



Marysville Journal-Tribune

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Jerome Twp. sued over referendums



By **Kayleen Petrovia**
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A group of property owners and developers are taking Jerome Township to federal court, claiming zoning in the area is “broken.”

Stakeholders for three residential developments that were each stalled by referendums are joint plaintiffs in a

lawsuit seeking damages from Jerome Township.

Land owners and companies developing The Homestead at Scotts Farm, Rolling Meadows and The Farm at Indian Run claim the township violated their property rights and discriminated against them during the zoning process.

“A few organized and vocal individuals in the township have hijacked the zoning process to stop new

homes from being built purportedly to keep the township ‘rural,’” according to the lawsuit filed on July 23. “In reality, they want to keep everyone else’s undeveloped land in the township as green space.”

The Board of Trustees approved applications to rezone the land for each of the three proposed developments from Rural Residential District to Planned Development District.

However, those zoning changes were stricken down by voters following referendum elections.

The lawsuit names the township as a defendant, arguing it is at fault for the damages caused by the residents’ vote.

“It is well established that the township is legally responsible for the deprivation of (the) plaintiff’s constitutional rights whether the deprivation occurs ‘by refer-

endum or otherwise,’” the lawsuit states.

It goes on to claim that consistent legal challenges to development are the result of a “status quo” zoning system in which “no growth is misconstrued as good growth.”

According to the lawsuit, a group of local residents are “misusing” the referendum process to halt all growth in the township, regardless of the size of developments or

their compliance with the township’s comprehensive plan.

“The results of the referendum have become inevitable: each time the comprehensive plan is ignored, the status quo is illegally preserved and no new residential development is allowed to occur,” the lawsuit states. It details a “scheme” that

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A third solar farm eyes county



By **ALLY LANASA**
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Representatives from Samsung recently met with Union County Commissioners, Leesburg, Taylor and Clairbourne township trustees, North Union Local School District officials and Richwood Mayor Scott Jerew to discuss the development of a third new solar farm in Union County called “Samsung Richwood Solar Project.”

At a Village of Richwood Council meeting on July 26, Jerew told the council that this solar farm will be located at the intersection of Routes 4 and 37 going into Magnetic Springs.

The mayor said he was shocked that Richwood is included in the solar project’s name although it is not within town limits.

“They have 1,200 acres signed up right now, and they would like to have 1,400 for the project,” Jerew said.

The mayor added that the three proposed solar farms – Samsung along with the proposed Acciona and Cadence solar projects – would total nearly 10,000 acres.

County Commissioner Christiane Schmenk told the Journal-Tribune on July

29 that the Samsung Richwood Solar Project is supposed to be 250 mega-watts of power, which is slightly smaller than the Cadence solar project.

Schmenk and Matt Schilling with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio also said that if the Samsung project is in the PJM new service queue, has received its system impact study from PJM and has paid the PJM application fee by the effective date of Senate Bill 52 then the project will be grandfathered in.

Samsung has a tentative schedule to hold a public information meeting in the fourth quarter of 2021. The plan is to have the solar farm in commercial operation by 2024.

According to the July 20 meeting minutes, the Union County Soil and Water Conservation District has a ditch maintenance project in the vicinity of the proposed solar farm.

The existing ditch will be cleaned out and some portions of an existing tiled ditch will be daylighted. Representatives from Union County Soil and Water Conservation District said they need a 75-foot easement to construct and maintain the ditch. Based on the

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Trooper Jacob Morrison of the Ohio State Highway Patrol says he knows every time he gets out of his cruiser, there is a chance for danger, whether from someone with malicious intent or a careless driver. Local law enforcement officials want to remind motorists to slow down and move over anytime they see a vehicle with flashing lights. Above, Morrison returns to his vehicle after a traffic stop on Route 161 in Union County.

(Journal-Tribune photo by Mac Cordell)

Troopers living on the edge - of road

Move Over Law critical for OSP safety



By **MAC CORDELL**
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For State Patrol Trooper Jacob Morrison, Ohio’s Move Over Law isn’t just about enforcing a rule, it is about getting himself, and everyone else who works along the road, home safely each night.

Morrison said he “probably should be” more nervous

each time he parks or gets out of his cruiser along the side of the road.

Morrison said the speed on freeways is intense, “and it gets worse when you are trying to handle a crash scene or you have more chaos going on.”

He said a tricky combination of being observant and becoming desensitized to the traffic allows him to do his job.

“It is something I have gotten used to,” Morrison said, then added that, “any traffic stop you make, they all have the ability to be a dangerous stop.”

He said he expects to be in

danger from criminals, but knows that the bigger danger will come from people who have no intention of hurting him or anyone.

According to the Ohio Department of Transportation, between 2015 and 2020, there were 5,226 crashes caused because individuals did not move over for emergency or construction vehicles in Ohio and nationwide each year hundreds of people are killed or injured due to being struck on the side of the road or highway.

Morrison said he can recall at least two crashes involving fellow troopers during

his time, caused by drivers who did not move over or slow down.

Ohio’s Move Over Law requires all drivers to move over one lane passing by any vehicle with flashing or rotating lights parked on the roadside.

The original law took effect in 1999 to reduce risk to law-enforcement officers, emergency responders and tow operators. It was expanded in December 2013 to apply to every stationary vehicle with flashing lights, including road construction,

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Volunteers from the Hope Center are shown assisting with the inflation of a balloon at a previous All Ohio Balloon Fest

(Balloon Fest photo)

Hope Center fuels, benefits from All Ohio Balloon Fest



By **Kayleen Petrovia**
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A weekend of fun at the All Ohio Balloon Fest will benefit the community long into the future.

For the third time, proceeds from the annual event will benefit the Hope Center, a nonprofit organization that serves Union County.

Through the partnership,

the Hope Center will provide volunteers to assist during the weekend festivities. In return, the nonprofit will receive the net proceeds from the event.

“We find people absolutely love it,” said Hope Center Director of Administration and Development Becky Bolt. “It’s a lot of fun.”

This year, the organization will provide 150 volunteers for three nights – Aug. 12-14. In 2019,

their assistance resulted in a \$15,000 donation to the Hope Center.

“It’s huge,” Bolt said of the effect of the AOBF donation.

Bolt said the Hope Center’s impact throughout Union County was made even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Generally, Bolt said, the Hope Center’s two priorities are “youth and food.”

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