

THE DALLAS POST

EDITORIALS

Missed signals on Deer Meadow

The Post is pleased to publish three letters about the Deer Meadow rezoning and development this week. We think public discussion of an issue such as this is healthy for the community, no matter what the outcome in this particular instance. But in reading these letters, we sense that the Borough Council doesn't fully understand many residents' concerns about the development.

The Council has justified the zone change to R-1 (residential) on the basis of the higher tax revenues that would be generated by 51 homes on the site. While that position may be legitimate, it misses the point of many of the opposition. They seem more concerned with the change in their quality of life that replacing open space with housing will create than with a broader tax base. These changes include the loss of open land on which to walk or watch animals, increased automobile traffic in their neighborhoods, and the general disruption caused by a project of this size.

If more money is needed to run the Borough, perhaps residents would prefer to pay a little more in taxes and preserve their community as it is. We don't remember anyone asking them their choice. Besides, it is by no means certain that this of any other development will provide more tax revenue than it consumes.

No one opposed to the proposal as passed has said they are against construction of houses on the property. What most have argued is that the former C-1 (conservation) zoning, which allowed minimum two acre lots, was acceptable. Under that designation, about 16 homes could have been built on the land. Now, work is underway to place 51 homes on the 33 acre parcel.

The developer has stated that the homes will be of high quality and cost in the neighborhood of \$150-200,000. There is no ordinance that requires him to build this level of house, but he has a good reputation and at this point we don't see any reason to doubt his word. However, it's quite certain that had a builder constructed homes under the former zoning, they would have been at least that substantial and probably more so.

In the end, it is not the developer's word that is at issue, though. It seems to us that the real problem is a lack of trust between residents and their public officials - a condition that stems directly from the Council's haste in pushing this change through even as significant numbers of taxpayers expressed their disagreement with it. And that all points to a need for more and better communication between residents and officials. We hope the Council will remember that in the future.

Funny, we don't feel like a 100 year old

This week begins The Dallas Post's 100th publishing year. We are proud to be a part of this historic event, and plan many special stories and events during 1989 to celebrate it.

The longevity of a newspaper can be attributed to many factors, but certainly the most important is its usefulness to the communities it serves. While The Post has had many owners, editors and publishers over the years, the newspaper itself has a life beyond that of any individual associated with it. That life includes the heartbeat of the Back Mountain communities and their residents even more than that of the publishers.

We have been and will continue to strive to make The Dallas Post as good a local newspaper as its communities deserve. As we end its first century of publication, we hope readers will join with us in making the year not only a remembrance of the past, but also a step towards a better future.



How dear is this meadow?

A field off of Powderhorn Drive in Dallas Borough lay resplendent in early morning dew last fall. The area has recently been embroiled in a controversy over rezoning. (Photo by Charlotte Bartizek)

Dallas Borough Council defends its decision

Letter to The Concerned Citizens of Dallas Boro:

We the following Councilmen of Dallas Boro have remained quiet while a small self centered group calling themselves The Dallas Boro Preservation Association has sounded off about the evils of rezoning Deer Meadows. We now want all the people of Dallas Boro to know the real story.

Before re-zoning the area, Dallas Boro Council contacted all the utilities involved asking them to confirm that they could adequately serve the proposed development. We have on record affirmative answers from the Gas, Water, Electric and the Sewer Authority. Next we contacted the Dallas School District, Dallas Fire and Ambulance and our own Police Department; again we received all affirmative answers. With this information in hand we moved to the

financial outlook.

In the beginning we were told we were selling out Dallas Boro for \$6,000.00 or \$7,000.00 in taxes. Again this same group did not do their homework or they should come up with a number of \$36,000.00 of \$37,000. This is tax money coming from an area that for the next four or five years will cost Dallas Boro only money required to plow and service the roads plus street lights and police patrolling.

At the special meetings we heard people say, "Now we are going to have to hook up to the sewers". It makes you wonder if this groups' committed to preservation or contamination.

This group professes to wanting to preserve its watershed and protect Huntsville Reservoir. The one who filed the appeal is presently trying to sub-divide his prop-

erty for building lots in an area overlooking the Reservoir and no sewer is available at the present time.

We want the people to know that we were elected by all the people of Dallas Boro, not just a handful in one area and we are committed to look out for what is best for all. It is our honest opinion that we have done exactly that.

Trustfully Yours,
Dallas Boro Council Members
Donald Shaffer, President
Timothy J. Carroll, Vice-Pres.
Russell L. Eyet, Jr.
Craig Tupper
Harold Brobst
William Berti

Editor's note: This letter was received by The Post for publication. We chose not to change the salutation to "Editor", since it's message is addressed to the community at large.

Neighbor recalls Deer Meadow as it was

Editor:

This is yet another letter concerning the Deer Meadows Development. Just as the other letters I had a part in, I want to state that I am not against development. Again, what I am opposed to is overdevelopment and its adverse effects on our community, including the burden to the residents from continuing water shortages, pollution, and overkill of a natural environment.

I have listened to the developer of Deer Meadows promising beautiful homes and the creation of a lovely area for the residents. I have heard the council members cite the few advantages they feel the development will bring to the community. And since I helped elect some of these men, I trusted them to be concerned enough to do what was best for those they represent. Now, I must trust the developer to be concerned for our community and to do his best. And all residents need to be alert to what occurs in the borough to be sure that what should be done, is done!

So far, I have watched this "progress". The heavy machinery and many red trucks rumble up and down Machell Avenue day and night. They push up the land and tear apart the surrounding area I had grown fond of. I watched the blackberry patch pulled up, the deer paths plowed over, stands of birches toppled and the small pond

filled in. I have watched my children trying to replant the tiny, uprooted pine trees and the neighborhood children chased off of the field they used to romp through. Many of us will miss hiking and cross-country skiing along the trails, catching polywogs and ice-skating on the pond, taking pony rides and counting the deer in the field, picking wildflowers and watching the hawks soar. And recently I watch a worker in a marked red truck come alongside my property and cut down a spruce tree that was not in the woods or in the field, but near enough to my lawn that the grass was kept trimmed around it, and around the others that it stood in line with. It would have seemed to be a part of our lawn to anyone else and we did treat it that way. But, this man wanted a tree for the holidays and he said he was able to have any one of them in Deer Meadows that he wanted. It was that insensitivity that finally prompted the writing of this letter. There were a lot of other occurrences building up before this one, from council meetings, to rumors, to reactions of residents. But I think that if you do not live in the near vicinity of the development you cannot realize how overdevelopment immediately affects you.

I think that many of us should become more involved in the community. We need to attend more council meetings, water

commission meetings and the Back Mountain Citizen's Council meetings. We need to write more letters, get more information and give more information to utilities, council members, newspapers. Dallas is in need of ordinance changes, updating, controlled growth and planning. And all residents should have a voice in these changes, not just a few councilmen or the developers. Not only will the councilmen have to contend with the problems they will have created, but most of all, the residents are having to contend with them.

We should decide before the next local election, 1) whether there should be a conflict of interests between representing the community by serving on the local council and profiting individually from it. 2) if any developers should handle the burden of water shortages, runoff and environmental erosion due to development. 3) whether councilmen and/or developers should contend with the problems they will have created rather than tax the residents further to handle them.

In closing, we should all think about maintaining a voice in our local government realize what continued development may do to our community and decide how we want Dallas to continue to grow.

Sincerely,
Lucille Callahan
Dallas

Questions financial value of Deer Meadow

Editor:

Some Borough residents are greatly concerned by the projected intensity of the Deer Meadow development project which is now getting under way. The Dallas Borough Preservation Association has examined the plans for development of the 33.4 acre tract and feels that construction of 51 single-family homes on this parcel is unwise and will load excessive costs onto the shoulders of present residents of the Borough.

For example, the Association observes that total property tax revenues the Borough will derive from the proposed 51 home development are "guesstimated" to total about \$6,000 (if, as projected, each new home is assessed at an average value of \$6,500 each).

And the 1/2% wage tax is "guesstimated" to bring in about \$28,000 to the Borough's coffers. It could be more or maybe less!

If these guesses are anywhere near correct, one may balance the projected increase in Borough revenues (\$34,000) against anticipated costs. For example, repaving Machell Avenue after construction and extension of new sewers is currently expected to cost only \$80,000. But the heavier traffic load which might be anticipated from, say 100 additional cars per day, suggests that reconstruction of the roadway to somewhat higher standards may be necessary, or alternatively, the roadway will require resurfacing more often than the 5 year projected-lifespan. In any case, Machell Avenue is likely to cost the Borough an additional \$10,000-\$15,000 a year as a result of the proposed Deer Meadow project. But this is not all.

Police, fire, and municipal services to the new development could cost the Borough an additional 1/2 man or roughly \$15,000 a year in salaries and fringes.

And the costs of additional sewer plant capacity and upgrading, costs of expanding and upgrading the Dallas Water Company - which was unable to supply existing residents last summer - additional costs incurred by Commonwealth Telephone Co., and the U.G.I. Corporation will all have to be shared by current consumers. (ANSTAAFL—There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch!)

Dallas schools will, of course, gain additional pupils from the proposed development. Figuring 1.5 pupils per household, Deer Meadow, as projected, would add an estimated 77 students. At an estimated annual per pupil cost of \$3,000, this is only \$231,000—but it will have to be borne by Dallas taxpayers.

Finally, there is a potential problem with the projected runoff from the proposed Deer Meadow development. Apparently, no thought has been given to the environmental impact—other than to simply drain storm waters into the Huntsville Reservoir. Correction of that problem could be extremely costly and tie the Borough's lawyers up with the State's and fed's for years.

As an alternative to the proposed 51-home development, the Dallas Borough Preservation Association urges that the Borough Council rescind the recent zoning change and allow new homes to be built only on 2-acre plots. Such development would greatly alleviate many of the potential problems (and resulting costs) which can presently be foreseen. In addition, by building more expensive homes on larger plots it is felt that this would likely boost Borough revenues (higher assessments & payroll taxes).

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Dallas

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The Post asks: "What do you like best about the snow?"



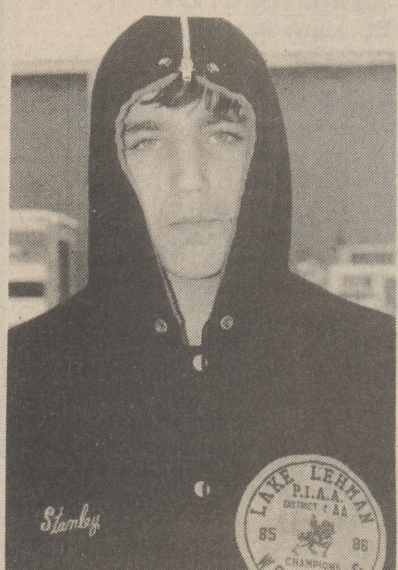
Jenny Edwards
Student
Harveys Lake
"The cancellations, sleigh riding and snowball fights."



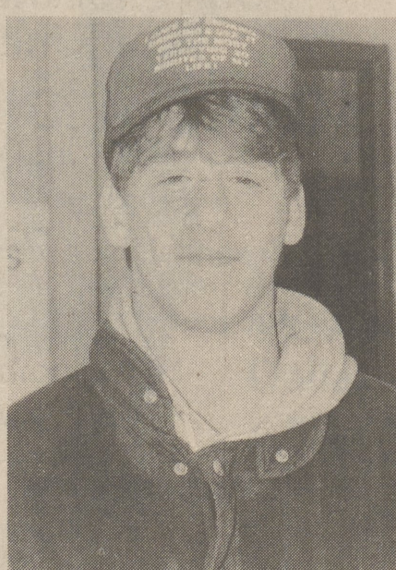
Vicki Cooper
Student
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"Snowmobiling."



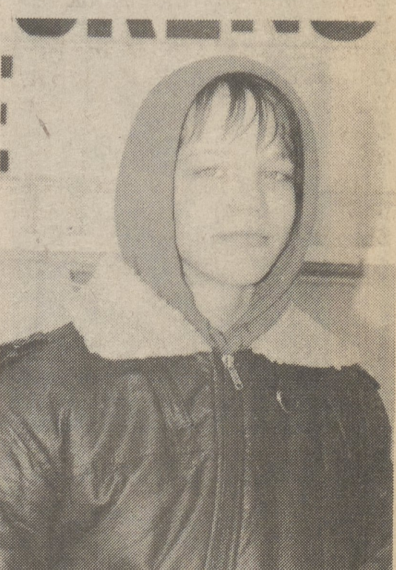
Jason Fetchak
Student
Harveys Lake
"Staying home from school, sledding and snowball fights."



John Sims
Student
Harveys Lake
"When it snows enough there's no school."



Leo Edwards
Student
Harveys Lake
"Throwing my brother in it, giving him a whitewash."



Bob Sims
Student
Harveys Lake
"Bombing cars with snow."