

## Liberty Twp. OKs slimmer district

Township trustees agree to remove 158 acres from a planned parcel.

By Eric Schwartzberg  
Staff Writer

LIBERTY TWP. — For a Liberty Twp. tax district, less may truly be more.

Seeking to push a joint economic development district along to approval, trustees agreed Monday night to remove 158 acres — or 23 percent — from a 685-acre JEDD parcel.

Township officials have been working since February to obtain signed petitions accepting the creation of the tax district from 51 percent of the property owners and 51 percent of the business owners in the originally proposed 685-acre area.

The task often required working with more than 320 different business and property owners, said Administrator Dina Minneci during a Monday night board of trustees meeting.

"This is a grand feat in itself, to try and work with so many different entities," Minneci said.

The deletion means businesses in places such as Liberty Towne Center, Liberty Pointe and Wyandot Business Park will not be subject to the district's earnings and enterprise taxes.

However, Trustee President Christine Matacic said parcels not included in the downsized JEDD area can be brought into it via a vote at a later date.

In May, the township hired the Cincinnati-based KMK Consulting Company to lead a promotional effort to persuade business and property owners to sign petitions agreeing to the JEDD. But the tax district failed to accumulate the needed percentage of business owners before a June 30 deadline.

Several factors came into play

## District

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cutting 158 acres

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when deciding to reduce the size of the JEDD, including the fact that business and property owners continue to change on a weekly basis, making the acquisition of signed petitions "difficult and inefficient," Minneci said.

In addition, establishing the JEDD quickly means securing revenues on upcoming construction, such as a Cincinnati Children's Hospital outpatient pediatric facility scheduled to open in 2008, and collecting earnings taxes from more than 300 employees in the new Kroger Marketplace, officials said.

The resolution is now expected to be presented to Middletown City Council today and to the Mason City Council next Monday.

If both Middletown and Mason sign off on the deletion of property, the JEDD trio will submit a copy of the agreement and the petitions of business and property owners to Butler and Warren county commissioners for approval.

The commissioners would have 30 days to act before the JEDD becomes effective, with taxing to begin this October.

The proposed development district is expected to generate between \$6 million and \$12 million during the next 16 years to fund infrastructure and other improvements, including the Liberty Interchange.

That project would extend Cox Road north to Green Crest Golf Course, widen Hamilton-Mason Road to four lanes and add ramps to and from Interstate 75 at Hamilton-Mason Road.

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