

Aaron Stephens, candidate for City Council, to East Lansing Info, Sept. 12, 2017

Eli: "What's your position on the tax proposals on the November EL ballot?"

Stephens:

My position still remains that the best solution would have been negotiation between the university and the city. I was very disappointed to hear that the four republican trustee's voted against the mutually agreed upon deal between Meadows and Simon. Now I am waiting to see the discussion on the exemption which will happen next week. I am worried of the effect this will have on students and lower-income individuals who are already significantly financially burdened. While I've heard arguments that the minimal percentage of the tax is not significant enough to make a difference, when it comes to buying that last book you need for class, or the extra bill that you might not have been able to foresee, every dollar counts. That being said, if the exemption is made significantly higher, so the majority of students and lower-income individuals have this burden alleviated, the income tax could tell a different story.

I understand the city's financial position, they have payments they are required by law to make, as well as services to maintain. With two thirds of the budget going towards public safety there is a lot that can be done (with or without the passage of the income tax). For instance, I would like to see more collaboration with partnering communities and MSU PD when it comes to the law enforcement, especially in situations like a crowded game day. The idea that Sue Webster spoke on in one of your most recent articles, where MSU would set up of MASH style field hospitals would be phenomenal. The University of Michigan does the same and benefits from it. I would also like to begin discussion on the off-campus student code of conduct. It has been attempted in the past, however, after sitting down with members of ASMSU on the topic, through collaborative work it may be achievable to relieve some stress the city has when dealing with off-campus student incidents.