



**Shaping
the future!**

NEOS- LETTER PERCHTOLDSDORF

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SPRING 2024

NEOS Freiheit
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MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND.

Whether at the Heurigen-tables in our home town or on social media - the hefty increases in municipal fees are the talk of the town. The dust is gradually settling, not least because the ÖVP and the GREENS have partially and temporarily cancelled the agreed increases under pressure from the NEOS.

What remains is the question of the current state of the municipality of Perchtoldsdorf's finances. How will the revenue that was to be collected and „borrowed“ for other purposes under the „sewerage and wastewater charges“ label be replaced?

Within 10 years, such so-called „internal borrowings“ must be used again for the specific purpose that the money was collected for. In practice, this means that funds must be made available from the municipal budget in the coming years to repay these “borrowings”.

A look at the budget for 2024 (<https://offenerhaushalt.at/gemeinde/perchtoldsdorf>)

shows that expenditure is only expected to increase by 0.3 % compared to the previous year. Good news in times of dramatic inflation, you might think. However, revenue would have to rise by a whopping 17.7 % this year to balance the financial budget!



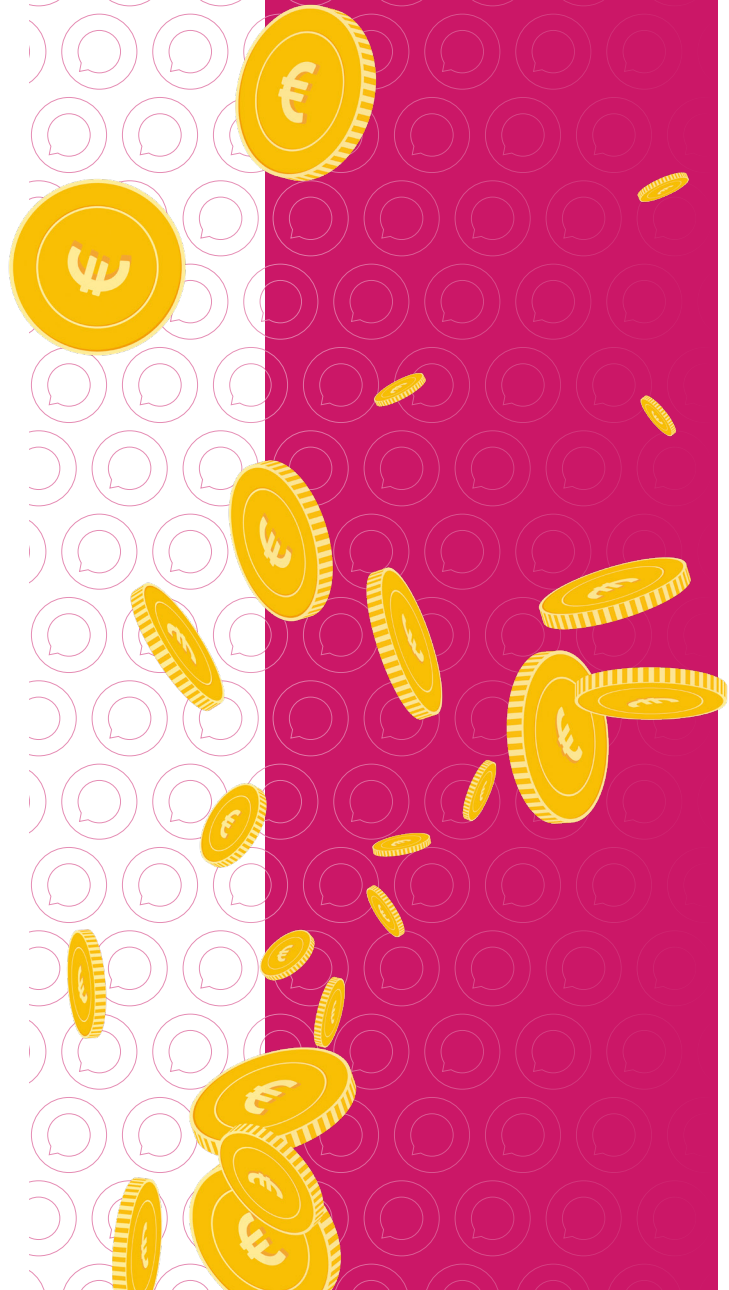
The fee increases should prevent a similarly dramatic deficit as in 2023 (€8 million according to the budget, the financial statements were not yet known at the time of going to press). The turquoise-green financial plan therefore shows that the ÖVP and the Greens only wanted to fix the 2024 budget on the revenue side by imposing additional burdens. In the case of water fees alone, we are talking about almost €834,000 in additional revenue at the expense of the people and businesses living in Perchtoldsdorf!

NEOS take a very clear position here:

- Fair charges - no unjustified, additional burdens.
- Perchtoldsdorf needs a reorganisation plan to adjust the municipality's expenditure to its income - not the other way round.
- Future investments (e.g. in educational facilities) must be prioritised.
- We demand that Mayor Andrea Kö and her team present a comprehensive concept to effectively and quickly address the imbalance in the budget.
- NEOS is happy to contribute to the creation of a sustainable reorganisation plan. Constructively and critically, of course.

Max M. Mader

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FAIR FEES FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES: WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

Why are the NEOS not letting up on the issue of fees, even though the increase in sewer and water charges have been reduced? There are three good reasons for this.

Are sewerage charges actually calculated correctly?

The municipality's leaflet explains at length how the values were arrived at and refers to the KDZ Centre for Administrative Research. Nevertheless, NEOS are not convinced that sewerage charges are calculated according to the recommendations of the Court of Audit and the decisions of the Constitutional Court and experts, as claimed by the mayor and the executive municipal councillor for finance maintain.

Our enquiry with the Office of the Lower Austrian Provincial Government revealed that „imputed costs“ may in principle be included in the calculation, but not if interest on loans in connection with the sewer construction and depreciation of the sewer network are taken into account. However, this is the case in the municipality's calculation. Equally clear - from the Court of Audit to the Constitutional Court to the Office of the Lower Austrian Provincial Government - is the view that only overheads incurred in connection with the sewer may be included in the calculation. This means, for example, that expenses incurred by the municipality for road construction or services rendered by the municipal utility company for the construction and maintenance of the sewer network must be included in the charges. It is equally clear that expenditure for schools and kindergartens or culture has no connection with the sewer and must be excluded. Instead of taking a factually differentiated approach here, the municipality has simply taken a percentage of all municipal expenditure and included it in the fees. In our opinion, this is not correct.

NEOS are calling for an objective, economically sound discussion on the correct calculation of sewerage, water and waste charges. In the case of water and waste, the details of the calculation have not yet been made as transparent as in the case of sewerage charges. This brings us to the second reason why we are not letting up.

What about the appropriate use of the charges?

Sewerage, water and waste charges may be set in such a way that a surplus is generated. However, the municipality may not use such surpluses as it wishes, but must ensure that all surpluses are used for the intended purpose within 10 years. To this end, the Court of Audit requires an annual recalculation based on actual income and expenditure.

This recalculation does not exist, at least it is not publicly known. It is therefore difficult to judge

whether there is no alternative to the increase, as the mayor claims, or whether there have been surpluses in the past, as is repeatedly claimed by opposition representatives. NEOS asked the mayor and the executive municipal councillor for finance this question. NEOS demand absolute transparency for all fees, not just for sewerage.

Excessive fees mean cross-subsidies for the municipal budget.

Charges that are set too high are not only unfair to the people of Perchtoldsdorf, they also obscure the need to make sensible and sustainable savings in the municipal budget.

Every cent by which the sewerage charges are set too high means that money is flowing into the municipal budget in a hidden way. Why? A „Berechnungsfläche“ of approx. 1.36 million m² is used to calculate the sewerage charges. This Berechnungsfläche is multiplied by the area-based fee. Every cent by which the area-based sewerage charge is increased means an additional revenue of €13,667. If unjustified overheads or even imputed costs are hidden in the charges, these costs are not offset by any real expenditure and the money is available for the general municipal budget.

Unfortunately, the municipal budget is in dire need of additional revenue, as the municipality's main sources of income cannot be increased so easily. The municipality has no influence whatsoever on the revenue shares resulting from „Finanzausgleich“, the main income source of our municipality. Due to the economic structure in Perchtoldsdorf, municipal taxes from commercial enterprises are less than in municipalities housing more trade and industry. This leaves property tax as the third main pillar of municipal revenue. Perchtoldsdorf has already fully utilised the legally permissible framework. No more additional revenue is possible from this source either.

Under these circumstances, it is very tempting to use fees to generate extra money for the municipal budget. And that is why NEOS take a very close look at whether the fees are calculated and used fairly and correctly. There is no way around the fact that ÖVP and GRÜNE should finally think about how to get the municipal budget under control in terms of expenditure.

Tony Platt





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YOU HAVE A CHOICE

The elections to the European Parliament will take place between June 6th and 9th, 2024. EU citizens who are not Austrian citizens can also cast their vote for Austrian candidates! Citizens living in Perchtoldsdorf who are nationals of another member state are currently receiving information from their home country on how to make use of their EU voting rights in their home country. In Germany and other member states, you have to apply to be entered on the electoral roll there. However, EC citizens can instead register for the European elections in the electoral roll („Europa-Wählerevidenz“) of their municipality of residence in Austria (see the box opposite for the procedure).

Why am I doing this? The elections to the European Parliament concern all of us! Today, a large portion of national legislation is influenced by the guidelines set by the European legislator (the Council and the

Parliament). More than ever before, the upcoming elections will be about key decisions on the future of the European Union. NEOS are convinced Europeans. But there is much to be done to make the Union more effective, more democratic. As a liberal party, NEOS are committed to radically reducing excessive EU bureaucracy.

If you feel at home in Perchtoldsdorf, you can help ensure that EU citizens living here are represented in the European Parliament by liberal voices of convinced Europeans from Austria by registering in the European voter register kept by the municipality.

By the way: EU citizens in Perchtoldsdorf are also entitled to vote in the municipal elections in January 2025.

Hans-Holger Herrfeld

ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OUR CANDIDATES

NEOS want to move Europe forward together, just fighting multiple crises is not enough. 2024 is a critical year for Europe. Join in and get involved!

HELMUT BRANDSTÄTTER

I am standing as the lead candidate for NEOS in the upcoming EU elections. My vision is a Europe that is strong, independent and democratic and speaks with one voice to the outside world.

Since 2019, I have been a member of the National Council for NEOS, spokesperson for foreign policy and research. Before that, I was a journalist, most recently editor-in-chief of KURIER. As an author, I

have published several books: „Kurz und Kickl“, „Letzter Weckruf für Europa“, „Heilung für eine verstörte Republik“, and most recently „Erlebtes Europa“.



ANNA STÜRGKH

When I was just over two months old, my mother took me along when she went to vote in favour of Austria joining the EU. With this decision, she and 3.1 million Austrians gave me the opportunity to grow up in peace, freedom and prosperity. Putin's war of aggression, Brexit and rising prices show us that this is anything but a given. I want to take responsibility and work for a strong European future. We must take bold steps to make Europe more capable of acting and fit for the future: from a stronger European Parliament with the right to initiate laws

to a genuine internal energy market for cheaper energy and independence from Putin. Today, I have a young daughter myself and I want to do everything I can to ensure that she too grows up in peace, freedom and prosperity.

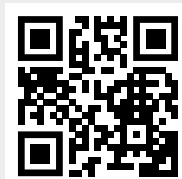


How EU citizens can exercise their right to vote in Perchtoldsdorf

IMPORTANT: The necessary **registration in the EU electoral register** is possible at the **Citizens' Service Centre of the municipal office, Marktplatz 11, Monday to Wednesday from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm, on Thursday from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm and on Friday from 8.00 am to 12.30 pm.**

For questions and further information, the friendly and competent staff at the Citizens' Service Centre are available in person or by telephone during these times.

All information and the necessary forms can be found on the BMI website.
<https://www.bmi.gv.at>



ATTENTION - the **deadline** for registration in the European electoral register is **expected to be mid-March 2024. It will be too late once the electoral roll has been finalised!**



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TIME TO CHANGE VIEWS!

Have you noticed it too? In recent weeks, the tonality of political discussions in Perchtoldsdorf has become much harsher. There is no question that massive fee increases have caused the proverbial barrel to overflow and anger has been vented in the social media and discussions in the municipal council. NEOS are advocating a critical but objective discussion based on facts and are doing our best to contribute to this.

What we don't like is that the justified debate about the level of sewerage charges, labour costs in the municipal administration and the sad state of municipal finances in general is increasingly tipping over into a discussion of envy and mutual insinuations. We lack objectivity and personal appreciation. Buergerliste and ÖVP are getting bogged down in mutual arguments about details, losing sight of the essentials in their bickering. Sometimes it seems as if ÖVP and GRUEN, from whom we haven't heard a peep about important local issues in recent months, are even happy about the populist fundamental opposition of the Buergerliste because it is a welcome excuse as to why nothing progresses on many important issues.

NEOS believe that it is time for a re-think. Without a sensible savings package, we will not be able to get the municipal finances under control. Without financial room for manoeuvre, future-oriented local development or the upcoming renovation of municipal buildings will not be possible. Instead of getting lost in petty squabbles and trivialities, a fundamental discussion about what is important for the positive further development of Perchtoldsdorf and what is not is long overdue. A negative example is the agreed plan to develop mobility. Reasonable proposals are not implemented and the wheel is constantly being reinvented. This costs time, ties up personnel resources unnecessarily and causes additional costs without making any progress on the matter itself.

NEOS will participate constructively in a serious discussion process intended to progress municipal finances in the right direction. We would be delighted if ÖVP were to take their announcements made on posters across the village seriously and actually tackle the hot issue in 2024. So far, we haven't noticed much of that.

Tony Platt

TAX FASTING IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. But what effect would it have had on the income of an average earner if the Finance Minister had fasted on taxes since the beginning of the year? If he had only collected the OECD average tax rate of 41.3% from gross wages since 1 January 2024, this average earner would have paid no tax until 13 February! „Tax Diet Day“ is born.!

The promise made by ÖVP and GRUENE to significantly reduce the tax burden was once again not followed through. On the contrary. The tax and contribution ratio has risen to a whopping 43.2 per cent this year! NEOS have been campaigning for years for a reduction of the tax and contribution ratio to a maximum of 40 per cent. What does this mean in concrete figures: a rate of 40 per cent would result in a volume of 16.1 billion euros for 2024, which would mean €2,130 more for every Austrian adult!

This would mean a real relief instead of “gifts” and voucher policy. We demand that more net income from your gross earnings ends up in your wallet. For NEOS, one point is clear: 2024 must be the year in which politicians start ending the reform backlog and provide real relief for people. This must be a priority for future governments at all levels so that it pays to perform. People - especially young people – must be confident that it is possible to build a successful life with their own income.

We have already put numerous proposals on the table of those in power. Four of them are summarised below:

- More net income from gross salaries by reducing non-employee-related non-wage labour costs by 6.55 percentage points. WITHOUT any loss of benefits.
- Effective reduction in income tax for full-time and overtime work. Those who work more must also see more in their bank account!

- Abolish capital gains tax. This tax hurts primarily small private investors, from whom the Minister of Finance should not take away a portion of the low interest they earn.
- No land transfer tax for first-time home ownership. Young people can hardly afford to buy an apartment or house. This particularly affects residential communities such as Perchtoldsdorf. We demand a real estate transfer tax allowance!
- No cross-subsidisation via fees: it is not only in Perchtoldsdorf that budgets are beefed by charging excessive fees. This must be stopped!

The end of the „no matter what the cost“ policies, over-subsidisation and election gifts is overdue. **The government must finally start saving money itself!**

Martina Künsberg Sarre

KINDERGARTEN MUST BECOME A LAUNCH PAD INTO LIFE!

It has been proven that good primary educational facilities are the launch pad to a successful educational career. Every Euro invested not only benefits the youngest children, but it also pays off economically and such has an indirect positive impact for all of us. Little has happened in the last five years.

Focus on quality

We are a long way from „lifting the wings of the little ones“. In Austria in particular, education is heavily dependent on the parental home and educational institutions are not equipped as they should be to counteract this. The government has announced several billion Euros for this area by 2030. We welcome this in principle, but continue to call for clear guidelines and targets as to how the money is to be used by the federal states and municipalities. Simply investing in expansion is not enough. Particular emphasis must be placed on the quality of childcare, especially for the youngest children. Large groups and a poor staff-child ratio are the opposite of good, high-quality primary education. This is the only way to provide effective language support in kindergarten so that the number of children who are categorised as “extraordinary pupils” when they start school due to a lack of German language skills can be reduced. However, the number of extraordinary pupils has not decreased in the last five years. On the contrary, it has risen significantly. Especially in Lower Austria. At 22%, the rate in Lower Austria stands well above the Austrian average of 17%.

We must not be indifferent to the little ones.

There is still room for improvement in childcare in Perchtoldsdorf too, as the “childcare atlas” shows. The compatibility indicator (VIF) of the Chamber of Labour looks at the number of closing days, the required minimum opening hours of 45 hours per week, the closing days and whether a warm lunch is provided. Contrary to all the assurances of the mayor and the responsible executive councillor (both ÖVP), our municipality performs worse here than neighbouring municipalities. That is why NEOS are also campaigning for improvements in our municipality.

How can we succeed? Even with the best intentions, we will not achieve paradise-like conditions in the kindergartens overnight. BUT: with a step-by-step plan that defines clear interim goals, with an improved and standardised general framework as well as a well thought-out step-by-step implementation plan, we can achieve this important goal. It’s worth going for it!

Martina Künsberg Sarre



ACHIEVEMENTS FOR PERCHTOLDSDORF

NEOS works - our constructive, critical work as opposition, has achieved positive developments for all of Perchtoldsdorf's residents in the recent months.

Sewerage and water charges

Partial cancellation of the increases - the originally planned surcharges will not be levied in 2024 and 2025 at least.

Ambros-Riedergasse

Our demand for an appropriate, cost-effective solution that does not attract even more through traffic was approved by the municipal council. Now it is our job to demand stringent implementation.

Begrischpark

The planned reclassification of parts of the park is off the table - the recreational areas will be preserved.

Vierbatz

The intended rezoning is off the table for the time being - the building regulations will not be changed, meaning relaxed.



WASN'T THERE SOMETHING ELSE?

ÖVP and GRUENE have made little or no progress on these issues

Ambros-Riedergasse

At the municipal council meeting on 12 December 2023, it was decided to embark on a fact-based planning and discussion process with citizens about an optimal solution for A.-Rieder-Gasse. The aim is to find a solution that ensures that the changes in A.-Rieder-Gasse do not make it more attractive for through traffic. An appropriate, cost-effective allocation of the available space in A.-Rieder-Gasse should be found for all types of traffic based on the approaches and proposals laid out in Mobil 2030. Nothing has happened for three months, Mr Deputy Mayor Apl!

Extension of Aspetten kindergarten

The tender for the extension was based on an unrealistic timetable. The extension will not be completed by autumn. The responsible municipal councillor assures us that additional groups will be offered from autumn 2024, but only in temporary locations. This is not professional project management, dear ÖVP.

Beatrixheim

In the municipal council meeting and on the homepage, Mayor Kö boasted of having bombshell news: the continuation of a care facility on the Beatrixheim site has been secured. „The details of the package will be finalised after the turn of the year, but the continuation of the site is secured.“ At the middle of March, there is no information as to whether and what has gone ahead, Madam Mayor.

Four-track railway extension

The environmental impact assessment procedure was submitted by ÖBB Infra. The mayor has invited all political groups to a meeting to discuss the municipality's initial position. Very positive! We have submitted our proposals. The letter to the responsible authority has still not been sent. Why, one wonders. What about the reconstruction of the bridge on Mühlgasse or the concrete design of the Perchtoldsdorf station? We see little ambition on the part of ÖVP and GRUENE to expose themselves and take a clear stand.

Noise protection A21

ASFINAG held an information event at which it provided comprehensive information about its plans. These correspond exactly to the legal requirements, no more and no less. The mayor thanked ASFINAG for this. We have not noticed any pressure for faster implementation.

A very sad chapter: the petition to Environment Minister Gewessler for a speed limit of 60 km/h for lorries and section control, which was unanimously approved by the municipal council, has disappeared without a trace. ÖVP and GRUENE shrugged their shoulders: the ministry simply didn't want to talk about it. We would have expected more ambitious action in Perchtoldsdorf's interests.

JOIN US AT THE HEURIGEN!

On **Sunday, 7th April 2024**, we will meet at **Heurigen Distl, Brunnergasse 32, starting at 18:00**.

Do you have any questions about „hot topics“ or concerns that you would like to raise, or would you simply like to get to know our team in person? **You've come to the right place.**



What is NEOS opinion?

In our blog, we comment on current issues in the village. Take a look! Sorry, this is in German only.

 niederosterreich.neos.eu/gemeinden/perchtoldsdorf/perchtoldsdorf-blog

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