

THE DALLAS POST

EDITORIALS

Back Mountain needs more recreation areas

Concerns raised by officials of Back Mountain Baseball about the possible loss of playing fields are yet another indication of the pressing need for area communities to join together to meet the demands of the future.

For 15 years, Back Mountain Baseball, the umbrella organization for Little League and softball, has played its games on fields owned by the Dallas School District. The fields and the buildings on the site, formerly the Dallas Township School property, are in the process of being sold to an affiliate of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, which intends to build a health care facility there. Announcements about the sale have included information that the upper fields would be available for their present use for at least two years and the lower field, which has been substantially improved by the baseball organization, would be available for ten years.

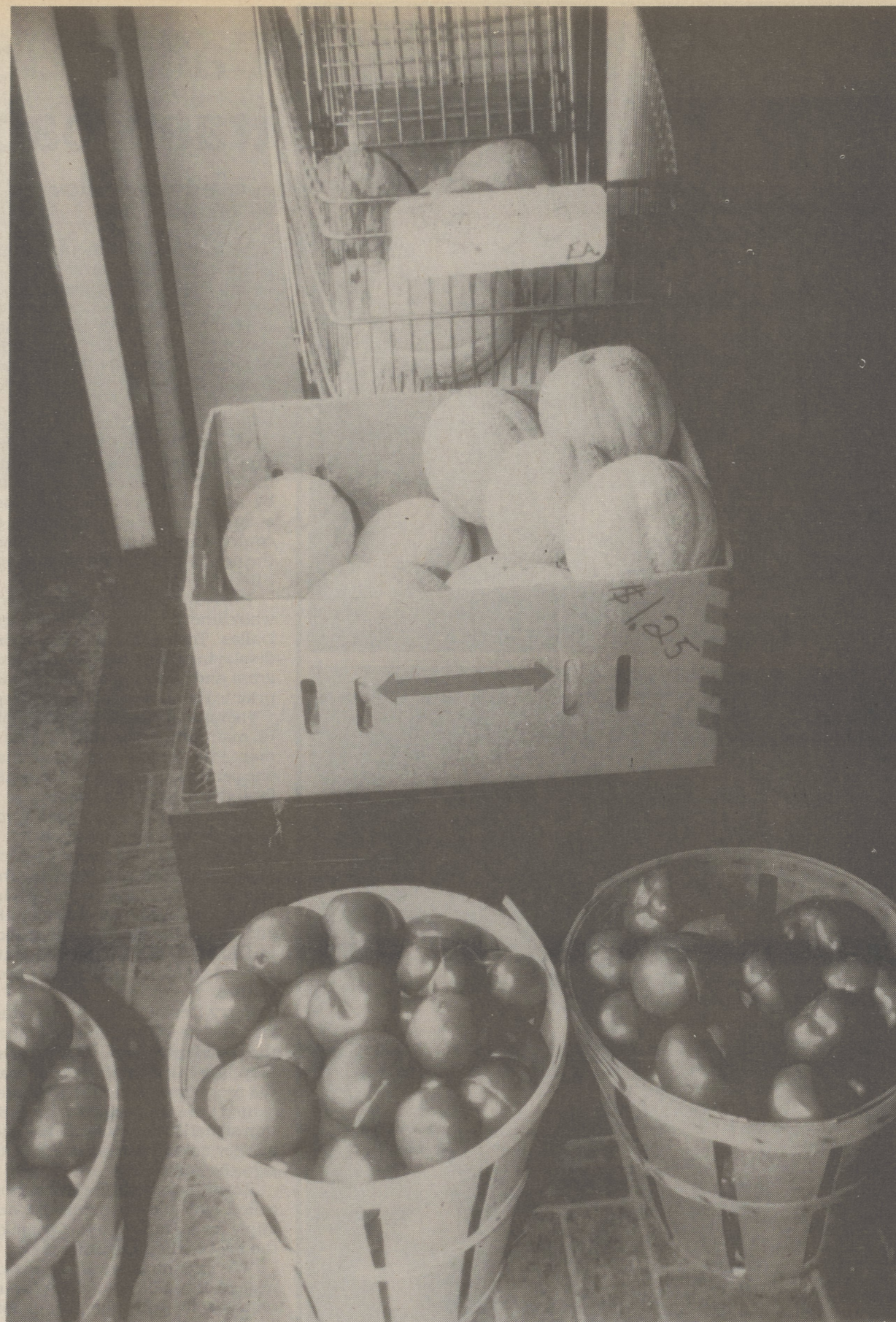
What happens after that time has elapsed? At this point, no one really knows. Some people hope the school district will find space for more ball fields on its property off Hildebrandt Road while others fear there simply won't be enough room to accommodate this highly popular program.

What seems to emerge from all this is that the Back Mountain does not have adequate recreational facilities in the public domain. That situation is partly a result of the fact that individually our communities aren't large enough to justify or afford the size facility required by Back Mountain Baseball or the Back Mountain Youth Soccer League. But those organizations aren't limited to one municipality; their very strength is linked to their ability to serve a wider area, thus reaching more children.

Back Mountain Baseball and Youth Soccer have been fortunate until now to have enjoyed the use of school district property at little cost. That is not to suggest that these organizations should have to shell out the huge amount of money it would cost to purchase their own land—chances are they would be unable to do so. A better solution is for the area's municipal governments to pool their resources and develop a suitable site, perhaps with help from the region's largest business firms and wealthiest individuals. If asked, they might provide much of the capital needed for such a project.

Along with recreation areas, a regional park might preserve open space to support some of the habitat that is rapidly disappearing as the region becomes more developed.

The result could be a living, enduring gift to all young people who grow up in the Back Mountain, and an example to them of how a caring, progressive community meets the needs of its residents.



Fruits of the season

Photo by Charlotte Bartizek

Medicare will pay for cancer test

Women with Medicare coverage should know that Medicare will now help pay for the cost of pap smear screening for early detection of cervical cancer. Available since July of last year, this coverage can save lives by increasing access to this effective method for detecting cervical cancer at a stage when it is more easily treatable.

Before the change in the law, Medicare paid for pap smears only for patients who were being treated for certain medical conditions including certain forms of cancer. But now Medicare will help cover the cost of pap smear screenings once every three years for all women who are enrolled in Medicare medical insurance. In addition, Medicare may help cover the cost of more frequent pap smears for patients who are at high risk of developing cervical cancer.

Medicare will pay 80 percent of the approved charge, after the beneficiary meets the usual medical insurance annual deductible (\$100 in 1991).

It is important for women to take advantage of this Medicare provision. The American Cancer Society estimates that 13,500 new cases of invasive cervical cancer will be diagnosed this year. Six thousand American women will die of the disease in 1991 alone. Pap smears can help reduce this number.

Road work

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Luzerne County Maintenance Manager, Matthew R. Collura has announced the following road work schedule for the week of Aug. 26.

DRAINAGE REPAIR - Various state routes in Dallas Twp.

MOWING - Various state routes throughout Luzerne County.

SHOULDER REPAIR - P-GRADE - Country Club Road in Dallas Twp.; Church and Chestnut Streets in Lake Twp.

SHOULDER WIDENING - Tr 118 in Dallas and Lehman Twps.

The Soviet triumph; people carry the day

People the world over watched with a mixture of fear and hope last week as a group of hard line Communists attempted to take the Soviet Union back to darker times. The failure of their coup can be attributed to many factors, but the most important must be the open resistance of the Russian people.

Many observers of events in the Soviet Union have wondered if there was sufficient support for reform among the general population. After hundreds of years of authoritarian rule—whether by czars or the Communist Party—the willingness of the people to accept more responsibility for their own welfare was a question that had not yet been addressed satisfactorily. It appears to have been answered now, in a most positive manner.

Surely the bold presence of Boris Yeltsin was an inspiration to the populace, and perhaps without his steady resistance the coup would have succeeded, at least more than it did. But given the choice of following Yeltsin's lead or that of the coup plotters, the people chose the man who offered them freedom from the generations of fear that have gripped them.

The fundamental problems facing the Soviet Union haven't disappeared in the past week, and it is clear that more hard times lie ahead. But there must be a new sense of power and possibility among the Russian people, as they savor their triumph over the forces that would have them return to the failed politics of former times.

There is much talk in the West of increased aid to the Soviet Union, especially from those who assume that had we propped up Mikhail Gorbachev earlier this coup would never have taken place. That is a dangerous assumption and one that will in the long run weaken the Soviets' ability to stand on their own. Our best export to the former communist states that are struggling to open their societies is our expertise and advice, not raw dollars. We can help them most by showing them how to help themselves.

One thing is certain—the pace of change in Soviet society must be accelerated and if Gorbachev is unwilling to move things along more quickly, the people will demand a new leader. While Gorbachev has been returned to power, his position is now contingent on his ability to meet the demands of the people, not those of the Communist Party or its operatives. That is a historic difference, and one that will eventually change the course of world events.

Guest opinion

DAMA trash program benefits most residents

The recent controversy regarding the recycling and refuse program implemented by Dallas Borough, Dallas Township and Kingston Township through the Dallas Area Municipal Authority is in need of clarification. I would like to point out facts which have been missed by the local newspapers in their coverage of this issue.

Kingston Township began researching the recycling mandate shortly after the passage of Act 101 in September of 1988. The research we conducted consisted of regular attendance at seminars and meetings and discussions with municipal officials who had experience in recycling. These meetings and discussions took place regularly for two years in an effort to gain as much information as possible before beginning a program. Many of these meetings are documented in the files of Kingston Township and the Back Mountain Citizens Council.

In April of 1989 there was a meeting held at the Kingston Township Municipal Building under the auspices of the Back Mountain Citizens Council. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together private haulers and municipal officials who were affected by the enactment of Act 101. Approximately ten (10) private haulers that were operating in the Back Mountain, at the time, were invited by letter to attend the meeting. Of the ten (10) or so invitees, approximately four (4) attended the meeting. The haulers who attended did not speak highly of recycling, to say the least. The conclusion drawn by the municipal officials in attendance was that the private haulers were not interested in recycling and could not be counted on to help meet the mandates of Act 101.

Discussions were regularly held between Kingston Township and Dallas Township officials regarding a cooperative venture to reduce the costs of recycling. The costs of implementing a curbside recycling program, in accordance with Act 101, are very high. Equipment costs range from \$40,000 to \$60,000 dollars. Personnel costs would be approximately \$100,000 per year. D.E.R. Grant funds are applicable only to equipment purchases, such as trucks or recycling containers. The grants are awarded on a basis of up to 90 percent, for example, of the cost of a recycling truck and it is rare for D.E.R. to award the full 90 percent. The grant funds cannot be used for operating or personnel costs, which account for the largest percentage of the total costs. The costs of disposal of the recycling materials is another factor, due to the fluctuating market.

I produced cost estimates for the Board of Supervisors in early 1989, based on the above factors, which showed that Kingston Township would have to bear first year costs of \$120,000 to \$130,000 by operating a recycling program ourselves. That would equate to a real estate tax hike of 9 to 12 mills or approximately a one-half percent increase in the Earned Income Tax. The elected officials in Kingston Township and, also, Dallas Township clearly recognized the necessity of cooperating in order to reduce these costs.

Kingston Township and Dallas Township then began discussions on the best mechanism for handling a regional program. The decision was made to ask D.A.M.A. to perform recycling because they are a general municipal authority, which can perform any municipal function assigned to it by the member municipalities. Dallas Borough took the bold step to join the program because it is good for the environment, even though they were not mandated. Resolutions were passed in the summer of 1990 by the municipalities authorizing D.A.M.A. to prepare and implement a recycling program. D.A.M.A. studied the recycling issue for four months and reported back to the governing bodies of the three municipalities in December of 1990.

The recommendations to include all solid waste in D.A.M.A.'s responsibilities was based on the fact that the majority of

residents were paying \$200.00, or more, annually for just refuse removal. The cost of collecting only recyclables would have been billed to residents at approximately fifty (\$50.00) dollars annually. The total cost for recycling and refuse removal would have pushed the average annual cost per residence to approximately \$250.00. D.A.M.A. received proposals from several contractors which indicated the cost per residence could be reduced by approximately \$100.00 annually by combining recycling and refuse collection under one contract with one hauler. Simple economic principles indicate that the cost per unit, or in this case cost per residence, decreases when applied to larger quantities. The program was designed to offset the cost of recycling by lowering the cost of total solid waste removal.

The municipalities enacted resolutions in early 1991 to permit D.A.M.A. to proceed with a comprehensive municipal recycling and refuse program. Competitive bidding was conducted by D.A.M.A. in the Spring of 1991. The process was conducted legally and fairly with the opportunity to bid open to all contractors who chose to participate. The bid was awarded to the low bidder and the annual rate was set at \$135.00, which reflects a savings for most residents of approximately \$100.00 annually.

The private haulers, who are now complaining, had every opportunity to bid. They are businessmen in an increasingly competitive marketplace. If they were uncompetitive or failed to participate, it is their own fault. They have known, or had reason to know, that Kingston and Dallas Township were mandated to recycle and they did nothing to prepare for that. The competitive bidding process recognizes the businessman who can provide the best service for the least cost. Clearly, the private haulers in the Back Mountain were overcharging residents for years. They announced lower rates soon after the D.A.M.A. program began. If they were able to lower their rates after the contract was let, then they certainly could have charged their customers less prior to July 1, 1991.

The mandated municipalities are required to reduce solid waste in their communities by 25 percent. The D.E.R. requires reports and documentation to prove compliance. The best way to provide that information is to have a contract with one firm to insure accuracy of that information.

As with the implementation of any new public policy the new municipal recycling and refuse program has opponents. Opponents, contrary to some suggestions, do not constitute anything close to a majority of residents of Kingston Township. The opposition is a vocal minority, many of whom have ulterior motives. The Township regularly enforces ordinances for the benefit of the entire community. This offends the people who violate those ordinances and is reflected in their opposition to the recycling and refuse program. There are certainly some legitimate concerns which will be considered. The Kingston Township Board of Supervisors announced at their meeting on August 14, 1991, that they would form a committee along with Dallas Borough, Dallas Township and D.A.M.A. to address the complaints received to date. There will be a sincere review of the complaints.

The Board of Supervisors of Kingston Township has acted in the best interests of the vast majority of their constituents. The vast majority of residents are saving money and receiving more service under the D.A.M.A. program. The Supervisors have not ignored the people's will. On the contrary, they have acted responsibly, legally, and in the best interest of the majority of the 7,000 citizens they represent. To suggest otherwise shows an ignorance of this issue and the democratic process generally.

For the Kingston Township Board of Supervisors
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