

## Public Safety Services FAQs

As we continue with our community engagement effort, we have recognized that some common questions come up routinely. In an effort to communicate the information we get from residents to the rest of the community, we have created this list of frequently asked questions (FAQs). We understand many people have individual or unique questions, and we want to hear from you through any of the available methods. Knowing that this list is not all-inclusive, we will continue to build it as we receive questions from the community. Thanks to everyone for reaching out and helping us guide our informational efforts!

### **Q 1: What was the recent action City Council passed about putting a tax levy on the ballot?**

**A:** Recently City Council passed a Resolution and Ordinance to authorize the City Manager and City Attorney to take the necessary steps to prepare a ballot measure for a proposed 2.2 mil Public Safety Levy for May 6, 2025.

The Ordinance was passed and submitted to the Board of Elections according to the legal process. The Board of Elections reviewed the ballot language and submitted it to the Secretary of State's Office who returned it for review by the Board of Elections and County Prosecutor. The Board of Elections decided to reject the ballot language on March 4 after an executive session meeting. However, the Board of Elections did not provide notification the City of the return by the Secretary of State, the meeting, or their rejection of the ballot issue. On March 21 when the City inquired about the status of the ballot issue and language, it was only then the Board of Election informed the City of their decision on March 4 and the deadline had passed for any corrections. Therefore, the proposed levy was not placed on the ballot by the Board of Election.

Due to the notification error, the City renewed the process to petition placement of the ballot issue on the November 4 election. This does not mean ballot language has been developed and approved. Votes to adopt specific ballot language for the issue will come at a later time again by the Board of Elections and Secretary of State. The recent council actions authorized the continued development of the ballot language through the established State process as we engage the community to identify priorities and terms.

### **Q 2: What are Public Safety Services?**

**A:** In short, it is all operations and services provided by the Fire Department and Police Department. This includes Fire, EMS, and Police operations and programs. The Police Department and Fire Department are the two functions of the city classified as Public Safety.

### **Q 3: What exactly is a 2.2 mill levy, and what does it tax?**

**A:** 2.2 mills means additional millage levied on the assessed value of the property as determined by the County Auditor. The City can only levy tax on real property and is prohibited from imposing any sales tax, income tax, or use tax. The only source of revenue to fund public safety services is through property tax.

In brief, the 2.2 mill levy would cost \$77 annually per \$100,000 of assessed property value and would generate \$610,000 for the City to cover the current shortfall of funds purposed for public safety operations.

Appraised Value of Property	\$100,000	\$200,000	\$300,000
2024 Taxes	\$77/Year	\$154/Year	\$231/Year
2024 Taxes	\$6.14/Mo.	\$12.83/Mo.	\$19.25/Mo.

## Q 4: What is the state of the City's financial situation?

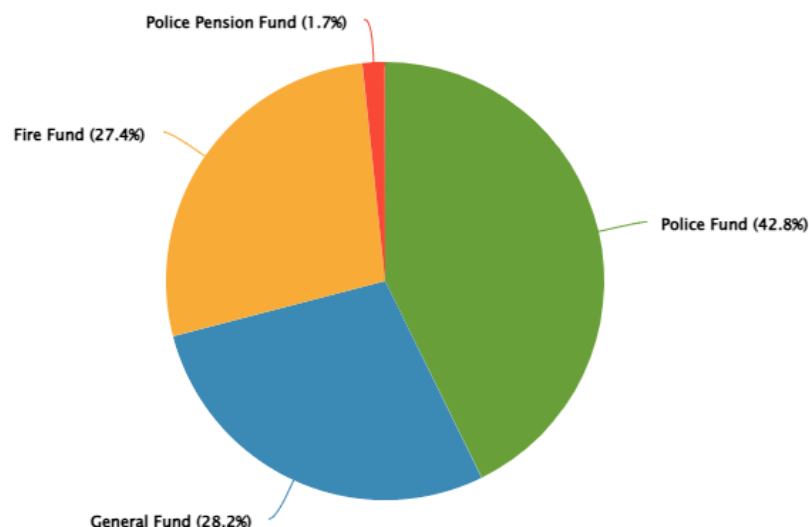
**A:** The City of Bellbrook's current financial situation is a balanced budget. Operating in a legally balanced budget state is a requirement regardless of revenue or expenses.

If expenses are higher than revenues, there are three options: 1) Use fund balance to fill the gap, 2) Increase revenue, or 3) Reduce expenses to match revenue. Currently, the City of Bellbrook has utilized the reserve General Fund balance to maintain the current levels of public safety services. If additional revenue is not generated, the City will be required to reduce public safety services, as there is not an adequate fund balance to continue the significant subsidies for public safety.

Over the past several years, the City has been forced to deplete the public safety fund balances at an average rate of \$442,000 per year to maintain current levels of safety and City services, not including an additional subsidy from the General Fund. Maintaining public safety services at their current levels will deplete the reserve funds in 2025, and the City will need to raise additional revenue through a 2.2 mill public safety levy or reduce public safety services.

## Q 5: What percent of tax dollars go to Public Safety Service in Bellbrook?

**A:** 72% of the property tax supported funds is dedicated to Public Safety, demonstrating the City's commitment to prioritizing safety in the City.



[Click the Chart Above to link to the City's online Budget Book](#)

## Q 6: The City has other fund balances on the books; why is there a need for additional funds?

**A:** The 2025 Fund Budget Summary found on the City's website and Financial Transparency Center shows a remaining overall balance of funds. However, the majority of those funds are restricted use, meaning the City cannot use them to fund public safety services or other general operations of the City. The overall change in fund balance reveals that eleven of the fifteen funds will be reduced.

In addition, the majority of the overall fund balance for funds such as water, street, waste, etc., have dedicated upcoming capital expenses or are predicted to be used to maintain their respective City services. Of the \$9,965,717 estimated to remain in overall fund balances, only \$364,505, or 3.5%, is in Police or Fire Public Safety Funds available for public safety services.

**Q 7: When has the City informed the residents of this financial situation?**

**A:** The City of Bellbrook is dedicated to being open, honest, and transparent. In 2017, the City went to the voters with a proposed General Fund tax increase that would have generated enough revenue to maintain current service levels, preventing the depletion of the cash reserves; however, the voters were not in favor of that plan and sent the City back for better solutions. Since that time, the City has made sure to structure finances toward the priorities presented by the residents.

In 2018 the voters approved a Fire/EMS only levy which provided funding at that time to allow use of additional part time employees and avoid imminent reductions.

The City has sought alternative funding and made good use of available grants to provide as many supplemental dollars to the City as possible. In addition, the federal COVID and ARPA funding provided in 2021 and 2022 provided a significant subsidy for public safety operations which deferred the public safety funding shortfall.

The City also created the [Financial Transparency Center](#) to provide all financial data to residents, and each budget year, it provides detailed information and trends to maintain the level of public safety services the community has asked for. Now that we are at the crossroads, we are informing residents of the choice that they will need to make: raise new revenue through a 2.2 mill Public Safety Fund levy or reduce public safety and City services.

**Q 8: If the City knew it was spending its cash reserves, why didn't it reduce expenses and services to avoid depleting the fund balances?**

**A:** The voters of Bellbrook decide the level of services they want, not the City government. The City should not make decisions about the level of services or quality of life without providing the voters with an opportunity to decide. To change the level of services without voter input would go against what the voters had originally decided to fund. As the costs have increased, expenses have been reduced to the point of being at a crossroads. Now that we are at the crossroads, and the fund balances have been used to maintain public safety service levels, we are informing residents of the choice that they will need to make: raise new revenue through a 2.2 mill Public Safety Fund levy or reduce public safety and City services.

**Q 9: Where can I view specific information regarding the City's financial status?**

**A:** Our commitment is to keep timely and factual information available for our residents. We are always open to requests, and we are continuously building the information made available on the City website. The City's financial information, including annual reports and budget expenditures, can be viewed on our website by visiting [www.bellbrook.gov/page/Finance\\_home](http://www.bellbrook.gov/page/Finance_home)

**Q 10: What cuts has the City already made prior to the discussion of the 2.2 mill Public Safety Levy?**

**A:** Since 2008, the City has seen reductions of more than half of the Local Government Fund and other revenues due to governmental changes such as loss of estate tax and loss of tangible personal property tax. In addition, there has not been an increase in the millage collected for City services since 2011. The City has managed these reductions in revenue through operational cuts, expenditure of fund balances, and significant subsidies from the General Fund.

Today, the City is operating at virtually the same budget request dollars as in 2020 and is, in fact, maintaining more with less. There has only been an overall .4% increase in the budget since 2020 while managing the reduction in revenue, increased operational costs (NOT expenditures), and maintaining acceptable service levels.

## Public Safety Services FAQs

(Question 10 continued)

The re-negotiation of the Public Safety Dispatch contract with Xenia and Greene County, leasing rather than purchasing police and fire vehicles, and personnel reorganization are examples of ways the City has reduced hundreds of thousands of dollars that would otherwise be reflected in increased expenses and a larger need for funding.

After making significant operational cuts and reductions, including some full-time personnel through attrition, the City has been subsidizing the cost of safety and City services from the reserve fund at an average of \$540,000 per year. Even considering the significant cuts made in the past five years, and while maintaining the current service levels, the cost of those service levels is higher than the revenue brought in. Here are the differences from 2020 through 2025 (budgeted) of revenue brought in versus the cost of current operations:

Year	Public Safety Revenue	Public Safety Cost of Operations	Difference/Subsidy
2020	\$2,954,894	\$2,755,835	\$199,059
2021	\$2,953,190	\$3,092,212	(\$139,022)
2022	\$2,858,471	\$3,171,458	(\$312,987)
2023	\$3,015,393	\$3,417,229	(\$401,836)
2024	\$3,307,250	\$3,765,521	(\$458,271)
(budgeted) 2025	\$3,321,789	\$3,950,000	(\$628,211)

It is projected that by the end of 2025, the City will not be able to fund a 2026 budget at the current operational service levels; therefore, an increase in revenue is needed, or a reduction in personnel and services will take place to safeguard the City's financial operations.

### **Q 11: Why is the City talking about raising property taxes instead of making do with less money?**

**A:** The City is dedicated to serving its residents with the level of services they desire. The current level of public safety and City services is unsustainable at current revenue levels. Because of this, the City is asking its residents to decide if they would prefer to maintain current public safety services with a 2.2 mill public safety levy or reduce/cut public safety services to balance existing revenue.

### **Q 12: Property tax appraisals recently got adjusted and home values increased, so why is there still a need for additional tax?**

**A:** Yes, it is true there was a recent triennial re-valuation of properties in Greene County conducted by the County Auditor's Office. In many cases, the tax appraised value increased, and in some cases 20% or higher. However, property tax millage has controlled reduction factors that do not increase proportionately. In other words, just because a tax appraisal for a property increases 20% does not mean the tax assessment increases. In some cases, property owners pay less tax.

The actual numbers of property tax collected based on appraised value per year is as follows:

(Question 12 continued)

Year	Police Fund	Fire Fund	Total	Increase	% Increase
2020	\$1,317,000	\$1,051,000	\$2,368,000		
2021	\$1,316,660	\$1,016,520	\$2,333,180	(\$34,820)	-1%
2022	\$1,394,457	\$1,118,986	\$2,513,443	\$180,263	8%
2023	\$1,585,000	\$1,226,000	\$2,811,000	\$297,557	12%
2024	\$1,597,000	\$1,234,000	\$2,831,000	\$20,000	1%
2025	\$1,616,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,866,000	\$35,000	1%

### Q 13: Is the City proposing a temporary or permanent tax?

**A:** We have heard from residents that they expect the City to bring information and solutions to maintain the quality of life in the community. Considering the limitations of property tax funding, a critical decision to maintain public safety services on a cyclical basis does not create a stable community. Considering such, this levy is permanent to provide continuous funding for public safety services without the need for renewal.

### Q 14: What does the 2.2 mill levy add to the City?

**A:** This is a status-quo plan. There would be no added services, additional personnel, facilities, or equipment. Rather, the 2.2 mill levy allows the City to Maintain the current levels of public safety services. This also challenges the City to maintain diligent efforts to maximize efficiencies and contain costs to maintain services and do more with the resources available.

### Q 15: If the City is forced to reduce safety and City services, what specifically will be cut?

**A:** There are many dynamics to projections and estimates; however, none are to the scale of 78% of the operational budget for Public Safety. The City needs to identify \$600,000 in increased revenue or make additional reductions in expenses. Currently, the police and fire budgets consist of 82% expenditures for personnel and 18% for operations, in numbers being \$3,149,223 in personnel and \$777,562 in operational expenses. In other words, a \$600,000 cut involves reducing personnel because the operational expenses cannot be eliminated, as they are reduced proportionately to provide adequate support for personnel. Ultimately, that results in drastic cuts to service levels.

The City puts the highest priority on critical services and public safety. In order to maintain as many public safety services as possible without available subsidies, cuts from other City services will be made. Regardless, there are not enough operational and purchase expenses to meet the need adequately. Below is a view of projected cuts and reductions to accommodate the loss of \$600,000:

- Fire/EMS \$252,000
  - Significant reduction in service delivery due to the loss of two fire/EMS personnel in addition to currently vacant positions.
- Police \$348,000
  - Significant reduction of service delivery due to the loss of three police personnel in addition to currently vacant positions.

For a detailed list of reductions, visit [www.bellbrook.gov/page/GetTheFacts](http://www.bellbrook.gov/page/GetTheFacts).

### Q 16: How can I participate in having my voice heard by City officials?

**A:** You can view all upcoming community engagement sessions on the City's website at [www.bellbrook.gov](http://www.bellbrook.gov). Community meetings will be announced on our website, Facebook page, and local media. Stay tuned!