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News

Lake County advisory panel set to help allocate senior levy

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By John Arthur Hutchison

JHutchison@News-Herald.com

[@newsheraldjah](https://twitter.com/newsheraldjah)

Lake County commissioners recently appointed five people to serve on the new Lake County Senior Citizen Advisory Panel.

The panel will help decide how proceeds from the countywide 0.5-mill senior citizens levy are distributed each year. The levy generates about \$3.2 million annually and is dedicated to senior citizens services.

Appointed to the panel effective Oct. 1 were Spence Kline and Frank Doberdruk with terms ending Sept. 30, 2017; Ellen Cantor with a term ending Sept. 30, 2015; and Kenneth Gauntner and Thomas Dreher with terms ending Sept. 14, 2013.

County Administrator Jason Boyd will serve as the panel's secretary.

The new panel effectively replaces an unofficial group called the Senior Citizens Levy Coalition.

The panel will meet periodically and make recommendations to commissioners during annual county budget hearings.

The panel also will request senior citizen agencies that receive funding comply with accounting methods to ensure the funds are spent for such public purposes.

Kline, who is CEO of the behavioral health agencies Neighboring and Pathways and a trustee for the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, said he looks forward to service on the panel.

He said he thinks there needs to be more discussion regarding the needs of seniors, especially because it is a fast-growing group.

"I think our society is not ready for the changes to respond to the baby boomer generation," Kline said. "The old ways of doing things aren't going to meet the demands of the future."

Commissioner Daniel P. Troy said in the past, the money had been divided into three groups: 53 percent of the dollars went to the Lake County Council on Aging, 42 percent to senior centers and 5 percent to the RSVP program.

"The feeling by this board was there ought to be a little more flexibility," Troy said.

Commissioner Robert E. Aufuldish said the decision was an innovative and proactive move to ensure the three groups receive the money to help them run efficiently.

Commissioner Raymond E. Sines said he thinks the panel will help create more accountability.

"I remember not that long ago, Lake County had the largest percentage of elderly growth in the state of Ohio," Sines said. "It's important that we look at the needs and how they have changed. Again, it's that idea — things don't stay the same, they change."

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