



The Delaware Gazette

Delaware County's only daily newspaper

191ST year
Volume No. 180

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FORECAST PAGE 2



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THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2010

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INSIDE



LIFESTYLE

Tuesday Trippier: Greener together at Best Buy. Page 6.



SPORTS

Cardinals sweep away Reds with 6-1 win. Page 8.

ONLINE POLL

What is your opinion of the potential sale and redevelopment of the Olentangy Indian Caverns as high-end housing?

A. It should not be redeveloped. The caverns are a part of Delaware County's history and the owner has a responsibility to the community.

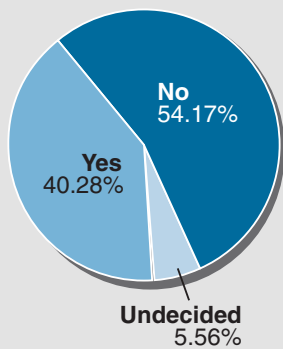
B. It's a matter of property rights. It's no one's business but the owner's.

C. Undecided

VOTE & COMMENT at delgazette.com

Comments may appear on the Gazette's editorial page in the coming week.

LAST WEEK'S RESULTS: Do you support the City of Delaware's 0.30-percent income tax levy for Fire/EMS services?



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Donation saves Big Walnut music program

Staff reports

The Big Walnut schools received welcome news this week in the form of an anonymous donation that will save the district's music program this school year.

In a gesture of philanthropy and giving, the Columbus Foundation recently contacted the district to provide a gift of \$400,000 to be

used to restore the music program for this school year, superintendent Steve Mazzi said.

Mazzi said he received a call about the loss of the music program and what the cost would be to bring it back.

An attorney who represents an anonymous donor contacted the Columbus Foundation. The donor was aware of the loss of the music

program due to the financial impact that the economy has had on the district and wanted to be able to restore this program.

"I was very shocked and excited about the prospect of this opportunity," Mazzi said in a written release. After several conversations and e-mails, the donor decided to

Please see MUSIC, Page 3

County study to predict development at I-71 exit

ANDREW TOBIAS
Staff Writer

A 60-acre outdoor outlet mall. Up to a half-dozen hotels. A 180,000 square-foot box retailer. Not to mention a \$30 million, 85-acre Columbus Crew facility, intended as both a corporate headquarters for the professional soccer team and practice facility.

These are some of the attractions developers have in mind for the currently sleepy and congested Interstate 71 and U.S. 36/Ohio 37 intersection, assuming that a proposed new highway interchange is built. Delaware County commissioners this week voted 2-1 to provide up to \$40,000 to pay for a study that could help pave the way for all of it.

The study will be paid for from the county's revolving loan fund, which is federally-funded and dedicated toward economic development projects. Commissioner Ken O'Brien voted against paying for the study, saying he wants a final version of a request for proposals to be completed first.

The study will predict the exact increase in tax revenues the county would see from increased development generated from an improved interchange. This week's vote authorizes the county to seek bids for firms to complete the study.

"It will show us the type of new revenues we can expect, and what kinds of businesses will be attracted to the area," Delaware County Economic Development Director Gus Comstock said.

The county auditor's office has previously calculated "tens of millions" of additional tax revenues, but the county wants to hire an independent firm to verify the information, Comstock said.

A centerpiece of the development project is the Columbus Crew facility; officials with the professional soccer team have been in ongoing talks with county officials. The Crew have proposed that Delaware County pay for the facility, and then lease it out to the Crew long-term.

If the county is going to borrow money to build the Crew site, it would want to be able to bank on long-term tax revenues to pay the debt off, Comstock said. A firm representing the Crew says the soccer facility would be the site of high-end amateur soccer tournaments, and would attract 500,000 to 600,000 visitors to the area annually.

Please see EXIT, Page 3



Gazette Bryan Bullock

Fair warning

A motorist passes the Delaware County Sheriff's new billboard warning drug dealers to beware.

BRYAN BULLOCK
Staff Writer

Delaware County Sheriff Walter L. Davis III is sending drug dealers a message. A great big message.

The sheriff's office erected a billboard along U.S. 23 on Wednesday that warns drug dealers to beware. The sign, located

just north of Delaware city, features pictures of two convicted drug dealers and the county's new toll-free tip line, 877-412-TIPS.

"Drug dealers are not welcome in Delaware County," Davis said in a written statement. "We hope that by showing them what happens to people who sell drugs in our community, they will think twice about coming here."

The black-and-yellow billboard is visible to southbound traffic on U.S. 23 near Coover Road. Davis said the location was chosen because the road is a pipeline where drugs travel into and through the county. Roughly 40,000 vehicles drive along the section of U.S. 23 everyday.

Please see BILLBOARD, Page 3

Intern behind removal of Delaware city graffiti



These before and after shots show graffiti removed recently from the United States Post Office at 35 S. Liberty St., Delaware.

Submitted

MELISSA MACKEY
Staff Writer

Delaware city now has less graffiti thanks to the efforts of a police department intern and local businesses.

Mark Swisher, a 20-year-old Cedarville University student, logged several hundred

hours this summer during his unpaid internship at the Delaware Police Department. His internship focused on cleaning up graffiti in the area by contacting 71 locations on a police department graffiti log.

Swisher verified that the locations had graffiti and took

photographs, then contacted the property owners on the log, offering suggestions on ways to clean up. About a month later, Swisher followed up and found that 41 percent had cleaned up the graffiti within that time period.

Removing graffiti in a timely manner helps lessen

"broken window syndrome," Delaware Police Department Community Relations Officer Rita Mendel said.

"If a single window pane is broken, it leads to additional broken windows and other vandalism," she said. "It's the same way with graffiti. It quickly escalates into more

graffiti, damage and criminal acts."

Leaving broken windows, unkempt yards or graffiti gives the perception that the community doesn't care, Mendel said.

"By cleaning and fixing it

Please see GRAFFITI, Page 3

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NY gov says Islamic group won't relocate mosque

MICHAEL GORMLEY
Associated Press Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. — Gov. David Paterson said Wednesday that developers of an Islamic cultural center that would include a mosque near ground zero have rejected his offer to help them find a different site.

While in Manhattan, Paterson said the group apparently wants to remain with its current plans to build near the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"I think they would like to stay where they are, and I certainly respect that and I certainly respect them," Paterson

said after the group spoke with one of his staff members. "Having said that, how much more foresighted would it have been if the Imam who is the developer of the project had been willing to hear what we are actually talking about?"

The mosque, to be located two blocks from ground zero, would be part of a 13-story, \$100 million Islamic center that would feature a 500-seat auditorium, a swimming pool and a gym. It's a project of the Cordoba Initiative, an advocacy group that promotes improved relations between Islam and the West.

Critics are suspicious of who will fund the project, and

developers haven't released their sources of capital. Opponents also say the religion that fueled the hatred in the terrorists shouldn't be displayed so near the site.

Wednesday, Paterson described some opponents of the project as "shrill" and said they were acting out of political self-interest. But most, he said, appreciate the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of religion while feeling "badgered" by pain following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

"I wanted to talk to them (the developers) about what was the possibility of just having a conversation about would

there be a way to provide a center for people of the Muslim faith in lower Manhattan, and it not interfere with what is still a memorial to what happened on September 11," Paterson said.

"I hope that the type of cultural understanding that they are trying to promote when they build this center could be practiced right now," he added.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who accompanied Paterson, again defended the project.

"I always believed that government should not be involved in deciding who you pray to, what you say or where you say it," Bloomberg said.



Associated Press Seth Wenig

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, center, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, fourth from left, and members of local religious institutions show their support for a mosque and Islamic cultural center.

White House: US on track to end Iraq combat role

TOM RAUM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is satisfied that the United States can safely end its combat role in Iraq at the end of this month and meet the deadline for removing all U.S. troops from the country by the end of 2011, White House officials said Wednesday.

Obama was briefed on the status of the withdrawal from Iraq by his national security team and the top U.S. commander in Iraq, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said the president was also brought up to date on so far unsuccessful efforts by Iraq to form a new

government five months after national elections.

Obama met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, national security adviser James Jones and, by videoconference, the U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno.

"The president heard directly from General Odierno, who said that we were on target to complete our drawdown by the end of August. Already we have removed over 80,000 troops from Iraq since President Obama took office," Gibbs said.

Gibbs and other U.S. officials said an uptick in violence as August 31 draws nearer was expected. They blamed it on the

start of the monthlong Islamic observance of Ramadan, and on attempts by factions to further complicate efforts to form a coalition government and by some militants to create the appearance that they were running the U.S. out of the country.

Ongoing attacks against Iraq's security forces come as the U.S. is moving to reduce its troop levels to 50,000 by the end of August.

"There continue to be terrorists in Iraq. There continue to be acts of violence," Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes told a group of reporters. "They have not affected the positive trends" happening in Iraq and the overall level of violence

is lower than it has been in the past, Rhodes said.

Gibbs said Odierno told Obama the security situation has continued to improve and that Iraqi forces are fully prepared to take over.

Obama has vowed both to end the official U.S. combat mission on schedule and to move all remaining U.S. troops off Iraqi soil by the end of 2011, a timetable set in an agreement with the Iraqi government.

The president also received an update from Vice President Joe Biden and Christopher Hill, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, on Iraq's troubled efforts to form a new government.

BILLBOARD

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"It is common for out-of-town drug dealers to drive into Delaware County to sell drugs," said Davis, who noted the two convicted criminals pictured on the billboard would likely have driven by the sign on their way into Delaware.

The billboard displays mug shots of Marion resident Amy Jervis and Cardington resident Adrian Montane; they were both convicted of drug trafficking in Delaware County last year.

Davis said he hopes the sign will dissuade dealers and let the public know what they can do to help keep drugs out of the county.

The LEAP Drug Task Force made 101 arrests in the county last year and 64 arrests during the first half of 2010. LEAP, Law Enforcement Against Pushers, is a multi-agency team which operates under the authority of the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office asks residents to report suspected drug activity by calling its tip line, 877-412-TIPS. Callers are asked to speak

slowly and clearly, include the location of the problem and provide a detailed description of the property, suspect or vehicle involved.

The newly-erected billboard is a first for the sheriff's office. Officials say the billboard will be used to display other public safety messages in the future. The project costs \$5,375.00 and is paid for out of a fund that is used for projects like anti-drug awareness and education, Davis said. A portion of the money in the fund was re-appropriated to the sheriff's office after money and property were seized from drug dealers.

County residents are likely already used to seeing public awareness messages by a different organization — the Delaware General Health District.

Linda Diamond, health district spokeswoman, said the district has public health messages on three billboards, several DATA buses and one bus shelter in the county. The district has used public advertising space for several years and people have responded favorably to the messages, which address topics from H1N1 to obesity.

bbullock@delgazette.com

GRAFFITI

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

quickly, it shows that the community does care," Mendel said.

Graffiti also hurts property values and scares away shoppers, Swisher said.

During Swisher's time at the police department, several instances of graffiti were cleaned up, including 21 on city property. The CSX railroad also cleaned up tagging on four railroad boxes in the city.

In the past, the Delaware County Juvenile Court's community service program has helped with graffiti clean-up, county programs and facilities department head Wendal

Horlocker said.

With the large occurrence of graffiti, it seems like a never-ending battle, he said.

Horlocker said the community service crews, which also help shovel snow at the Council for Older Adults and do litter clean-up at Mingo Park, are supervised by a community service specialist. Those helping get credit for their community service hours or pay off restitution.

The police department hopes to continue the program by cleaning up the graffiti using volunteers and future interns, Mendel said.

mmackey@delgazette.com



The CSX railroad box on the corner of East Winter and Lake streets had its graffiti removed recently.

EXIT

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The county could also use the projected increased tax revenues to build new roads and other improvements.

An important factor remains: which side of the road the interchange will the road be built on? Bob Weiler and Patrick Shively, the developers that have building rights on the north and south sides of U.S. 36/Ohio 37, respectively, have each presented the county with their own plans.

Both plans have similar components including hotels, big box stores and other retail options, offices and restaurants. The interchange would lead to the creation of thousands of jobs, the developers say.

But, businesses aren't formally committing to any site until they know where the interchange will be, Comstock said. Proximity to the interchange makes a huge difference to retailers.

Among those who are waiting is the Columbus Crew. Both developers are prepared to accommodate for the facility.

Comstock said the location of the interchange would be

an "important factor" as to where the Crew facility would ultimately end up.

"Everybody is waiting for someone to drive that golden spike on I-71 and say 'This is where the interchange is going to be,'" Comstock said.

A study commissioned by Shively has recommended a new \$50.2 million "Sunbury Parkway" exit be built south of the current Delaware I-71 interchange. The plan tentatively involves building Sunbury Parkway from the interchange eastward to right outside Sunbury village limits, along with a number of connector roads.

The Ohio Department of Transportation is applying to fund an environmental study to see if the recommended location is feasible.

No timeline has yet been set for the project, which could take several years, but officials with Delaware County and ODOT have said they are trying to fast-track the process.

atobias@delgazette.com

HOW TO COMBAT GRAFFITI

- If you see graffiti in progress, call 911.
- Report graffiti by calling the Delaware Police Department at 740-203-1111.
- Remove graffiti immediately, but take pictures first.
- Form a volunteer graffiti removal crew in your neighborhood.
- Talk to your children about graffiti, acknowledging that it is a crime.
- Sponsor clean-ups in the community.

MUSIC

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

provide \$400,000 to the district's program with \$313,000 to be used to cover salary and benefits for the music program staff and \$87,000 to be used for music and educationally related materials, supplies and human resources.

The district's music program was reduced significantly this year to help offset budget restraints. Out of seven district music teachers, four teaching contracts were cancelled when their positions were abolished after board of education mem-

bers approved a Reduction in Force (RIF) list as a cost savings measure following the May defeat of the district's 7.5 mil emergency operating levy. Music programs at all three district elementary schools were eliminated, middle school music programs were compressed, and popular Big Walnut High School Band Director Craig Porter lost his job. However, with the donation, Porter will be retained as head of the high school music department and continue to serve as band director and assistant choir director. Additionally, music teachers Heidi Bridge, Justin Heck, and Kathy Blocher will be removed from the RIF list

and recalled.

"I'm thrilled for the students of Big Walnut that they will have an opportunity to benefit from music programs in grades K-12," said Porter. "While I'm excited to back as a music teacher at Big Walnut, I'm more excited for the students."

Because the funding will only cover the expenses for one year, additional funding would have to be obtained to continue the program beyond the 2010-11 school year, district officials said.

"We are truly grateful for the

very generous donation. It is wonderful for us to be able to reinstate our music programs for our students for the 2010-11 school year," added board president Diana Butts.

"The teachers, students, and parents will be thrilled with this unexpected and fantastic turn of events. I know that I personally was stunned with joy when I received the news of the donation,"

Lenny C. Lepola contributed to this story.

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*STEP UP 3D - PG13 12:10 1:20 3:10 4:20 5:55
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*THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT - R 7:05 10:00

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ENDS THURSDAY

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