

Beaver Island is one geographical location with one set of taxpayers paying more than another set of taxpayers. Why is this equitable?

Using the preponderant theory by some in Peaine Township, if I pay more for something that you do, then I should have a stronger voice and greater opportunity to control that operation. So why doesn't my vote count more than yours? (I'm going to use a middle percentage since the real percentage is based upon how the calculation is being done with the lower one 37% and the higher almost ten percent higher than that. So 40% will be used in this editorial.)

The millage that I'm paying is 40% more than any of you in Peaine Township. I think my vote should count 140% of any Peaine Township resident's vote since I pay 40% more in taxes for the same joint operations. Taking this one step farther and going in the opposite direction, how about we consider the Waste Management Committee. When votes are taken, those St. James' members votes should count 40% more than those of Peaine Township's members. This discussion is ludicrous, but seems to be suggested by some in Peaine Township if they were to increase their millage to match St. James millage.

I believe that one vote is the same as any other vote, not one more important than another. I also believe that one tax rate should be applied equally to all properties on Beaver Island without any special rates for those in Peaine Township.

Take this back 75 years or so. Imagine that the people living on the island decided that they needed to buy a firetruck to protect them from the possibility of house fires and wild fires or forest fires. Imagine that Peaine Township had 200 households and St. James Township had 100 households. The price of the fire truck is \$300. Peaine households could contribute \$1 each and St. James households could contribute \$1 each, and the fire truck could be purchased for the good of the island with each household equally protected from fire. Suppose Peaine Township says that they will only contribute half the price of the fire truck. Peaine residents would say that this is fair because their township contributed half the cost of the fire truck. St. James residents would say that this is not fair because they have to contribute more than each household in Peaine. What has happened over the last many years is that in order to get anything like a fire truck purchased, St. James residents have accepted that they have to pay more on an individual basis to make the contributions from both townships equal. My question is: When the house catches fire, is there any difference in the services provided to one township versus the other township? I don't think so. If the answer is that the service is equal, then why does one individual pay more for the service than another?

Peaine Township officials have perpetuated this for years and years. Unfortunately, the County of Charlevoix does not buy into this philosophy. Every resident on Beaver Island who pays property taxes pays the exact same millage for whatever County millage is voted in by the voters. The cost of education is paid in the same manner. Every property owner on Beaver Island pays the same millage for second homes no matter what township the home is in. Every property owner on Beaver Island pays the same amount of tax for their primary residence no matter what township they are in. Why is this *this* way? It is because every property owner is required to pay their fair share of the costs of running these operations. The State of Michigan and the County of Charlevoix disagree with Peaine's policy of special millage rates by requiring the same millage from every piece of property

Next, there is the argument that St. James Township residents use these services more than Peaine Township residents. I don't think that I pay any less for my green garbage bag than any Peaine resident, so if I use fourteen bags to your one bag, I am paying my fair share as well as paying for my usage. The District Library is operated for the benefit of all residents and visitors to Beaver Island, but I don't see anyone trying to figure out how many Peaine and how many St. James residents use the library. I don't see anyone on the fire department or on the EMS keeping track of how many emergencies are in Peaine township and how many are in St. James Township. The use of the township airport is not determined by who lives in one township as opposed to the other. We should all pay the same amount to have these services available, or the Peaine services should be cut by 40%.

If the pager goes off for fire or EMS, do I get better service than you get in Peaine Township? I get the same service that you get, yet I'm paying more for that same service. These services are considered "available when needed." I pay more yearly than you do for the transfer station, the historical society, and every other jointly owned operation. I see a lot of these services more as insurance than as a for-profit business. If you have a more expensive home, you will pay more to insure it. If you have a more expensive car, you will pay more to insure it. I am paying more for the insurance than you are. This is not fair.

Taking the insurance idea a step farther--Does the Mercedes owner have more control over the insurance company than the Dodge owner? If you pay less for the policy, it is usually not as good a policy. If you pay more for the policy, then it is usually a better policy. No matter what policy you get, you don't get any more control. But if you believe you should get more control, then any St. James taxpayer should have more voice in decisions than any Peaine taxpayer with the way things are now. Should you receive 40% less service because you pay 40% less for the service? Or should the fire department and EMS respond in a 40% longer time if the call is in Peaine Township?

These questions are posed to show that the fair thing for each taxpayer to do is to pay the same millage for jointly funded operations as every other island resident whether they live in St. James Township or in Peaine Township.