

# the Voice

SPRING 2017

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## Township Requests More Police Funding in May 2 Levy

*No increase for Sheriff's Office services requested in 14 years*

**C**olumbia Township residents will be asked to consider a 3.4 mill levy on the May 2 ballot that would continue funding for contracted police services from the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office.

Administrator Mike Lemon said the Board of Trustees determined a return to the voters was necessary after seeing ongoing increased costs coupled with loss of revenue from state cuts.

"As difficult as it is to ask voters for more money, we need to be reminded that the level of safety we enjoy in our community is not by accident," said Trustee President David Kubicki. "It is

based on the level of police services we continue to provide.

"The bottom line is, we will have less service if we cannot pass a levy to continue to fund our police services," he said.

Calculations from the Hamilton County Auditor's Office note that passage of the 3.4 mill levy would cost homeowners \$119 per \$100,000 market value each year.

### FUNDING SHORTFALLS

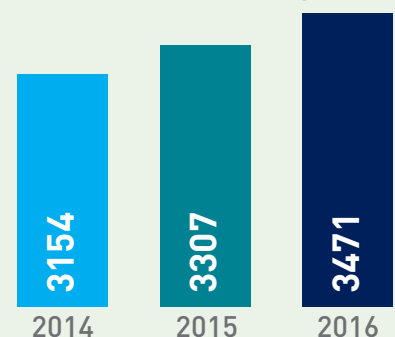
The township has dipped into its General Fund for the past two years to cover safety service shortfalls, Lemon said. "With increased personnel costs and the expense for police services, we have surpassed the revenue provided by our current levy," he said. "Since 2012, those costs are actually more than we are taking in."

Township Trustees have looked for alternatives to the current police model, Lemon said. In the last two years, while anticipating the need for future revenue, trustees explored contracting with other smaller police forces like Golf Manor and Mariemont.

"After lengthy discussion and receipt of proposals, it was found that the cost of contracting with the neighboring communities would result in a 20 percent higher cost," Lemon said. Not only was the personnel cost higher, but also

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### Who is Calling?



Many of the calls that deputies in Columbia Township respond to are not high-level emergencies, according to Administrator Mike Lemon. Calls for service are trending upward in the past three years.



## Value of Trees Can't Be Measured



Susan Hughes  
Trustees

Something that has always been close to my heart is watching the succession of the blooming of trees in the spring. Pear and magnolia trees bloom first, next come the red buds, and then come the weeping cherries, and so on. Each tree has its own time to showcase its beauty.

Well-kept trees are an expression of pride in our community. Columbia Township takes an active role in planting and maintaining trees growing along its roads. Our efforts

have resulted in not only being designated a Tree City USA community, but also the first township in the state of Ohio to achieve this distinction. We have been honored to receive this designation for eight consecutive years.

Two township employees are ISA Certified Arborists. Under their watchful eyes, trees are trimmed both spring and fall. Not every tree is trimmed, only those in need. We have a street tree inventory of 713 trees.

Trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate temperatures, clean the air, produce oxygen, and beautify our community. Not to be overlooked is the increase in property values that trees bring.

Without trees, there would be no anticipation of spring, no birds singing their beautiful melodies, no canopy of shade in the summer, no rustling of leaves in the fall, and no home for the squirrels in the winter.

Planting our trees is an act of faith, an attempt to make our community a better place to live. We believe these trees will improve our environment not just for us, but also for our children and grandchildren.



## Reminder: Use Correct Taxing District on Vehicle Registrations

**Why?** Because Columbia Township receives funds for roads and bridges from your registration.

Columbia Township can collect a portion of your vehicle registration fee if you correctly identify the township as your taxing district. These fees are then returned to the township to be used for road and bridge repair.



Trustee Chris Kritikos reminds residents that each time you renew your license plate or register a new car, make sure your taxing district says: 3167. That number assures that your permissive local tax fees will be returned to the township where you live.

From each passenger vehicle registered, the township receives \$3, according to the Ohio Department of Transportation. Last year the township received \$6,300 returned to the community to be used for road and bridge repairs from these taxes.

## Block Parties Need a Permit



### Planning your summer neighborhood block party?

Columbia Township requests organizers fill out a block party application which is found online at [ColumbiaTwp.org](http://ColumbiaTwp.org).

A block party is defined as a neighborhood event in which all residents in the area of the party are invited and a majority attends. The party organizer is responsible for making sure the party complies with the noise ordinance.

Residents and emergency traffic has the right to enter and exit the block party at all times. And as a reminder, all debris in the roadway needs to be picked up and disposed of in approved containers. To fill out your permit, go online and download the form or email [Jservizzi@ColumbiaTwp.org](mailto:Jservizzi@ColumbiaTwp.org). Permits may be faxed to 561-6981 or mail application to Columbia Township Attn: John Servizzi, 5686 Kenwood Road, Cinti, OH 45227.



## Street Tree Program Keeps Helps Township Stay Green

**T**hose healthy trees planted in the right of way near your home didn't get there by accident. Columbia Township established a comprehensive program to care for all its street trees as part of its efforts to maintain its "Tree City USA" status.

**Did you know?** Columbia Township was actually the first township in Ohio to be named a Tree City USA community, an award given by the Arbor Day Foundation that recognizes communities that meet several urban forestry goals each year. "It's a point of pride with us," notes Administrator Mike Lemon.

Street trees are the trees planted in medians and in the right-of-way, Lemon noted. In Columbia Township's 10 miles of roads, there are 713 trees, said John Servizzi, road maintenance supervisor, all cared for, pruned and monitored by the township's road maintenance department. Occasionally, a tree service is called in when equipment

requirements exceed what the township owns.

Twelve years ago, Columbia Township stepped up its efforts to maintain its base of street trees. An urban forester was hired to assess the health and

**Whenever we have strong storms that come through, our damage has been minimal because we have been caring for our trees.**

*Mike Lemon, Columbia Township Administrator*

condition of every street tree in the township. Then trees were pruned and treated, and unhealthy ones were removed and replaced, Lemon said. A list was generated for each street where recommendations were given as to the best trees suggested for that area, based on soil and location. And finally, an annual maintenance service was

established to check, prune and treat all trees twice a year, he noted.

"As a result of all the things we have done, whenever we have strong storms that come through, our damage has been minimal because we have been caring for our trees," he said.

Lemon noted the program has paid off not just in increasing quality of life, but in economic benefits, too. By investing in two road maintenance workers who became certified arborists, problems can be dealt with professionally without subcontracting services out. The workers talk to homeowners about problems with their trees and then suggest recommendations to treat the problem, and this benefit has saved the township and residents a lot of money, he said.

Columbia Township now is in its eighth year as a Tree City USA community.

If you have questions about your street trees, contact John Servizzi at 561-6046.



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## More Police Funding



the equipment maintenance and cost of equipment repair was much more expensive than services provided by the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office.

Hamilton County Sheriff's Office provides the township with 24/7 police services, with from one to five deputies on patrol per shift, Lemon said. Additionally, the large department offers specialized services that may not be available in smaller departments such as K-9 units, a bomb squad, drug and organized crime task forces, crime prevention inspections, computer and electronic-crime specialists, and a host of specialized vehicles used in crime prevention and detection.



If the township had decided to contract with a smaller neighboring department, it actually still would have to pay for specialty services with the Sheriff's Office in the end as those services would not be available locally, Lemon said.

From 2012 to 2014, the township paid for its police services out of the police levy fund, but starting in 2015, it moved \$220,000 from the General Fund to cover the shortfall. That number rose to \$300,000 shortfall in 2016, he noted. The cost for police services, including dispatch fees (911 calls) and equipment purchases, have averaged \$935,886 while revenue averaged \$709,422.



## You Gather It, Township Will Haul It

Brush pick-up a year-round service in Columbia Township

**I**f spring plans include a major outdoor yard overhaul, don't forget you can place your brush and yard waste at the curb for pickup.

Columbia Township's regularly scheduled pickup of brush is the second and fourth Monday each month, offered year-round. "We never stop," notes Road Superintendent John Servizzi.

**A few important restrictions should be noted:**

Brush may be no larger than six inches in diameter.

Place the brush in piles with the cut ends stacked toward the curb. While there is not limit on the amount of brush that can be taken, Servizzi asks that huge piles be broken up into a couple of pickups. Do not place brush in the street.

"We cannot do special pickups, so

please just wait until the scheduled days to put out your brush," Servizzi said. Also note that materials on private property cannot be picked up.

For questions about the service, contact Servizzi at Columbia Township at 561-6046 ext. 303 or [maintenance@columbiatwp.org](mailto:maintenance@columbiatwp.org).



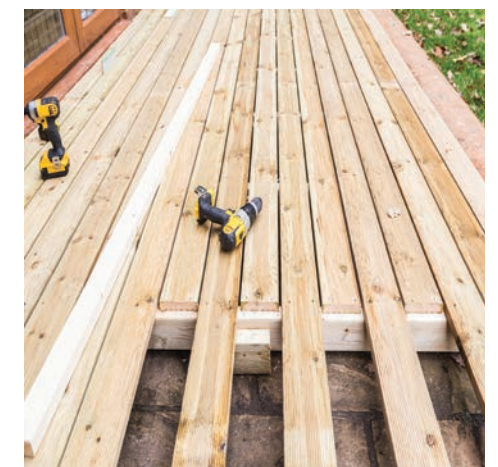
## Thinking Spring Home Upgrades? Check With County Before You Build

**W**hile Columbia Township provides many services for its residents, far beyond many other townships its size, one service it does not manage is planning and zoning.

That means if you plan a home project this summer, such as a new fence, pool, garage or storage shed, you need to contact Hamilton County to learn about their permitting conditions.

Information can easily be found online in an interactive website at: [building.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/](http://building.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/). Step-by-step directions for many projects are available through this resource, as are forms for necessary permits.

For further information, call Hamilton County Planning and Development Department at 946-4550 weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.





# Madison Place Parking Study Detailed

Township explores options for improvement of area's parking issues.

**A**nyone driving through Madison Place or living there knows on-street parking is at a premium along the roads in this area. With the density of housing and multiple car ownership, parking one's vehicle nearby can be an issue.

Columbia Township Trustees have hired JMA Consultants, Inc. to study existing on-street parking available on each street and review parking policies. The goal of the effort is to create recommendations for improvement.

"There are several issues associated with this area's parking," noted Administrator Mike Lemon. "One is the number of vehicles parked on the streets. Some homes might have as many as 10 cars associated with them," he said.

Parking is also a safety issue for first responders and street crews, he said. "The ability of our snowplows to get through areas where there is parking on both sides of the street in winter is substantially compromised in this area," he said. The township has hired the consultant to also identify design standards that affect street parking. For example, Lemon said there might be areas where the street needs to be widened, or where signage could be



Parking on both sides of the street in Madison Place can create problems for emergency vehicles.

changed to improve safety issues.

"For years, the situation has been getting worse," noted Road Superintendent John Servizzi. "What really triggered it was parking in winter because if we plow, people complain about us covering up their driveways or cars. We have guys driving a plow who have less than an inch clearance on each side due to cars parked on both sides of the street," he said. Driving under those conditions is nerve-wracking to snow plow drivers who may be driving in difficult conditions or in the middle of the night.

Possible upgrades that could be suggested to improve parking include recommending changes in policies, new ordinances, street widening, and removal or restrictions in certain areas of parking. Police and fire departments will also be involved in the study.

"Our goal is to optimize the number of parking spaces with the space that exists and improve safety," Trustee Susan Hughes said. "It should really be helpful."

Trustees hope the study will be completed in time for changes to be made by the end of summer.

# Use of Cable Access Service Is Topic of Township Survey

**D**o you ever watch meetings of the Columbia Township Trustees online through cable access television or via the Internet?

Columbia Township is currently assessing resident use of its ICRC (Intercommunity Regulatory Commission of Southwest Ohio) contracted services. The township pays ICRC to film and post township trustee meetings on public access cable television, ICRC's website and the township's website at a cost of approximately \$24,000 a year (\$2,000 per meeting).

Administrator Mike Lemon asks residents to visit [www.ColumbiaTwp.org](http://www.ColumbiaTwp.org) to take the survey to find out if this

expense should be continued.

"When we checked viewership on ICRC's website for the past several years, we had a high of 35 viewers at one meeting and a low of one person for most other meetings," he said.

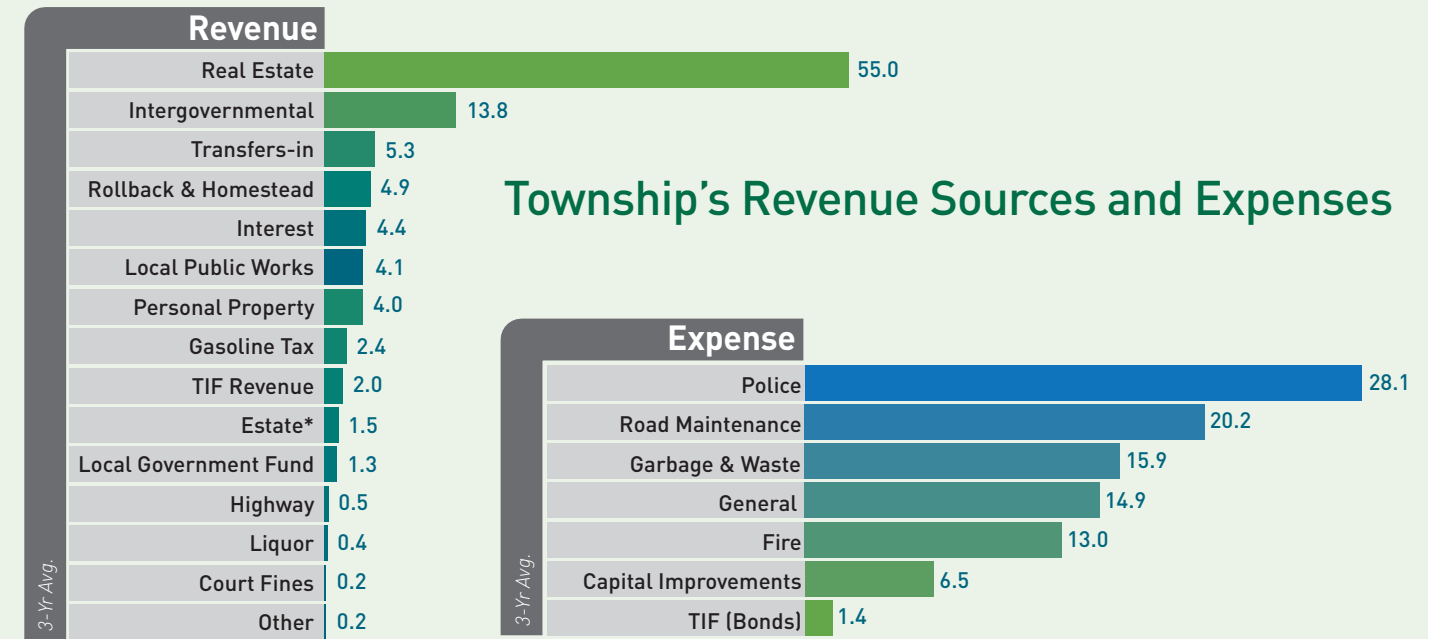
ICRC provides cable access services to 24 communities in southern Ohio. Columbia Township has worked with the provider to broadcast meetings since 2003.

Lemon believes the township could tape trustee meetings and then upload them to the Internet at a much lower cost. "It is really a matter of cost savings," he said. "If we make a change, the money we save will go into paying for our newsletter." Lemon said.

INTERCOMMUNITY CABLE  
**ICRC** TV  
REGULATORY COMMISSION



# Wonder Where Your Community Receives Its Funding and How that Money is Spent? Here Are a Few Answers To Those Questions in a Graph Format.



# Important Phone Numbers in Columbia Township



Trustee President  
**David Kubicki**  
272-7870  
[dkubicki@columbiatwp.org](mailto:dkubicki@columbiatwp.org)



Trustee  
**Chris Kritikos**  
272-7871  
[ckritikos@columbiatwp.org](mailto:ckritikos@columbiatwp.org)



Trustee Vice President  
**Susan Hughes**  
272-7872  
[shughes@columbiatwp.org](mailto:shughes@columbiatwp.org)



Fiscal Officer  
**Caroline Heekin**  
272-7867  
[cheekin@columbiatwp.org](mailto:cheekin@columbiatwp.org)

## Township Administration

Administrator  
**C. Michael Lemon**  
561-6046  
[MLemon@columbiatwp.org](mailto:MLemon@columbiatwp.org)

Administrative Assistant  
**Kimberly Gray**  
272-7877  
[kgray@columbiatwp.org](mailto:kgray@columbiatwp.org)

JEDZ Tax Administrator  
**Jane Fette**  
272-9954  
[JFette@fairfaxoh.org](mailto:JFette@fairfaxoh.org)

Property Maintenance Code Enforcement  
792-7256  
[columbia@sycamoretownship.org](mailto:columbia@sycamoretownship.org)

## POLICE PROTECTION—Emergency- 911

Columbia Township—**Non-Emergency**  
825-2280

City of Cincinnati—**Non-Emergency**  
765-1212  
[www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cpd](http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cpd)

Hamilton County—**Non-Emergency**  
825-1500  
[www.hcso.org](http://www.hcso.org)

## FIRE PROTECTION—Emergency- 911

The Little Miami Joint Fire & Rescue District  
271-3636  
<http://lmfr.org>

Deer Park—Silverton Joint Fire District  
791-2500  
[www.dpsjfd.org](http://www.dpsjfd.org)

Village of Golf Manor Fire Department  
531-2022  
[www.golfmanor.org](http://www.golfmanor.org)

# We're No. 2!

## Township rates high again for recycling

Columbia Township residents have kicked up their recycling efforts a notch this past year, according to the Hamilton County Recycling and Solid Waste District.

Statistics from the district show the township again boasts the second highest residential recycling rate for townships based on tonnage recycled in

2016. Columbia Township earned 12th place for the highest recycling rate in townships, villages or cities, but came in second behind Crosby Township (24.7 percent) when only townships were compared.

Additionally, the recycling rate has increased in the past three years, with last year's statistics showing that 18.4

percent of items in the trash were recycled.

Administrator Mike Lemon reminds residents that not only is recycling good for the environment, but it also means returned money to the township through a program from the Hamilton County Recycling and Solid Waste District.

### PERCENT OF ITEMS RECYCLED VERSUS TRASHED

