

## A Tale of Two Candidates

As voters in Marion Township and the City of Howell ponder who they wish to represent the 5<sup>th</sup> District on the Livingston County Board of Commissioners, the stark contrast in substance, style and leadership couldn't be clearer. Communications sent by my able opponent seem to fixate on a single issue: taxes!! So, let's add a little detail and sunlight to his misleading rhetoric.

We should all be thankful for Livingston County's low tax rate. After all, a low tax rate keeps more money in household budgets, is an incentive for business capital investment and job creation. As a fiscal conservative, that's precisely where we should be – but to expect further tax cuts could impact some services. The City of Howell's property tax rate is higher simply based on services provided. This resulted in economic development challenges when compared to the lower tax rates (and less services) found in the surrounding townships. The city was stable financially up until the 2008 recession.

The recession had a negative impact on taxable values of property resulting in significant reductions in revenue for the city. Although the Headlee Amendment to the Michigan State Constitution is a good piece of legislation, its interaction with Proposition A (Michigan Tax Amendment) does not allow Michigan municipalities to recover property taxable values to pre-recession levels once the economy recovers. Coupled with the State consistently falling short on its statutory revenue sharing levels, this places extreme fiscal pressures on Michigan communities. To learn more on this dynamic, I encourage you to visit the Michigan Municipal League website [www.savemycity.org](http://www.savemycity.org).

When elected to City Council in November 2013 and subsequently as mayor, the fiscal stresses were a constant discussion for council members and city staff. Staff reductions had already been implemented and infrastructure road work simply could not be accomplished. Although a fiscal conservative, I've never been a fiscal idiot and solutions had to be discussed. The public safety millage would have taken pressure off the city's general fund and allowed for modest infrastructure work. The approach had full council support, the millage district set unanimously, but council's vote to impose the millage had three members in support and

three opposed. Recalling my many lessons in leadership and organizational management, my belief is that an elected body must be united in imposing any unilateral millage increase. This belief prompted my NO vote as a tiebreaker removing the issue from consideration. NO TAXES WERE RAISED.

The last approach receiving full council support was to ask voters for a full Headlee over-ride. Any tax increase must show value-for-money and all additional funds, if approved, would have gone directly to infrastructure residential street work. Many realtors have told me that a home's value and "curb appeal" might be disadvantaged if it's on a significantly deteriorating street over one on a well-maintained one. That vote subsequently failed as residents preferred keeping tax levels as they were and forego residential road work. AGAIN, NO TAXES WERE RAISED. Council then implemented additional but modest budgetary cuts, authorized modest road maintenance, and only considered reconstruction if there was at least an 80% grant from external sources. Last year's reconstruction of Clinton Street, and the State Street reconstruction in 2019 are examples where external funds were used.

As the late Paul Harvey would say: "And that's the rest of the story." I'm deeply disappointed that my opponent would mislead and mischaracterize me and my former council colleagues as "tax raisers." He should know better. We were simply trying to rectify a significant drop in revenue and restore taxes to their pre-recession level. The fact is that no property taxes were raised during our tenure, other than those allowed under state law. Budgets should always reflect community priorities ensuring a balance between revenues, expenditures, and needs. The City Council acted in good faith and with the best interests of ALL Howell residents. We were always good stewards of their tax money – passing balanced budgets ever year and setting priorities with what funding was available.

My opponent, however, placed his personal interests before that of the community in late 2020 by spearheading salary increases for the Board of Commissioners – all during state ordered pandemic shutdowns with many in our community unable to work. The Howell City Council never did that and preferred keeping money where it would best serve the community. He also is currently supporting a needless expenditure of our tax dollars for an

external search for a new Health Director when a qualified internal candidate has already been identified. And, in an example of throwing the baby out with the bath water, he voted not to accept \$1.5 million State COVID funding. Granted, there were some provisions in the funding that I wouldn't have liked, but there's always creative ways to spend the money where it would have maximum benefit – helping the most vulnerable in our county, the elderly or those who have compromised respiratory or immune systems, receive a vaccination if they chose. Decisions must be made for the good of our entire community absent ideological litmus tests.

Voters in Marion Township and the City of Howell have an obvious choice in the August 2nd primary – a tale of two diametrically opposed candidates in substance, style, and leadership. If they opt to vote for change and allow me to represent them, I commit to representing all residents of District 5 and not an ideology while keeping our tax rates low. I will remain fully engaged in the community, open minded, never abdicating critical thinking, and ALWAYS available to listen to what matters to you. I will be honest, forthright, never misleading or mischaracterizing anything to score cheap and dishonest political points.

The time for change to common-sense leadership is now. Please visit my website at [www.voteproctor.com](http://www.voteproctor.com) or my “Committee to Elect Nick Proctor” Facebook page to learn more.

Nick Proctor