

It's time to speak up on zoning changes in Thorn Township

Editor:

Thorn Township residents with property zoned rural residential should be aware that the township zoning commission is currently reconsidering the 300 foot road frontage and 3.5 acre area requirements. The most road frontage and land area required by any township next to Thorn Township is 200 feet and 2.0 acres. I believe these surrounding townships have a more reasoned and fair approach to this matter. Thorn Township's requirements are too restrictive and punitive.

Unfortunately, I have been the only voice for this position in the zoning commission meetings. Since no one else is showing up for these meetings and voicing their opinions to commission members, the commission members think residents are satisfied with the current restrictions. From private discussions, I know many residents share my concerns about these limitations on our property rights. It is now time to speak up publicly.

Last November, we had an opportunity to retain or reject zoning. Voters decided to retain zoning, but many expressed concerns

about some of the zoning provisions. It's time to let commission members and our trustees know what we want changed. I urge you to support your fellow residents who have fallen victim to some of the zoning restrictions. Please contact any of the five zoning commission members and our three trustees listed below:

Zoning Commission

Robert Kirkbride-246-6922
 Marci McCauley-246-5949
 Jocie McGlothlin-246-6963
 Jerry Nethers-246-4773
 Ron White-246-6458

Trustees

David Hoops-246-5332
 Tim Phipps-246-6390
 Rick Wilson-246-5544

Or better yet, please come to the next zoning commission meeting at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 18 at the township hall in Thornville.

Robert Reed
 Thorn Township

'Watchdog' keeping an eye on village expenditures

Editor:

Public records state that the only Kirkersville street employee has quit and the mayor's son-in-law, John Rohr (also BPA member), "will work until someone can be found." I noticed that Mr. Rohr's timecards are being signed by Mike Cloud, the zoning commission chair rather than Mayor Bennie (Jim) Evans, who had been reviewing and signing them until very recently. The village clerk said it is the street commissioner's responsibility (although no street commissioner had ever signed the time cards before) and he implied that Bennie Evans didn't think he should sign his son-in-law's time card.

I thought that was interesting and also thought Bennie (known as Jim Evans at the county planning commission) should be carrying his sudden realization of nepotism into his work at the county. Bennie inspects county rehab program jobs done by his son-in-law, Steve Piatt (also appointed Kirkersville Council member) through a company that Bennie's daughter co-owns and serves as president. Nevertheless, Bennie Evans reported Mr. Rohr's employment to council two weeks after the fact.

The minutes of March 7th council meeting state that a Mr. Leonard from the Licking County Planning Commission "spoke about using a Comprehensive Plan as a tool to prevent problems in zoning. He "pointed out there would be a cost of \$500.00 plus mailings."

Accountability for our tax dollars continues to be lax. The Flying J records

show that one police officer spent nearly \$30 for gasoline but did not turn in a receipt.

According to public records, council voted to purchase a battery on March 7th. However, an invoice (costing \$74.00) for a battery is dated March 1st and was signed by Bennie Evans. Nothing like asking permission to spend taxpayer's money AFTER the charge has been made!

Mike Cloud told council AFTER the truck had been "towed to Bingman's for repair of the electrical system." Two invoices were received from Bingman's for work on the truck and on a cruiser. Both invoices show that alternators were put on two different vehicles. On one vehicle, the "headlights" were also repaired at the cost of \$100. Neither of these invoices have dates on them; nor do they include any identifying information, such as the year, model or mileage, of the vehicles repaired. These invoices total \$335. The village will also have to pay the cost for the parts, which are billed separately by another company. Towing is another charge paid to a third company and I believe that was \$200 as was noted in the cash journal.

Since there is an operating levy on the May ballot, it is important that the citizens know how their tax dollars are being spent. On several occasions in the past, the auditors have noted the importance of obtaining proper invoices and receipts to help insure that money is being used for a proper public purpose.

Bonnie Mansfield
 Kirkersville

Objectives for new police chief

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- Improve communication, operational consistency, and service quality- The full time chief will monitor day-to-day operations of the department and take immediate action when necessary.

- Establish a clear direction and vision for the police department- The ideal candidate will have several years of varied

full-time law enforcement experience. The individual must have strong knowledge of all the common aspects of police operations, impeccable integrity, solid written and interpersonal communication skills, and the energy and willingness to overcome the challenges of building a professional operation within tight budget parameters.



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'You're going to get taxed one way or another'

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Commission will assist in this process.

Once the State Board determines the cost, the State Treasurer must deposit the required funds into the School Trust Fund. The General Assembly's role is reduced to a right of legislative override by three-fifths majority vote of each house, to determine alternate costs, provided they "shall include and provide funds for essentially the same components, programs and services as determined by the State Board of Education..."

"The state would have to fund what the board recommends," Shaner said. "They (the state) will have to find the revenue."

The required local contribution would be capped at 20 mills, though districts, if voters approve, could raise more money locally without it affecting their level of state aid. Twenty mills cost the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 about \$700 a year. Local millage would be gradually reduced to the 20 mill floor starting in fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012), reaching the floor by July 1, 2016.

The amendment also makes sure the General Assembly continues to provide funds for school facilities through June 30, 2012. The state must continue to provide funding for "safe, educationally adequate and building code complaint school facilities as are necessary to the availability of a High Quality Public Education" after January 1, 2012. The local contribution for new or renovated school facilities can not exceed 5 mills.

In addition, the proposed amendment forces the General Assembly to maintain the Local Government Trust Fund at the same level as fiscal year 2006 and to adjust it annually for inflation. Similarly, the legislature must also fund public higher education at the same level as fiscal year 2007 and adjust it annually for inflation.

"We are going to have to pay attention to who gets elected to the state board of education," Shaner said. Members are elected from 11 districts. Fairfield, Licking and Perry counties are in District 9 which covers 17 counties and part of two others. Terms of the elected and appointed members expire either 12/31/08 or 12/31/10.

Thornton fears the state won't come up with its required revenue while local taxes will be reduced to the 20 mill floor. "I believe the amendment has teeth," Shaner responded. She said it provides direct access to the Ohio Supreme Court to enforce the funding provisions.

Petitions must be filed in August, she said, but the campaign wants as many signatures as possible by the end of May. She contends signing the petition isn't a vote for the amendment, but rather an opportunity for the debate to occur.

Later in the meeting, board members discussed the initiative. "I personally have questions with it," Thornton said. "The vagueness is a concern for me," President David Brookover added. "You're going to get taxed one way or another," Vice President Sarah Alley, MD said. Members took no action on the issue.

In other business, board members unanimously approved the original 2007-2008 school calendar after a one-month delay. Class start Wednesday, August 22. The first day of winter break is December 24 with classes resuming January 2. Spring break comes after Easter next year, running March 21 through March 28. The last day would be the first make-up day if the districts exceeds the five allowed calamity days. The last day of school is May 30 with graduation on Sunday, June 1.

A teacher questioned why the district continues to have 181 student days when the state requires 180. "I don't understand the logic behind it," Thornton said. "It's time to review it." The issue is expected to be part of the district's upcoming negotiations with teachers.

Board members also unanimously approved several of the superintendent's personnel recommendations.

- Supplemental contracts were approved for three non-teachers: Larry Blackstone, head football coach; Holly Gibson, head volleyball coach; and Elizabeth Arnold, assistant volleyball coach.

- One year contracts were approved for the following teachers: Sarah J. Arruda, Holly R. E. Caudle, Thomas Howard, Danute B. Lawrence, Susan C. Moore, Leslie A. Osterman, Laura A. Phillips, (continued on Page 5)