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Shelby Township Clerk Stan Grot and Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis authorize the township's 2015 Tax Rate Request form setting the township's local tax millage rate at 9.299 mills.

Shelby Township renews same local millage rates

By SEAN DELANEY

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For the seventh consecutive year, Shelby Township's local tax rate of 9.2999 mills will remain the same with 2.4113 mills dedicated to general operations, 1 mill to the police and fire pension, 3.2575 to fire operations and 2.6311 to the police operations.

"This is the same overall millage rate that has been in place in Shelby Township for the past several years," said Township Assessor Matt Schmidt, who noted

that Shelby Township currently has the second-lowest millage rate of any of the 11 municipalities located in Macomb County that provide full-time police and fire protection services.

"The only change in the 2015 requested millage rate as opposed to the reported rate is that 1.4113 mills will be requested as a general operating millage but will be allocated to the police fund," he added.

According to Schmidt, the transfer from the general fund to the police fund is a combination of

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the 0.18-mill transfer the Board of Trustees put in place last year as a means of subsidizing the police operating fund as well as an additional 0.0051 mills transfer to compensate for a decrease in the maximum allowable millage levy for the police department operating fund in 2015.

"We understand that public safety is paramount to many of the services that we offer as a municipality," Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis said. "To ensure our police officers have the equipment and training they need to protect our residents, the board made the necessary financial moves to give our officers that support."

Stathakis, Trustee Paula Filar, Trustee Doug Wozniak, Treasurer Michael Flynn and Clerk Stanley Grot voted in favor of setting the township's local tax millage rate at 9.299 mills at the Sept. 19 Board of Trustees meeting, while Trustee Paul Viar voted against it after a motion he made to reduce the millage rate to 9.0999 failed to receive support.

"The supervisor has asked to keep this millage the way it is, and I have asked for a minor decrease of \$594,000 off the backs of our tough-paying taxpayers," Viar said prior to the vote. "Since the general fund now has \$13.4 million in a fund balance and the capital improvement fund has a balance of \$8.4 million, that means we have over \$20 million sitting in the township. And we can't give the residents of this community a minor tax cut? It is so miniscule that it won't mean much but at least it sends a message that we're willing to cut out some of this enormous spending that's going on."

However, Shelby Township Financial Director Allan McDonald argued that doing so could have a long-term impact on the township's financial liabilities.

"The township liabilities for police and fire pensions and retiree healthcare add up to roughly \$78 million," McDonald said of the township's long-term financial liabilities. "As far as annual obligations to retiree healthcare, we typically put in 60 percent to 75 percent of the recommended contribution per year."

"The reason we're not able to contribute the full amount

is because it would be too much for the different funds to sustain. Since 2008, we've had to keep track of the difference between what we put in and what needs to be put in. Since 2008, the difference is about \$10 million."

Stathakis said that, given the long-term obligations to the township retirees, now is not the time to reduce millage rates.

"Since 2008, I've been asking about ways we could reduce taxes, but we can't do that when we still have

these outstanding balances to our retirees in terms of healthcare and pensions," Stathakis said. "While we stay true on our promise never to raise the millage rates, we must stay true on funding these financial promises our township has made to its current and former employees."

According to Schmidt, the 9.2999 mills tax rate will cost taxpayers owning \$200,000 houses, which have a taxable value of \$100,000, approximately \$930 per year.

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