

2023 ZOO LEVY

**Tax Levy Review Committee
Recommendations**



**Hamilton
County**

ZOO HAS REQUESTED A RENEWAL WITH A 15- YEAR INFLATIONARY INCREASE

WHY?

- Hamilton County is home to the **#1 Zoo in the Country!**
- **Hamilton County's partnership** has been crucial to the Zoo's success.
- The risks that the consultant pointed out are real and we need to take a **proactive approach**.
- An increase would also allow the Zoo to expand benefits to **Hamilton County residents** with a year-round membership and ticket discount.

UC ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

- Tax revenue generated for state and local government totaled **\$34 million from FY2020-2023.**
- The fiscal impact averaged approximately **\$8.5 million annually** in total sales, earnings, and lodging taxes.

“The Cincinnati Zoo maintains a vital role in stimulating the Hamilton County economy.”

—2023 UC Economic Impact Study

- On average, for every **\$1 of tax levy funding the Zoo received, it generated \$8.14 in economic benefit** within Hamilton County due to the **spending of nonlocal visitors.**

“Individuals that are nonlocal to Hamilton County are contributing new dollars to the local economy that otherwise would not occur were it not for the Cincinnati Zoo.”

—2023 UC Economic Impact Study

ZOO LEVY MILLAGE OPTIONS

Renewal (no increase) 0.46 mills

Revenue \$7,332,842

Cost per \$100k home \$9.01

Renewal and Increase in line with 5-year inflation 0.48 mills

Revenue \$7,761,202

Cost per \$100k home \$9.71

Renewal and Increase in line with 15-year inflation 0.57 mills

Revenue \$9,733,822

Cost per \$100k home \$12.86

CONSULTANT REPORT

- Zoo is a strong neighbor and community resource
 - LED lights in neighborhood
 - Rockdale Academy Urban Learning Garden
 - CPS Zoo School
 - Solar panels, stormwater tanks, waste management
- The Zoo is an investment in our community, serving all Hamilton County residents

The Consultant projects that the Zoo can weather the nation's present economic challenges, including rising inflation, over the next five-year levy cycle without a levy increase

- Levy funding used to cover 41% of operational costs; now only covers 17%
- Zoo is 150 years old with 40% of its facilities more than 80 years old
- Annual budget for major maintenance projects and reinvestment has increased from \$2.5M in 2018 to \$5M today and continues to rise
- Expenses covered by the levy have increased 79% over the last 15 years

TLRC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zoo subcommittee felt that a levy inflation increase was warranted after fifteen years of flat millage

The full TLRC met on Monday, June 12 and discussed all three options. A majority of the TLRC present voted to recommend an increase to 0.57 mills (4-2 vote)

The TLRC added that any increase in levy revenues will be accompanied by a formal plan from the Zoo to the Commissioners outlining how this benefit will directly benefit Hamilton County residents, as a thank you for their contributions to the Zoo through their property taxes.

The current levy contract requires the Zoo to provide half-price days (1 full day or 2 half days) to Hamilton County residents annually, this was stopped during the pandemic in 2020 and has not been reinstituted – The TLRC recommends this be reinstated and tracked in future reporting

In addition, the TLRC is requesting a discussion of the TLRC Policy and guidance for future levy reviews be scheduled for an upcoming Commission meeting

ZOO LEVY TIMELINE

Secretary of State Deadline for ballot issues is
August 9 at 4:00pm

- Resolutions requesting the Auditor Certify Millage options
 - July 29 Commission Meeting
- Zoo Levy Public Hearing
 - Date to be Determined by Commissioners
- Commissioners vote on levy for the ballot
 - By August 8 Staff Meeting