

Bainbridge continues to weigh benefits of joint district

By **JOAN DEMIRJIAN**

Bainbridge Trustees are considering the advantages of a Joint Economic Development District with the city of Aurora that could enhance revenue and zoning controls for the township.

The option is under review as development ideas are surfacing for the former Geauga Lake park land along Aurora Road (Route 43) in both Bainbridge and Aurora.

"It would be a great benefit to the township," Trustee Jeff Markley said of the JEDD.

Assistant Geauga County Prosecutor Bridey Matheney, who represents Bainbridge, said a JEDD agreement allows a township to adopt the city's zoning for the designated area. The zoning provisions can be more stringent than the township's, she noted.

When a JEDD is established, income taxes can be collected from employees of businesses within the district. Townships do not

have the authority to collect such taxes.

Bainbridge already participates in a JEDD with the city of Solon at the North Marketplace shopping center on Aurora Road (Route 43). The city administers the program collecting the taxes which are shared by the two communities.

Bainbridge is working on establishing mixed-use zoning for the Geauga Lake property owned by Cedar Fair of Sandusky. Aurora already has mixed-use zoning in place for the Cedar Fair property within the city.

"We are waiting to see how it will be developed," Mr. Markley said of how this joint agreement would apply to the former amusement park land.

"A JEDD could give Bainbridge more architectural control when reviewing development plans using design standards of Aurora," Mr. Markley said. "Townships don't normally have those authorities. And that

property is going to need additional control." As an example, he said, "If a developer wants to use a theme involving the history of the amusement park, authority would be needed to do that."

Aurora Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin said last week that city representatives are in the beginning stages of JEDD talks with Bainbridge. "One of our goals is to develop guidelines to the entire area, so it is a seamless-looking neighborhood," the mayor said of the Cedar Fair properties in Aurora and Bainbridge.

Trustee Christopher Horn said the JEDD would allow Bainbridge to incorporate parts of the zoning from Aurora if the trustees chose to do so.

"It would provide consistency of zoning within the whole area," he added, and throughout the mixed-use districts of Aurora and Bainbridge.

Trustee Lorrie Benza said townships are limited in authority by the Ohio Revised Code. A JEDD could allow for more creative design standards for buildings, which townships normally cannot do.

The city can put in place the layout of property, as well as road widths, streetscapes and street light designs.

"I'm not saying we could do everything but within the district, we might be able to incorporate that," she said.

To establish a JEDD, Cedar Fair would have to agree, officials said, or the municipalities could wait until new owners take over the property.

Bainbridge is now working on the mixed-use zoning concept with a consultant as it continues to consider a JEDD, Mr. Markley said.

"I think we can be working on the formation of a JEDD simultaneously with the zoning," he said.