

QUARTERLY

SUMMER 1998

BATH TOWNSHIP

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 3

An official newsletter published by the Bath Township Board of Trustees
as a service to Bath Township residents under the authority of the Ohio Revised Code, Section 505.07.

Bath Township Beyond 2000!

By Jackie Jacobus

Prompted by the annexation petitions recently filed by Fairlawn, the Bath Township Trustees held a series of community meetings over the past few months to address major issues faced by the township. Issues addressed were:

Existing Annexation Petitions

Projected Loss of Land and Tax Revenue:

The current petitions seek to annex 293 acres of township land including three motels. The petitions include less than 2 percent of Bath's total acreage, but 62 percent of its total commercial/business tax valuation. According to the Bath Township Clerk's Office, the projected loss from the annexations would be approximately \$630,000 or 14 percent of the township's annual budget.

Annexation Hearings: Over 60 community residents voiced their concern at the June 1st Summit County Council Hearing. The township's legal representative presented a compelling case against the annexations. According to Bath's spokesperson Trustee Jenkins, "The support of the Bath community was both evident and impressive. Yet, these issues tend to be decided on narrow terms and the law heavily favors the entity doing the annexing." A decision is expected by Summit County Council in early August.

Legal and Structural Protection Against Annexation

Legislative Reform: Ohio annexation legislation today remains favorable to municipalities. On balance the interpretation of the legislation by the courts tends to favor the annexing municipalities.

Incorporation/Merger: Bath Township does not have the population to incorporate as a city. It can meet the population requirement to incorporate as a village, but that would require the approval of the

cities of Akron and Fairlawn, which is not a realistic expectation. Merger attempts with Fairlawn in 1994 and Richfield in 1996 failed.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Based on a survey mailed to every home in the township in 1997, Bath residents are primarily interested in maintaining the rural, residential character of the community. The Township's Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides the guidance for reformulating a zoning resolution that can be adopted and enforced to adhere to the desires of its residents. Protection from annexation is necessary to assure the township's ability to control local land use through its zoning.

Proposed JEDD Contract

The annexation process has been around for 100 years. In the early 1990s, legislation was enacted enabling townships to contract with municipalities to protect townships from annexations - a so-called JEDD Agreement. A copy of a new proposed

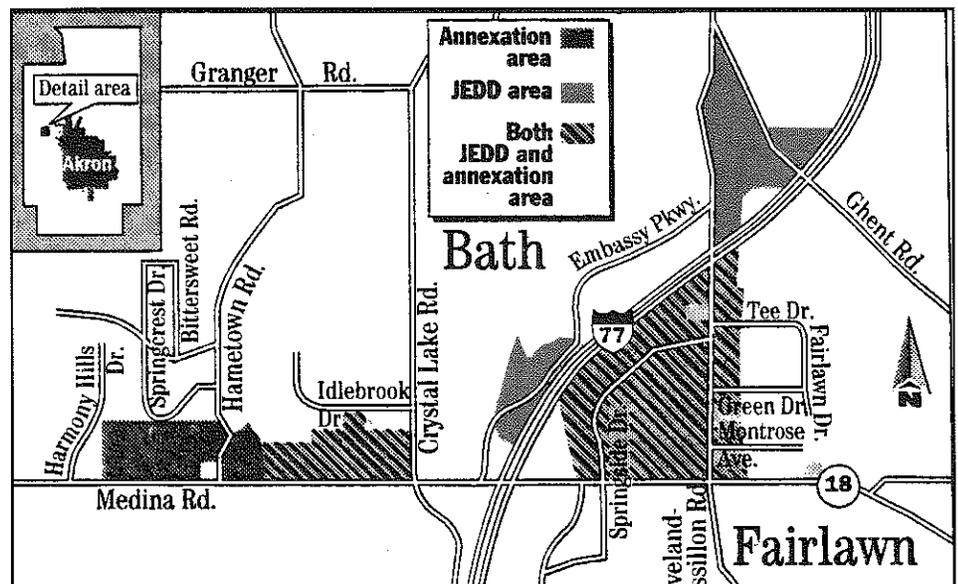
agreement with Akron and Fairlawn was mailed to every home in the township. It offers Bath the ability to eliminate annexation and control the township's development. It should be carefully reviewed and retained for future reference.

Differences: There are key differences when compared to the 1997 JEDD Agreement. It:

- Emphasizes preserving the residential and rural character of Bath.
- Precludes the current annexations by Fairlawn of the 293 acres and the annual loss of \$630,000 in property tax revenues.
- Creates a JEDD District only in the southern part of the township covering about 2.5 percent of Bath's 14,000 acres compared to 2.8 percent (refer to map on this page).
- Allows for the incorporation process as a village after one year.
- Gives Bath \$250,000 a year for 10 years

Continued on page 2

JEDD Public Hearing - July 20th - 7:00 P.M. - Revere High School Auditorium



Bath Parks - Present and Future

Welcome to a tour of Bath Township's parks both present and future. My name is Mike Rorar, Park Supervisor, and I will be your tour guide.

Bath Community Activity Center

Let's start our tour with Bath's one existing park, founded in 1968, and located on North Cleveland Massillon Road. The 41-acre Community Center is diverse in both use and recreation facilities. There is a trail system used by hikers, four tennis courts, four baseball fields, one basketball court, one soccer field, one shelter and picnic tables spread throughout the park.

Looking ahead, two of the baseball fields will be replaced this summer by a football/lacrosse field and the remaining two baseball fields will later be replaced by one large soccer field and one small baseball field. The trail system will eventually connect with Towpath at Hale Farm and there are also plans for an additional shelter to be added sometime in the future.

Bath Nature Preserve

Next stop is the 404-acre Nature Preserve which is presently closed to the public. Formerly a section of the Firestone estate, the land was purchased by the township in 1997. The Nature Preserve's diverse habitat and physical features range from pasture lands to old growth forest

and wetlands including a tamarack bog, ponds and creeks. It possesses some of the rarest flora and fauna in Northeast Ohio.

The Nature Preserve was open to the public for viewing on July 12 as part of the Community Day celebrations.

Seasonal walks are planned for August 8 at 8:30 a.m. and October 10 at 10 a.m. A *trail ride* (bring your own horse) is scheduled for September 6 at 9 a.m. Community residents are urged to participate. For *reservations* call the township at 666-4007 extension 232.

Bath Baseball Park and Trailhead North

The new 26.5-acre Baseball Park will feature a total of eight playing fields and will be located on Everett Road just south of Southern Road. Construction of the first three baseball fields and an entrance drive is scheduled to begin in August.

The fields will range in size to provide a variety of play for youth and adults. The park will allow for longer baseball seasons and make it possible for Bath to hold tournaments allowing our youth to become more competitive.

Wetlands run through the center of the park. One day a meandering boardwalk through the wetlands will connect the park to the Nature Preserve and to the Community Activity Center.

Revere Road Park and Bath Trailhead South

Bath's smallest park, just over four acres, is the last stop on our tour of parks. Located on North Revere Road, just north of Olentangy Drive, the land was purchased in 1979 to serve as a buffer against annexation.

When fully developed, the park will feature two tennis courts, a basketball court, play area for young children, parking and a trailhead providing access to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Bath Township and Akron will work together to construct a trail providing access to the Canal Corridor which presently runs from southern Summit County to the historic town of Zoar and eventually from Cleveland to Cincinnati.

The township will construct the trail starting at the park and running east parallel with Smith Road along the power-line easement stopping at Sand Run Road. Akron will complete the trail working from Riverview Road westward connecting Towpath to the Canal Corridor.

This trail may very well be the first trail in the area which connects residential neighborhoods to the Towpath in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and is made possible through a regional cooperative effort.



Mike Rorar, Park Supervisor is assuming responsibility for Bath Community Activity Center, Bath Baseball Park & Trailhead and Revere Road Park & Trailhead.

Beyond 2000 *continued from page 1*

- with no spending stipulations.
- Provides Bath with 10 percent of the net JEDD revenues for the first 6 years of the contract.
- Returns 100 percent of the property tax to Bath Township for all property annexed in the last three years, including Embassy Parkway.

Bath Township cannot, by state law, collect an income tax. Its main source of income is property tax. The proposed JEDD agreement protects Bath's property tax base by precluding any annexations. In fact, the proposed agreement could initially mean \$1 million a year in Township revenue when

taking into consideration; \$250,000 for ten years, 10 percent of net JEDD revenues for 6 years, all property taxes on land previously annexed, and retaining the \$630,000 that would be lost if annexation proceeds. More importantly, the agreement's purpose is to place Bath's future in the hands of the township and its residents.

Public Hearing Scheduled

A public hearing on the proposed agreement is scheduled for July 20, 1998 at 7:00 p.m. in the Revere High School Auditorium. Your written comments and/or suggestions should be submitted to the Township Office before that date.

The importance of this issue to the township's future cannot be over emphasized. Your suggestions, and thoughtful consideration of the proposed agreement can significantly impact the future of Bath Township.