

Six Levy Proposals for Consideration in the May 10 Primary Election

The League of Women Voters of Morgantown/Monongalia County has attempted to aggregate all levy information into one document to help voters make a more informed decision about whether to support them.

First: What are the various classes of property?

Class 1 is personal property used in agriculture.

Class 2 is anything that is owner occupied, generally the person's main house property.

Class 3 and 4 are the same class definition (anything other than owner occupied). So it includes all vehicles, boats, RVs (anything taxed on your personal property tax ticket) and vacant lots or pieces of land, rental property, and business property. The number 3 is used to designate those defined properties that are outside any municipality boundary. The number 4 is used to designate those defined properties that are within a municipality boundary.

Second: What will each levy cost?

Name	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
Fairs	0.05	0.1	0.21	0.21
Fire	0.42	0.84	1.68	1.68
Library	0.27	0.54	1.08	1.08
Parks/Trails	0.58	1.16	2.32	2.32
Transit	1.1	2.2	4.4	4.4
Baseball/Garden	0.06	0.12	0.24	0.24
Total*	2.48	4.96	9.93	9.93

*Cents per \$100 of assessed value

Most voters will probably be concerned with the rates each levy will assess on Class 2 property (owner occupied). The table above shows the cost IN CENTS per \$100 of assessed value for each levy. (example: if the homeowner—Class 2—has a home assessed at \$100,000, the cost of the VFD levy would be \$8.40 per year) The cost of passing all levies for that homeowner would be \$49.60 per year which would be added to their real estate tax statement.

According to the County Clerk's office, it is important to understand that the levy rate applies to every tax ticket a person receives. For example: a person may receive two tax statements per year - one on their car and one on their house. Each levy would apply class 3(4) rate to the value of the vehicle and class 2 rate to the value of the house parcel.

So, to estimate the cost of a levy to an individual or family, you must know the assessed value of your home (if you own it) and the assessed value of your personal property. If the personal property for a Morgantown resident is assessed at \$5000, the cost of passing all the levies would be approximately \$5 per year. Add that to the cost of passing all levies when your house is assessed at \$100,000, the total cost would be \$49.60 + \$5.00. (Remember, this is just an example, not a guarantee of the cost to you.)

Third: Description of each levy proposal and the impacts of passing or failing each levy.

Fairs: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost about \$1 per year. If passed, this would be a 5-year levy and it would raise about \$50,000 per year for the Mon County Fair and \$20,000 for the Clay District Fair and for the Battelle District Fair. The levy is limited to these Fairs because they are the only ones that are members of the WV Association of Fairs and Festivals. Levy funds will allow Mon County Fair to have more facilities built for the Livestock Show and update the existing structure so the facilities could be scheduled and used by any county individual or group. Representatives of both the Clay District Fair and the Battelle District Fair report that without the levy, they will not be able to make needed improvements and repairs to their facilities. The Fairs will be forced to downsize and may face having to close.

Fire: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost about \$8.40 per year. Money raised during this 5-year levy would be split among the 12 VFDs in Mon County, providing approximately \$50,000 for each department per year. Funding would be used for training, protective clothing, radios, and possibly to replace aging fire trucks. At last count, there were 20 trucks in use that were over 15 years old. The VFDs also have expenses averaging \$28,500 just for insurance and worker's compensation. From this levy, all VFDs would receive the same amount of funding so that smaller companies would be able to upgrade their equipment and recruiting. Additionally, funds would go to the county's hazardous materials team, to the county's brush fire team and to the Volunteer Fire Companies Association which maintains the county's two tanker trucks.

Library: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost about \$5.40 per year. This 5-year levy would provide funding for the entire library system, which includes the Morgantown Public Library as well as Cheat Lake Public Library, Arnettsville Public Library, Clay Battelle Public Library, Clinton District Public Library and the Aull Center. The Library System has been underfunded for several years, and this levy would allow them to be open more hours and to expand their programs. In the past, the County Commission has provided about 16% of the funds for the downtown library and about 30% for the branch libraries. Without the levy to replace these funds, there will be reduced hours at all facilities and possible closure of some, reduced materials and services and potential charges for meeting rooms and programs.

Parks and Trails: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost \$11.60 per year. This 5-year levy would fund parks and recreation throughout Mon County. Plans include Morgantown Ice Arena additions, renovations, and upgrades; Camp Muffly operating expenses plus swimming pool, pool house and historical cabins; Chestnut Ridge Park operating expenses plus dredging of Harris Lake and improvements to the ski slope; Mason-Dixon Historical Park operating expenses plus upgrading playgrounds and hiking and mountain biking trails; Mon River and Deckers Creek Rail-Trails operating expenses and maintenance; Westover Park improvements to four baseball fields, bleachers and pavilions; Cheat Lake and/or Laurel Point soccer fields and equipment.

Mountain Line Transit: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost about \$22 per year. Funds generated by this 5-year levy would partially be used to replace the \$456,000 that has been provided by the County Commission from the coal severance revenue. That represents about 10% of Mountain Line's operating budget. Additional money from the levy would replace federal funding which is also declining. Levy monies would allow for replacement of some buses plus allow for adding new service routes to Mylan Park, Suncrest Towne Center and other developing areas of the county. Without the levy, rural routes out in the county will be eliminated. Although routes which are financed by the City of Morgantown and by WVU will not be affected, failure of the levy will have an impact on everyone, as county residents will have a much harder time finding transportation into the city for work, healthcare, and shopping.

Baseball/Botanic Garden: For the owner of the home assessed at \$100,000, this levy would cost about \$1.20 per year. The Morgantown Pony Baseball League involves over 1000 young baseball players and is currently 100% funded by community and corporate sponsors. This 5-year levy would provide about \$80,000 for maintenance and improvements to eight BOPARC baseball and softball diamonds in White, Krepps, Marilla, Valley View and Jack Roberts parks. The levy would also provide \$25,000 annually for upkeep and improvements to the Botanic Garden. Since 2000, the Garden has grown to over 80 acres of beautifully maintained gardens and trails that provide enjoyment for anyone seeking a quiet hike or organized activity. Levy funding would be used to pay a portion of the costs of keeping the Garden open to the public, at no charge, 365 days a year. These costs include utilities, insurance, supplies, staffing, maintaining the new public restrooms and Welcome Center, trails, plantings, etc. As the Garden grows, the operating costs also grow. The current budget is nearly double that of 2013, and while the City of Morgantown and County Commission have provided some funding, private contributions have covered most of the costs. The levy funds will provide a reliable base of support for the Garden.