

election results

State bond issue gets voters' okay

Centre County voters last night resoundingly approved a referendum proposal for a \$190 million state bond issue to fund economic development programs.

With all 85 precincts reporting, 66 percent of the more than 19,000 area voters approved the proposal.

Statewide, voters approved the measure by an almost 2-1 margin. With 41 percent of the state's pre-

incts reporting, 212,733 voters favored the proposal to 124,346 who opposed it.

The programs that would be funded through the sale of the bonds include a \$50 million program to provide loans or grants to local economic development agencies. The money would be used for projects such as access roads or railroad sidings — short railroad

tracks connected with the main track, which would accommodate private businesses opening new facilities.

Also tentatively included are \$20 million for encouragement of small business programs development through incubator center programs and a \$15 million program to provide jobs for unemployed youths.

—By Beverly Ivens

Herman wins 77th District primary

Incumbent Rep. Lynn Herman, R-Centre County, last night soundly defeated Norman Dombisky in the Republican primary for the 77th Legislative District seat.

About 44 percent of Centre County's registered voters turned out for the primary. Herman received 90.58 percent of the vote with 3,157 votes. Dombisky garnered 9.41 percent with 328 votes.

Early morning election results from Clearfield County were not available.

Herman called the margin "very significant," although he was not surprised at the victory, he said. "I'm glad that voters in the district selected me as their Republican candidate for the race," he said.

Herman said he expects to win the general election in November. "I'm fairly confident that I'll be returned to office," Herman said.

Herman's opponents in the November general election will be Democrat Ira Smades and Consum-

er Party candidate Tom Ortenberg. Philipsburg Mayor Ira Smades, running unopposed in the Democratic primary, received 2,438 votes. Tom Ortenberg, running unopposed in the Consumer party primary, received 16 votes.

Ortenberg said he is in a good position now because he will face a Republican who is "not overly popular," and a Democrat "who has a real severe credibility problem."

—By Beverly Ivens

Witmer wins race for 171st district

Charles Witmer last night defeated Dennis Sciabica in the Republican primary race for the 171st district.

In the only contested race in the district, Witmer received 58.67 percent of the vote with 2,512 votes. Sciabica received 41.32 percent of the vote with 1,769 votes.

With 55 precincts reporting, Witmer said he was "very nervous and very excited." However, he was unavailable for comment when final results were tabulated.

Witmer will face Rep. Ruth Rudy, D-Centre County, in the November general election. Rudy said she was not surprised at Witmer's

victory and said she would run, "a vigorous campaign" for the house seat. She is confident she will be re-elected, she said.

About 42 percent of Centre County Republican voters turned out for the primary race. Witmer said he would have liked a higher turnout.

—By Beverly Ivens

Tanker cars catch fire in N.C.

Cars loaded with alcohol spread flames in downtown district

By TOM MINEHART
Associated Press Writer

MARSHVILLE, N.C. — Tanker cars loaded with thousands of gallons of alcohol caught fire after a train derailment yesterday, spreading flames through the downtown business district and forcing more than 2,100 people to evacuate.

No deaths or injuries were reported and the fires were extinguished by late evening, but evacuees were kept away from their homes because the threat of fire flare-ups remained, authorities said.

Seven cars caught fire, including four containing 281,000 gallons of methanol, said Mark Sullivan, a spokesman for Seaboard Systems in Jacksonville, Fla. Another car contained plastics and two were loaded with pulpwood.

The fire blazed in the town square in the early evening, but by 8:55 p.m. all of the tank cars fires were out and the possibility of explosion, which had forced the evacuations earlier, had been reduced, said Union County Fire Marshal Kevin Stewart.

By 10:30 p.m., he said, the fire had been put out "for all practical purposes."

"Now it's just a matter of recovery — (moving) the methanol onto tanker trucks. We're out of the doghouse," Stewart said.

Moving the remaining methanol will begin this morning, he said.

Stewart said he and other firefighters would be up all night "baby-sitting the railroad."

Emergency officials fought the fire with special foam, and later with

sprays of water to cool down the tank cars so they could be righted today. Railroad officials planned to start recovering the methanol late yesterday, Stewart said.

Officials said the fire had spread from the tankers to the town hall and businesses on the town's main street. Marshville Mayor Bobby Griffin said it was "a miracle that there were no injuries or deaths."

Gov. Jim Hunt visited the site and praised the volunteer workers helping the evacuees, saying, "I found out what North Carolinians are made of."

Hunt toured the site with Griffin and County Sheriff Frank McGuire.

Water from three fire trucks flowed through the streets and into storm drains, and there was a slight odor of alcohol. Steam and smoke rose from behind buildings along the track and a railroad crossing sign lay on its side amid the bricks and rubble from the burned buildings.

"We have lost three businesses and the bank employees lost some cars and the bank had some damage on the front," Griffin said. "But there have been no reports of injuries or deaths."

The magnitude of the fire increased and decreased "like a seesaw all day long," said Stewart, adding that the rain which fell all day "has been a blessing."

Fire officials boarded helicopters and videotaped the scene from the air every hour to help them plan their next move.

Smoke from the fire posed no danger in terms of toxic fumes, said Bill Hodge, regional manager for the

state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development.

However, Hodge said he would check for stream contamination on Wednesday.

Griffin said he saw parts of two burning tankers in a dry cleaning store and a repair shop 500 yards from his downtown business before he fled.

All 2,107 residents of Marshville were evacuated to the nearby town of Wingate, Stewart said. Emergency personnel went door-to-door evacuating residents in an area three-quarters to one mile from the wreck site.

"I heard a boom, a big roaring, and then it got quiet and I said it must have been a truck or something," said Anne Edwards, one of those evacuated from the town.

As many as 500 evacuees will be housed in the Forest Hills High School and New Salem Elementary School, said Union County officials, with the remainder of the displaced staying with friends and family. About 100 people had arrived at the Forest Hills school by late afternoon.

"All that was running through my mind was, 'Are my kids all right?'" said James Tillman, 29, who was at work when the order came to leave town. His wife and three children rejoined him at the Forest Hills shelter.

Sullivan said railway officials did not know what caused the derailment, but said the train had not struck an automobile, as was first reported.

He said the 73-car train was carrying grain, coal and some empty cars.

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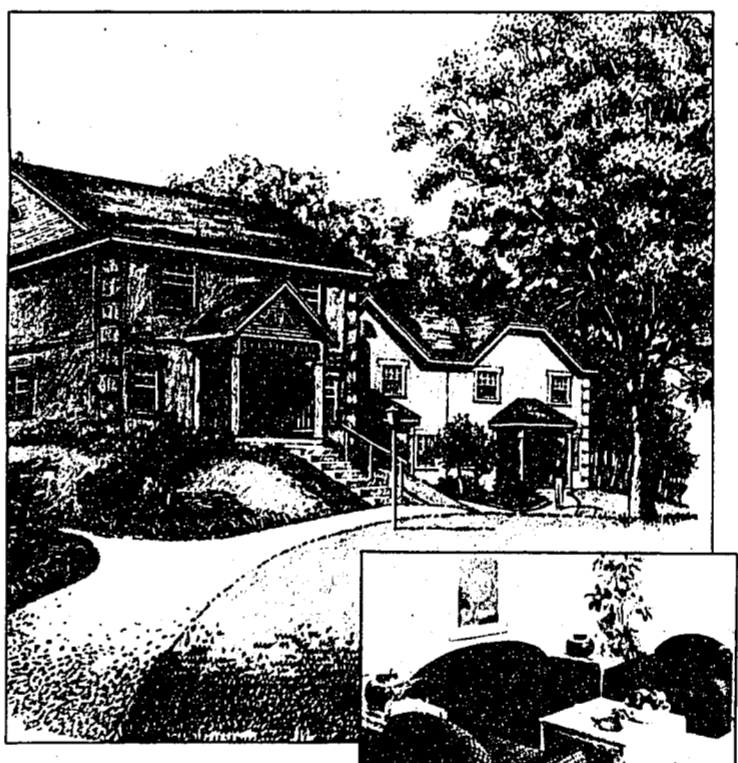

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