

Mayor Debbie Sutherland is backing the creation of a skate park.

Mayor William F. Knoble gave his annual State of the City speech last Monday.

School district officials say the district either needs to make cuts or increase revenue.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Who is your favorite all-time late night talk show host?

E-mail us at: info@westlifeneews.com by Friday, January 28.

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Epic pool battle

Rocky River and Westlake swim teams serve notice to each other and the rest of the SWC.

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Is Westgate Mall gone?

By Brad Miklosovic

ROCKY RIVER

Mayor William F. Knoble has informed the Richard E. Jacobs Group that he is opposed to a proposed plan to demolish Westgate Mall.

The Jacobs Group met with Knoble and Economic

Director Kory Koran Jan. 5 to discuss the fate of the mall. Knoble said they were told that the Jacobs Group intended to demolish the mall, except for Kohl's Department store. The project would include three large box stores and an "Avon Commons type" of outdoor retail space.

Officially, the Jacobs Group would not comment on any proposed project. Spokesman William Fullington said, "The Jacobs Group has been working a long time on redeveloping Westgate Mall in a way that the residents of Rocky River, Fairview Park and the surrounding area would benefit (from)."

Knoble said the proposed plan would reduce the square footage of the mall from the current 700,000 square feet to approximately 500,000 square feet and that the mall would be torn down in 2006 and rebuilt and reopened in 2007.

The Jacob Group, the mayor said, was making the change because they claim that the upscale shopping demographic has been covered by Crocker Park and Westfield Shoppingtown Great Northern.

Knoble disagrees. "I do not believe the upscale market is satisfied by Crocker Park and Great Northern, as you have stated," Knoble said in a letter to

James F. Epple, vice-president of real estate development for the Jacobs Group. "Properly marketed, Westgate is an ideal location for small specialty shops, whether local or national chains."

The city also has some concerns about the amount of traffic any redevelopment would have on the city's infrastructure.

Since Westgate isn't located near any Interstates, consumers must travel through Rocky River to get to the mall. There are no Interstate off ramps in Fairview Park.

"All streets leading to Westgate are residential, except Center Ridge Road itself, and even it is residential west of Spencer Road," Knoble wrote. "The increased traffic caused by regional 'big-box' stores would severely impact our fine neighborhoods."

Traffic has been a continual concern for Knoble.

"The number one com-

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Frozen art

A pair of ice dancers are frozen at the ice carving demonstration at Crocker Park in Westlake last weekend. (Photo by Larry Bennet)

Kucinich wants new study done on RTA, NOMBL

By Jeff Gallatin

NORTH OL MSTED

Westshore Congressman Dennis Kucinich is asking Regional Transit Authority officials to put the brakes on absorbing the North Olmsted Municipal Bus Line (NOMBL) and instead renew the contract, and allow a new comparative study of RTA and suburban bus lines to be done.

"In 1987, the last time such a study was done, the federal Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) found that both North Olmsted and Maple Heights performed more efficiently than the RTA," Kucinich said in a Jan. 18 letter to RTA General Manager Joe Calabrese. "Since 1987, no new study had been executed nor commissioned."

Calabrese said Monday the results of a meeting he has scheduled for today with a group of transportation and business officials to review RTA data on the bus lines will be a factor in whether a new study is done.

"We'll be discussing whether our data is correct about the bus lines and we'll ask them to consider whether the proposal for our handling the North Olmsted and Maple Heights services is indeed cost-effective," Calabrese said.

Officials from North Olmsted, Maple Heights and

Kucinich's office have been invited to the meeting as well, Calabrese said.

North Olmsted Mayor Norman T. Musial said he plans to attend the meeting and will continue to represent North Olmsted's interests.

Calabrese said he expects feedback from the officials shortly after the meeting and he will consider it as well as provide it to the RTA board.

He said any final decision on whether or not to not absorb the suburban lines and wait for a new study would be up to the RTA board. He said there are time considerations involved, saying RTA officials need to know by March to set its operations budget.

He disagreed with Kucinich's contention that the 1987 study indicated the municipal lines were more efficient. Instead, Calabrese said the study stated the data was inconclusive and that there was no clear data to show which transit organization was more efficient.

Calabrese also said that a 1992-93 study by a Miami firm, Busitil and Associates, showed that it would be more cost efficient for RTA to take over the services done by North Olmsted and Maple Heights.

In his letter, Kucinich asks RTA to renew the current five-year contract and allow an independ-

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Appeals Court upholds prohibiting concrete crushing

By Jeff Gallatin

OLMSTED FALLS

After a several year battle, an 8th District Court of Appeals ruling has upheld a court decree prohibiting Great Lakes Crushing from operating a concrete crushing business on its Sprague Road property.

In a Jan. 20 entry, the court upheld a March 24, 2004, Common Pleas Court ruling that Great Lakes Crushing was not a legal nonconforming use of the property and that it was subject to Olmsted Falls zoning. It also affirmed that the Olmsted Falls zoning ordinance prohibiting the commercial concrete crushing was constitutional. It also reinstated the injunction sought by the city that prohibits Great Lakes from conducting the crushing operation on the property.

The court did reverse a portion of the appeals court ruling and ruled that Great Lakes could appear before the Olmsted Falls Municipal Planning Commission and seek a conditional use permit to operate a crushing operation on the property.

Olmsted Falls Law Director Paul T. Murphy said Monday city officials are pleased.

"We're very happy because this has been going on for almost seven years and it prohibits the crushing on the property," Murphy said.

Mark Belich, a member of the Great Lakes Crushing Board, cited the returning of the application to the planning commission as evidence that the company was not off base in its efforts.

"My understanding is that it goes back to the planning commission because that group did not handle it properly," Belich said.

However, he did note that the court ruling prohibits Great Lakes from operating the crushing operation.

Murphy said he had not talked to other officials

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