

Auburn, Bainbridge continue to pursue post office branch

By JOAN DEMIRJIAN

Auburn and Bainbridge township trustees held a joint meeting this week to discuss issues with the Chagrin Falls Post Office. The goal now is to set a public forum at which residents of the townships as well as the village of Chagrin Falls can speak about their frustrations with their mail service.

Bainbridge resident Howard Knicely told the trustees, "A lot of people are upset over the post office issue." Most of his mail was late last year, he added.

The intent is to have U.S. Postal Service representatives at the meeting, and possibly U.S. Rep. David Joyce, R-Bainbridge, officials said during the Monday gathering at the Auburn Administration Building. Officials are still deciding when to have the next meeting.

Bainbridge Trustee Kristina O'Brien said the effort to find solutions began with a resident's letter about his problems with the Chagrin Falls Post Office.

Bainbridge Trustees have been receiving calls and complaints on the matter. Mrs.

O'Brien said her suggestion is to get all six township trustees together to discuss better management and perhaps a new post office for the two townships.

Bainbridge Trustee Lorrie Benza said she believes the purpose is to set perimeters on a plan of action.

Auburn Trustee Michael Troyan said when a meeting is scheduled with Rep. Joyce and postal representatives, residents can voice their concerns. Auburn Lakes has been particularly hard hit with mail delivery problems, he said.

Mr. Knicely said he was not there to denigrate people in the post office. "The problem is what do we do to rectify this? A lot of people in this area are upset." The matter was discussed at a homeowners' meeting, he said. "Somebody has to get something done there."

Bainbridge Trustee Jeff Markley said it boils down to the operations, efficiency and location of the post office operations.

There is a lack of parking at the Chagrin Falls post office site and people drive in circles trying to find a spot during busy times, according to Mr. Troyan. With the consolidation of the

Bainbridge branch post office with the Chagrin Falls site, they have doubled the amount of people being served at one facility, Mr. Troyan said. There are about 34,000 people in the service area, he noted.

Auburn Trustee John Eberly recalled how 15 years ago, Auburn had five ZIP codes. With the help of the late U.S. Rep. Steven LaTourette, Auburn was finally given a single ZIP code and it has worked well, Mr. Eberly said.

Mr. LaTourette was sympathetic and got the meetings together, Auburn Trustee Patrick J. Cavanagh said.

Mr. Eberly noted that the problem now is management and service at the post office. "Everyone has a horror story," he said of experiences there. "When it takes nine days for a letter to get from Chagrin Falls to Chardon, that is a problem."

Mr. Markley talked of how registered letters were sent out to a number of residents of the Canyon Lakes subdivision in Bainbridge concerning an upcoming meeting and some of the letters were not delivered.

Mrs. Benza noted that many people are

using other post offices in the area.

Mrs. O'Brien noted that the six trustees should get the Chagrin Falls post office manager in "and his boss. We need to get all players involved."

Asked if a building in the Bainbridge and Auburn area is wanted, Mr. Eberly said, "Absolutely." He added, he is meeting with Chagrin Falls Village Mayor William Tomko. "They had the exact same concerns we have."

Mr. Markley said he tried to get in touch with the district manager, who was out of town and the acting manager was not available.

He noted that he was advised that there is a place on the U.S. Postal Service website to register comments and complaints, and the postal service has an obligation to respond in three days. Trustees said the link will be placed on the townships' websites and all residents with concerns are urged to make them known to the postal service.

Mr. Cavanagh said it takes about 25 minutes from the eastern area of Auburn to get to the post office in Chagrin Falls prompting the desire for a more central location.

Prosecutor not finding grounds for action in political park notice

By JOSEPH KOZIOL JR.

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, but one county official may escape prosecution because of ignorance of another kind.

Last August, the Geauga Park District posted on their website and sent out through electronic messaging, a "Park Appreciation Day" notice that included that then Geauga County Commissioner candidate Timothy Lennon would be among the speakers. A second notice from the park district identified Mr. Lennon as "future Geauga County Commissioner."

The notice drew immediate attention from Geauga County Probate Judge Timothy Grendell, who chastised park officials for the release, calling it "improper."

Unfortunately, the flyer, in that incorrect form, was prematurely released. The matter must be corrected immediately and any reference to Mr. Lennon should be removed."

Judge Grendell blamed park Director John Oros and the park's communication specialist, Sandy Ward for the error.

But before any corrections were made an estimated 9,380 Geauga households received the notice via email.

While Mr. Lennon was elected county commissioner in the November race, he did have an opponent at the time, Democratic challenger Bonnie Cavanaugh.

Though the slip-up could be viewed as a simple mistake, it is against the law. Section

The code also noted that "whoever violates ... this section shall be punished as provided in Section 3599.40 of the Revised Code." The offense is a first-degree misdemeanor.

Because public dollars were used to fund the notices, one resident took the case to Geauga County Prosecutor James Flaiz for review.

But, eight months later, Mr. Flaiz said he is struggling to bring charges in the case.

He said the word "knowingly" means the person has to show intent to violate the statute.

Mr. Oros, who is a member of the Geauga County Republican Party's Central Committee and has participated in Geauga County Tea Party functions, apparently was unaware that Mr. Lennon had a challenger in the race

when the notice was issued, Mr. Flaiz said. He said it is difficult to show Mr. Oros knew what he was doing.

The park event never became political because Mr. Lennon did not appear at the event following the notice and corrections that followed.

Newbury resident Christopher Yaecker, at the time the notice was issued, offered simple advice for any future plans to give political candidates a boost in their campaigns using public dollars. "I would recommend that you reconsider this arrangement or invite all candidates for county offices to participate in park-sponsored events," Mr. Yaecker wrote to park officials.