

**Subject:** Response to Letter to the Editor - October 20

Dear Editor,

We are writing to address the many inaccuracies in the letter from Mabel Kopp published in the *Chagrin Valley Times* dated 10/20/2023. Ms. Kopp, along with a few other people in the Bainbridge community have been spreading disinformation about the Geauga Lake redevelopment project and the purpose of an economic development tool referred to as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). The township trustees are compelled to respond to, and dispute, the false claims being made in this recent letter to the editor and on social media while continuing to openly share accurate, factual information.

First, the letter to the editor states that the TIF equates to "...stealing over \$24+ million from our schools...". There is no basis for that statement, or the amount cited. Geauga Lake has been vacant for more than 16 years, during which neither Kenston nor Bainbridge has been able to collect the potential property taxes that would result from a viable development site. In 2018, the township trustees utilized a 10-year TIF opportunity to facilitate the redevelopment of the property and shared this information with the KSD who understood its purpose of helping to facilitate the redevelopment of Geauga Lake in order to increase tax revenue to both the township and school district.

TIFs are popular economic development tools used throughout the State of Ohio, in townships, villages, and cities. They are used to help encourage development and/or redevelopment and help to pay for public infrastructure that serves the area of redevelopment. A TIF is a diversion of **a portion of the increase** in property tax revenue resulting from new redevelopment activity to a special **township-controlled** fund. The pre-existing property tax base remains undiverted and continues to be paid to the taxing entities, including the KSD. As the value of the property increases, the TIF is triggered and 25% of the new revenue is distributed to the taxing entities, including KSD, while 75% of the new revenue is retained in the township TIF fund to be distributed at the discretion of the township, for public improvement projects within the Geauga Lake redevelopment area.

The improvements identified as reimbursable by TIF funds would include a perimeter trail around the lake, an active park with playground, \$50,000 towards a historical amenity, \$1,000,000 towards a second safety facility, and the township connector road between Depot and SR 43, all within the Geauga Lake area in Bainbridge Township. It should be noted that to date, not one penny in the township TIF fund has been spent or distributed and no agreement to distribute TIF funds has been prepared.

Second, Ms. Kopp does not seem to understand the process used to extend the TIF beyond 10 years. A 10-year TIF may be initiated without consent or input from the school district; KSD was notified and understood the rationale for establishing the TIF. Any extension beyond 10 years would require the participation and agreement of the KSD, providing the opportunity to negotiate terms that are beneficial to both. Further, the assertion that the current TIF would result in an increase in property taxes for either Bainbridge or Auburn residents has no basis in fact. As noted above, tax revenue to the taxing entities would only **increase** as the result of redevelopment.

To be completely transparent, redevelopment of any kind in the township affects both the township and the KSD. New development, whether residential or commercial, has its associated costs on township services and school enrollment and those costs are carefully considered during the discussion of any proposed development. The ability to service new development must be matched with adequate resources paid for by the new development in property tax and other revenues streams, if applicable. Disinformation such as what was fabricated in the letter to the editor and on social media

does not address the facts of development in Bainbridge Township and we would urge those interested in the facts to speak with a trustee or attend a meeting and ask the question.

Third, with respect to the development plans approved by the trustees: Menards, Meijer, and Vision Development, builder of market-rate apartments, are the only applicants who have presented preliminary and/or final development plans that have been approved, and with conditions. Vision is projecting 331 apartments, but that number has not been confirmed as final. A Use and Density Index was negotiated as part of the Consent Judgement Entry with the developer and are as follows: *Residential - 500 unit max with 169 units to be owner-occupied, 50% of the 169 to be age-restricted; Large Retail – 200,000 sf. min. to 400,000 sf. max.; Retail/Commercial/Restaurant- 7,500 sf. Min.; Office -no min.; Mixed Use – 7,500 sf min. of restaurant, 7,500 sf min. of Retail and may incorporate between 50-150 units of integrated residential, 50% age-restricted.* Any other number presented is simply a fabrication.

Finally, Ms. Kopp asserts that the Geauga Lake development will “...draw 400 to 600 new students...” to the Kenston School district. This, again, is a fabricated number that is not even logical. There is no way to know the exact number of new Kenston students who will live in any of the new residential properties at Geauga Lake, particularly with the age-restricted requirement and sizes of some of the apartments, but it is not logical to assert that the Kenston population will increase by nearly 25% of its current enrollment because of new residents in a single development. Also of the three approved redevelopment projects, two will be large retail (Menards and Meijer) without a single student added to the district.

The TIF and the proposed development of the Geauga Lake district are certainly issues that are open to debate on their merits and deficiencies. However, Ms. Kopp’s letter to the editor included many false assertions that have been publicly shared for the past two years that are irresponsible and add nothing to a productive discussion of those issues.

In closing, we would reiterate an invitation to anyone who has questions about the TIF, the Geauga Lake development or any other Bainbridge Township issues to attend a meeting of the Bainbridge Township Trustees. Our next four meetings are scheduled as follows: November 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, and December 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> at the Bainbridge Town Hall, beginning at 7 PM.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this response.

The Bainbridge Township Board of Trustees  
Michael Bates, Chair  
Jeff Markley  
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