resources are spent on their commercial areas. Mr. Davisson stated he doesn't want to see officers leave. Obetz doesn't pay as much as Columbus.

Crystal Tucker, a resident, asked why the City is in this position. Mr. Davisson stated he did not anticipate refunds. The City has lost \$2.5 to \$3 million in revenue in the past three years. Police expenses have also increased. A brand new police officer costs approximately \$100,000 a year and that is going up. People don't want to be cops. They are treated horribly; it is dangerous. Mr. Davisson stated cops put themselves in harm's way and they deserve to be paid for it.

Mr. Borders asked what is left to develop. Mr. Davisson discussed. He stated there are three areas left to develop. He discussed those areas.

Mayor Kirk stated it is irresponsible for the elected officials to not fix this. This doesn't have to be contentious. People don't understand what is happening and why. The officials are not going to do anything that is going to hurt this community. These things are not easy or fun things. We have hard choices to make. Residents should be able to decide what they want to pay for. The City has to look forward. There has been a lot of thought put into this. There is a plan. No one wants to pay more money or ask for more money.

Mr. Kimbler stated he is the only Council member that lives east of Alum Creek Drive which is growing. The polling in this room is not the same as the people east of Alum Creek Drive. He stated a lot of people sought him out and they are against the 1% safety levy. We are Madison Township and we don't hear the same noise regarding the Township. A lot of that plays into the thought process of the people east of Alum Creek Drive. Since the last meeting, he stated he changed his mind. The people who elected him told me something different.

Mr. Kramer stated 1% is a struggle to pass and has a negative impact on businesses. He stated 0.5% is better.

Amanda Hansel, a resident, asked if residents pass a 0.5% levy, how many years before Council is back asking for more money. Mr. Davisson shared current income projections. He stated 0.5% will fail by the end of 2026. He stated the 0.75% works as well as 1%. She wanted to make sure this is a safety levy. She stated when the Township was asking for a safety levy, everyone thought it was important. Now, there is not the same sentiment. Mr. Davisson discussed how the money can be used. Ms. Hansel asked about mutual aid.

Mr. Seidle stated Council seems to think the 0.5% is more pleasant. Mr. Davisson discussed the City's bond rating and carryover requirements. Mr. Borders asked why the Buckstone TIF doesn't cover expenses. Mr. Davisson discussed. He stated it was a matter of timing. There is also growth in a lot of other areas outside of Buckstone. Mr. Davisson stated the schools do really well with Buckstone.

Mr. Hollins stated the law department distributed an updated Resolution for a 0.5% increase. There are numerous parts of the Resolution that needed to be changed. Council has options for moving forward.

Mr. Gibbs moved to amend Resolution 02 – 25 to read as the 0.5% version distributed by the Law Department to substitute what was in the Council packet. Motion made by Mr. Gibbs; seconded by Mr. Kimbler. Mr. Varney stated 0.75% seems like the happy medium. He stated he would rather it be 0.75%. Mr. Hollins stated you need to vote on the 0.5%. Mr. Gibbs stated this is how a government needs to work. He then stated 1% is not a reality. He then stated he knows cuts can be made to get the City where they need to be. Voting as follows: Mr. Richardson – yes; Mr. Flaherty – no; Mr. Kimbler – yes; Mr. Varney – yes; Mr. Kramer – yes; Mr. Gibbs – yes. Motion carried.

Mayor Kirk called for a motion to suspend the rules regarding the adoption of Resolution 02 – 25. Motion made by Mr. Gibbs; seconded by Mr. Kimbler. Voting as follows: Mr. Richardson – yes; Mr. Flaherty – no; Mr. Kimbler – yes; Mr. Varney – yes; Mr. Kramer – yes; Mr. Gibbs – yes. Motion carried. Mayor Kirk called for a motion to adopt Resolution 02 – 25. Motion made by Mr. Richardson; seconded by Mr. Gibbs. Voting as follows: Mr. Richardson – yes; Mr. Flaherty – no; Mr. Kimbler – yes; Mr. Varney – yes; Mr. Kramer – yes; Mr. Gibbs – yes. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Kirk called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Mr. Varney; seconded by Mr. Flaherty. All ayes. Council adjourned at 8:35 PM.



Mayor Angela M. Kirk



Stacey Boumis, Clerk of Council