

County commissioners decline tax dollars



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PORT CLINTON — Commissioners of Ottawa County have, once again, decided not to collect available tax dollars.

The tax funding not collected means a temporary tax relief for the incoming year, according to a release from the county commission, which is made up of three county commissioners: Mark Stahl, Mark Coppeler and Donald Douglas. County commissioners made a [similar decision last year as well](#).

Ottawa County is offered two out of 10 inside mills. In the 2024 tax year, the county was reappraised, which resulted in a county-wide average valuation increase of about 33.5%, meaning that county residents' tax bills increased as a result.

"In order to provide some relief to taxpayers, the Ottawa County commissioners decided to reduce their inside millage collections for tax year 2024 to 1.5 mills, which saved county taxpayers approximately \$1.5 million," according to Ottawa County treasurer Anthony Hatmaker. "For tax year 2025 (collected in 2026), the commissioners have

again elected to collect only 1.5 mills of 2 mills that are available to the county, again saving taxpayers approximately \$1.5 million in 2026.”

The commissioners said that since its portion — two of the 10 inside mills — was a smaller piece of the overall pie, they hoped other agencies collecting the remaining eight mills would follow its example and defer collecting taxes, which did not occur.

The commissioners said entities that receive property tax dollars cannot be to blame for the increase in property tax from inside millage and the 20 mill floor. They say the decision to raise the 20 mill floor was not made locally but rather by state legislation, according to Hatmaker.

"The commissioners are basically saying your taxes went up, but we did what we could to mitigate it," Hatmaker said. "It's beyond our control."

The commissioners called on other taxing authorities to also decline unneeded dollars to ease the burden on county property owners.

“This decision is non-precedent setting and the county’s collection of inside mills will be reassessed in the upcoming years,” the commissioners said in the release. “It should be noted that other tax liabilities such as school levies, other political subdivision levies, etc., are not subject to commissioner oversight and without any voluntary reductions, they will still be collected and distributed to the appropriate taxing authority.”

The county commissioners and budget commission recognize there is a larger problem at hand, according to the release. They believe that while these entities can do what they can to provide temporary relief, a permanent fix must come from the state level. The county’s officials will continue working with the state for solutions affecting Ohio and, specifically, Ottawa County.

Hatmaker also called on county school districts to explain why they did not decline dollars.

"I believe they owe their taxpayers a public explanation of their position especially in light of what the county commissioners have done now two years in a row," Hatmaker said.

This year, Erie County's commissioners [declined to collect any taxpayer money](#) owed to the county for the year, amounting to \$8 million overall. It's the second consecutive year commissioners have declined to collect taxes.

Definitions

A millage floor prevents tax from being reduced below a certain level, [according to the state of Ohio](#). City, local and exempted village school districts have a 20-mill floor, meaning they receive at least 20 mills of property tax revenue for current expenses.

- One mill is equal to \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.
- Inside millage is authorized in the Ohio Constitution for up to 10 mills that all Ohioans pay. This millage is divided among a school district, county, and political subdivision (city, township, village). Inside millage is inflationary, meaning that an increase in value will equate to a proportional increase in what one pays in tax.
- Outside millage is authorized by a vote of the people. Citizens of a taxing jurisdiction must approve a millage rate, which is voted on. However, HB 920 (passed by the Ohio General Assembly in 1976) makes outside millage non-inflationary. This means that as values in a taxing jurisdiction increase, the effective rate of outside millage levies decrease by a proportional amount. This keeps the dollar amount one owes the same.

Source: Erie County treasurer Caleb Stidham

