

TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2005

County tries to win RID support

Townships concerned about losing tax dollars

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HAMILTON — Worries about the loss of tax dollars and the potential for sprawl were presented to Butler County Commissioners Monday at the final public hearing on the creation of tax incentive districts in Ross and Oxford townships.

However, Commissioner Michael Fox said many of those attending the hearing had fallen victim to inaccurate information provided by state legislators or other officials.

Specifically, Fox said, some were unaware that through Residential Incentive Districts, some school districts could reap additional funding beyond that which would have been allocated to them by the state if the RID did not exist.

After a RID is established, payments in lieu of taxes on the

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► A listing of subdivisions included in the RID proposals. **A4**

increased value of property as a result of development are diverted to pay for infrastructure projects that directly benefit the district. Because the improvement values are kept off tax rolls, school districts appear to be "poorer" than they actually are and thus get more money in the state's funding formula.

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Projects to be funded by RIDs

The following is a list of proposed RIDs in Ross and Oxford townships and the projects the RID revenue would fund.

Ross Township

The proposed RID district would encompass seven parcels of land in the Ross Trails, Ross Estates, and Dennison Farms subdivisions.

Proposed RID projects include:
➤ Improving the Ohio 128 and School Road vicinity in Ross Township

➤ Widening Black Road in

Ross Township

➤ Improving Hamilton-New London Road at the Black Road intersection.

➤ Improving U.S. 27 at Hamilton New London Road

➤ Completion of a sidewalk project*

➤ Construction of a new administration building*

➤ Construction of a new police building*

➤ Parks projects*

Oxford Township

The proposed RID district

would include 10 parcels of land in the South Pointe Crossing development owned by 4 Leaf Development LLC, and in properties owed by Bowling Estates LTD and TRJ Properties LTD. It would also include 14 parcels owned by individuals.

Proposed RID projects include:

➤ Widening and improvements to Ohio 27

➤ Ohio 73 and U.S. 27 Connector Road

* were added Monday at the request of township trustees

RID

Meeting addresses township concerns

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Fox said he believes legislators are generating unwarranted bad buzz about the RIDs because the districts keep tax dollars from hitting state coffers.

"Yes, we are taking it out of their pockets. We are taking advantage of the state legislation," Fox said. "If they don't want us to do it they should have written their legislation better."

The county must also reimburse school districts for any loss of tax money due to the RID. As of last year, the county must also reimburse townships for any loss of tax money from their inside millage.

The idea is that the projects — primarily road improvements — will eventually bring additional development and boost the overall economic health of the county.

Fox said Monday that contrary to what some officials have been told, a RID could allow certain school districts to get back about 70 percent of the taxes paid by residents. After the state took its cut, those districts would otherwise get just more than 20 percent of that money back if no RID existed, Fox said.

Fox offered up a May 20

opinion from the county's bond attorney to back up his statement.

"Can you give (school districts) more money? The answer is 'Yes,'" he said.

After a lengthy explanation by Fox on how RIDs work — and promises that neither the schools nor the townships would lose out on tax money — most of the morning's speakers grudgingly accepted the formation of RIDs.

However, discussion eventually turned to concerns about the specific RID-funded projects, particularly plans for an Oxford bypass to connect U.S. 27 and Ohio 73 that has been an unpopular idea among some residents there.

Jan Taylor and Jennifer Taylor Gelber of Taylor Family Farms in Oxford Township said they fear the connector will spur sprawl.

"I don't believe it's smart growth," Gelber said. "The connector bypass was unpopular. I believe they are circumventing public opinion" by including it on the project list, she said.

Gelber also said she was concerned that the growth resulting from the infrastructure projects will hurt the rural character of the township.

Oxford Township Trustee George Simonds displayed a map of the township with shaded areas to indicate tax-exempt properties such as Miami University.

"We have a significant amount of tax-exempt land. We can't afford any diversion" of the tax dollars, Simonds said. "If there is a RID in Oxford Township, I

don't know how we're going to pay the bills."

Ross Township Trustee Thomas Wilsey Jr. criticized the board for leaving the township out of the loop on how the RID would work and what projects would be funded.

The RID projects seem to benefit developers more than residents, Wilsey said.

"We are not warm and fuzzy on these RIDs in Ross Township," Wilsey said. "It's a little scary for the townships when, at first blush, the information we received was we would lose 100 percent of taxes for 30 years."

After much discussion, Wilsey said he still "philosophically disagreed" with the RIDs, but "we'll go with it," he said.

In the end, commissioners agreed to consider several additional improvement projects trustees brought them Monday. The county engineer must also approve projects to be funded by the RID. They also agreed to consider whether RIDs could be used to fund conservation projects — something brought to their attention by Larry Frimmerman, executive director of the Three Valley Conservation Trust.

The next public step will be a commission vote, which by law cannot take place for a minimum of 30 days from Monday's hearing.

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