

COUNTY SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND FINANCE

The League of Women Voters of the Tiffin Area believes that County government should provide adequate, equitable, and flexible funding for necessary services in appropriate facilities. It further believes that County government should establish and maintain long range planning.

Position:

The County should not only provide and fully fund mandated services, but also services for the health, safety, economic, and well-being of our citizens. Emergency Medical Service (EMS) should be an essential countywide service.

There should be sufficient staffing to provide full-time services. More flexible hours for patrons should be considered to meet the needs of the public.

Necessary and adequate equipment, including technological, should be provided for departments so that they can do their jobs efficiently.

Facilities should meet the following criteria:

1. Be designed or remodeled to provide adequate space for staff;
2. Be located for accessibility of the public being served;
3. Have proper signage and lighting;
4. Have adequate security;
5. Be properly maintained.

A facility may be considered for disposal in the following situations:

1. Service(s) that were housed there have changed or moved out;
2. Services are going to be concentrated in fewer buildings;
3. The cost to maintain or repair the building is too high.

Buildings being considered for disposal might be kept if they have potential for providing net income, space for future services, and/or have historical or architectural significance.

The League supports the funding of services from a variety of sources, as appropriate, such as: property and other local taxes, sales taxes, charges for services, licenses & permits, fines & forfeitures, interest, investments, rent, donations, and grants.

The League believes that capital improvements should be primarily obtained from voted bonds, voted levies, grants. It further believes that general obligation bonds and general fund monies are the least acceptable funding sources for capital improvements. Other revenue sources could be considered and might include establishing a non-profit foundation and/or provide for multi-function uses that might include rentals.

The League believes that the County should have a long-range plan for services, finances and facilities. This should be formulated and regularly revised by a public-private committee made up of all sectors of the community.

Background on Position:

The study began in 1986 with the initial scope being “review and update of services presently provided by the county government; from the update, a determination of essential/non-essential services to be made.”

Concern over county financing arose as a result of economic cutbacks in county services and the repeated failure to pass a local county sales tax. Two general meetings were held in 1986-87.

In 1987 the study was amended to delete “determination of essential/non-essential services,” with the decision that the study was too complex. Consensus was reached in early 1988 and the League immediately took action by joining a coalition in support of a 1% county sales tax. The tax passed in May 1988.

The League intended to expand the study in 1990-91, with consensus in 1991, consisting of an evaluation of county facilities. This study was not done due to limited womanpower.

At the Annual Meeting in 1992, League members voted to add the County Jail position to the County Finances and Services position. The rationale for doing so was the original County Jail position focused on the construction of a jail. Since Seneca County was by then planning to build a jail, a correctional system should be considered a county service and, therefore, should be adequately funded.

The County Commissioners were guest speakers at a unit meeting in January 1993. A general meeting in April 1993 featured an update on current county financing.

In the spring of 1996, an effort by a number of county groups resulted in the establishment of a County Park District. League supported this effort and will monitor the development of the Park Commission.

At the 2000 Annual Meeting, members voted to drop the County Jail position.

In May and June 2002, two meetings were held on TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) reauthorization. The purpose was to educate the public, as well as League members, regarding welfare reform and where it might go in the future.

In January 2003 a committee began working on a study of County Services, Finances and Facilities. Members met with the commissioners to tell them of our interest. The County provided information for the study. The first informational meeting on finances was presented in March exploring County income and expenses. In April a power point presentation on County services was given; the services were divided by their sources of funding.

Based on our current position the League supported the proposed .5% county sales tax (Issue 1) on the May 6, 2003, primary ballot with a financial contribution and a guest column. The issue failed.

At the September 2003 General Meeting the County Study Committee presented a power-point presentation of county facilities. At the November 18 meeting, consensus was reached and a position established. The Board approved the position on December 8, 2003. The committee presented the position to the County Commissioners on January 8, 2004, and the committee gave a presentation of the facilities study to the Chamber of Commerce sub-committee on county facilities.

The new position was updated in 2004.

Fall of 2006 the League addressed concerns with the courthouse and the lack of planning with the County Commissioners.

February of 2007 the League made a statement to the County Commissioners in support of the extension of the .5% county sales tax.

Spring of 2008 information was presented to the membership on the county jail and the Seneca County Youth Center.

A statement in support of a combined city/county justice center was given to the Board of County Commissioners and City Council in April 2012.