

THE TAX ATTACK

Chapter XX

The Plain Dealer of January 18 led the news with a front-page article addressing the fast growing property tax rates in our county that are already the highest in Ohio and are increasing faster than other counties in our region, says the newspaper. Gates Mills tied for second place with an increase of 48% during the period 1998 to 2010. Euclid was only one percent higher and several communities were not far behind. The table below explains Gates Mills 2010 Real Estate Taxes being paid this year:

<u>Taxing Authority</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Tax</u>	<u>Actual (\$) Tax per \$100,000 Value</u>	<u>Percentage Change from 1998</u>
Cleveland MetroParks	2.46	55	26.73
Cuyahoga Community College	3.08	94	83.33
Cuyahoga County	19.09	404	37.17
Cuyahoga County Library	3.40	77	121.04
Cuyahoga County Port Authority	0.10	3	(23.08)
Mayfield School District	54.56	1228	56.24
Village of Gates Mills	<u>17.31</u>	<u>390</u>	<u>25.10</u>
	100.00	2251	47.53

Those are sobering numbers. And we must not forget that we voted for those taxes. Granted the four real estate reappraisals/revaluations during that 12-year period may have contributed something to the rise, but in Gates Mills the taxes we currently pay for Village services on our three levies are based on values and maximum tax amounts established in 1993, 1996 and 2005 respectively.

The tax rate applicable to Village services has increased less than inflation over more than a decade. In large measure credit for this goes to the volunteers who labor for better service efficiently provided and Village employees who understand that priority and do an effective job of service delivery.

It is the obligation at every level of government to provide for the safety, health and human service needs of its citizens. But those efforts won't contain our real estate taxes unless countywide operations are addressed by better and more cost-effective provision of essential needs. The various entities funded by our taxes have neither demonstrated the necessity for every current service nor the cost effectiveness with which they provide those services. Hopefully our new County government, as well as the several agencies our tax dollars fund, will acknowledge and accept that obligation before attempting to impose additional tax on us all.

One lesson in all this is that we need to appreciate and support our Village cost structure. Later this year we will again be called upon to approve an operating levy that will either renew or replace the expiring 3.42 mill levy first voted in 1996. Those dollars will be critical to sustaining existing services.

Finally, we need to question in a visible way attempts to continue or increase already high taxes by those others funded from our County Real Estate Taxes.

2011 will be a year filled with tax discussions at both the State and County levels. Be sure your voice is heard on these critical issues.

Bob Reitman
Treasurer and Tax Administrator