



**For Immediate Release**

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## **City of Kentwood Voters Will Consider Permanent Police and Fire Millage Increase on May 7 Ballot**

**Kentwood, Michigan, Jan. 24, 2024** – City of Kentwood voters will consider a dedicated millage increase of 1.95 mills on the May 7 ballot that, if approved, would provide critical support for police and fire services.

As the city of Kentwood has continued to grow, the demand for police and fire services has also risen. Since 2010, Kentwood’s population has grown by 11.5%, rising from 48,707 residents in 2010 to 54,303 residents in 2020. If approved, the dedicated millage increase would enable Kentwood’s Police and Fire departments to hire additional staff members and maintain response times to meet growing needs for police, fire and emergency medical services.

“Our community has grown exponentially over the past 10-plus years, and with that growth comes a need for continued investment in our police and fire services,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “As our teams respond to more calls for service and support more residents, additional funding for our Police and Fire departments will ensure they have the necessary resources to protect and serve our community.”

The last police and fire millage of 2 mills was passed in 2010, with nearly 62% of voters in favor. The millage was expected to maintain police and fire operations through 2020.

“We have been good stewards of the 2010 police and fire millage, leveraging dollars for four additional years than originally projected,” Kepley said. “We will be as effective and intentional with funds from this millage increase if approved.”

The proposed millage increase was approved by the City Commission on Jan. 9. If approved, it would be levied starting July 1, 2024. It is expected to generate more than \$5.1 million in its first year.

“Our goal is to serve our community with excellence, and this millage increase will support that effort,” Police Chief Bryan Litwin said. “As our community continues to grow, we have seen a 14% increase in the number of calls for police service over the past decade but our staffing levels have remained the same since 2000. It is critical for us to get our staffing levels up to where they have to be to meet our community’s needs today and well into the future.”

If approved, the dedicated millage is projected to support a variety of police and fire initiatives over the next seven years, including:

- Addressing critical personnel needs, enabling police to add, train and support vital additions to the team, raising their minimum staffing level from three officers and a sergeant to five officers and a sergeant.
- Adding another EMS unit for the Fire Department in the future when the demand for emergency services exceeds current staffing.
- Funding the replacement of necessary police and fire vehicles and other equipment, which have seen significant cost increases in the past few years.
- Creating a basic outdoor training facility for police and fire that will eliminate the need for travel expenses and overtime for training purposes, ensuring cost-effective and up-to-date training practices.
- Supporting increased simulation-based training for police and fire personnel, helping team members build essential skills so they can make informed decisions in real-time that protect community members, property and fellow emergency personnel.
- Updating technology and equipment to protect police and fire team members and community members.
- Enabling both police and fire to focus resources on prevention and education and be more proactive in addressing community issues.

“We made a promise to our community to keep our average response time at or below 5 minutes and 20 seconds,” Fire Chief Brent Looman said. “To continue to meet this standard as we respond to 36% more calls than we did a decade ago, we need additional resources. Our ability to meet this response standard can mean the difference between life and death.”

A mill is 1/1000 of a dollar, or 0.001 cents. If a tax rate or millage rate is 1.95 mills, a resident is taxed 0.00195 cents for every dollar, or \$1.95 per \$1,000 of the taxable value of the property. For example, for a residential home with a taxable value of \$100,000, the cost of 1.95 mills would be \$195 per year, equating to \$16.25 per month.

More information on the proposed millage is available at [kentwood.us/PoliceFireMillage](http://kentwood.us/PoliceFireMillage).

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