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THE BACK MOUNTAIN



FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY

DALLAS POST

Vol. 102 No.

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35 Cents



THE HOUSE: 72 S. Lehigh Street
THE PRICE: \$285,000
THE TAX BILL: \$2,584.96



THE HOUSE: 112 Wellington Drive
THE PRICE: \$300,000
THE TAX BILL: \$5,705.28

A tale of two houses

Owners of new homes get big tax bill

By ERIC FOSTER
 Post Staff

If two families were to purchase homes with an identical value in the same town - you might expect that they would pay the same property tax.

In many states where properties are required to be periodically reassessed, your expectations would be close to the mark.

But in Pennsylvania, there are no regulations requiring periodic reassessment of all of the properties in a county, and reassessment practically never happens.

For home buyers, the difference can be thousands of dollars a year.

To demonstrate the difference, we'll give an example of two fictitious families purchasing real homes of a similar value in

Kingston Township.

The Joneses will purchase a two-story colonial at 72 South Lehigh Street for \$285,000. The Smiths a modern home at 112 Wellington Drive for \$300,000.

The Joneses will pay \$2,584.96 in real estate taxes at the proposed 1992 millage rates. The Smiths will pay \$5,705.28.

The \$3,117.32 difference is because the Smiths home was assessed at \$25,470 in 1987 when it was constructed. The Joneses was assessed in the 1960s at \$11,540.

John Anstett, chief assessor and director of the Luzerne County Assessment Office would like to see that change.

"Our last county-wide general reassessment was in 1965," said Anstett. "Which

means that if somebody has a house which was built 20 years ago, the assessment was the same as it is today."

"I would like to see a law which requires a general reassessment. Personally, I think it equalizes assessments. It would bring the value of the house that was built 25 years ago to the current market value," said Anstett. "Unfortunately, Pennsylvania law does not require that to be done."

According to Anstett, one of the misconceptions people have about reassessment is that governments will use it to immediately increase their tax revenues.

While residents with older homes are likely to see their assessed value, and their

See NEW HOMES, pg 9

Housing growth has kept tax rates down

By ERIC FOSTER
 Post Staff

Drive through almost any town in the Back Mountain and you're likely to see new houses being built - particularly in the larger townships of Dallas, Kingston and Jackson.

For the folks already living in the Back Mountain, that growth means lower property taxes than many other areas in the county.

The 1990 census shows that while Luzerne County's population actually declined 4.35% in the last ten years, the Back Mountain gained 6% more people.

See TAX RATES, pg 9

MUNICIPALITY	POPULATION		PERCENTAGE CHANGE	ASSESSMENT		PERCENTAGE CHANGE
	1980	1990		1980	1991	
JACKSON TWP.	2941	3600	22.4%	\$4,119,931	\$7,470,650	81.3%
HARVEYS LAKE	2318	2746	18.5%	\$5,096,960	\$6,437,210	26.3%
LAKE TWP.	1783	1924	7.9%	\$2,281,170	\$3,490,590	53.0%
DALLAS TWP.	7287	7625	4.6%	\$12,762,100	\$18,419,810	44.3%
KINGSTON TWP.	6535	6763	3.5%	\$9,561,940	\$14,258,420	49.1%
LEHMAN TWP.	3030	3076	1.5%	\$4,836,770	\$6,772,350	40.0%
FRANKLIN TWP.	1473	1414	-4.0%	\$2,308,190	\$3,346,930	45.0%
DALLAS BORO	2679	2567	-4.2%	\$5,830,540	\$7,153,140	22.7%
TOTAL	28046	29715	6.0%			

Note: The 1990 census of 5336 for Jackson Township included the prisoners at Chase Prison. Without the prisoners the population is estimated at 3600. The assessment figures are from the Pennsylvania Economy League.

Hunters' harvest can help needy

By GRACE R. DOVE
 Post Staff

This year Pennsylvania hunters have the opportunity for the first time to help area food banks while bagging a buck. Pennsylvanians for the Responsible Use of Animals, in conjunction with the Commission on Economic Opportunity, the state Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and other organizations, is participating in "Hunters Sharing the Harvest," a new program which benefits area food banks.

Hunters who wish to participate in "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" only need to notify their professional deer processor when their deer is being butchered. The butcher notifies CEO, who will inspect the fresh venison before transporting it to the food bank for freezing and storage. Only professionally processed venison is accepted because professional meat

See HUNTERS, pg 5



Christmas play

Courtney Reap played the part of Mary in the Gate of Heaven Schools first-graders' Christmas play held on December 15. Kindergarten and first grade students performed before a large crowd of family and friends. (Post photo/Charlotte Bartizek)

Board, teachers have 'til Dec. 22 to digest fact-finder's report

By ERIC FOSTER
 Post Staff

The Dallas School District has received the fact-finder report it requested to help resolve contract negotiations with the district's teachers.

Janet Evans, secretary to superintendent Gerald Wycallis, said that the report was received Thursday, December 12.

The fact-finder, John Hamrick of Bethlehem, held a hearing on October 24 at which both the school board and the teachers' union presented evidence.

Both parties have ten days to

accept or reject the report. If it is accepted, it becomes the basis for a contract. If rejected, then there is a five-day cooling off period after which negotiations begin again, according to Wycallis.

The district's teachers have been working without a contract since the beginning of the school year.

In August the district released a statement which said that the teacher's were requesting a five-year contract with yearly salary increases of about 10 percent.

Union president William Wagner has called those reports inaccurate.



EYESORE AND DANGER - The former Hearthstone Pub on Main Street in Dallas is regarded as dangerous by local fire and police officials. (Post photo/Grace R. Dove)

Tearing down old pub to be Borough priority

By GRACE R. DOVE
 Post Staff

New Dallas Borough Solicitor Ted Krohn says demolition of the badly deteriorated building housing the former Hearthstone Pub is one of the borough's top priorities.

Krohn, who became borough solicitor this past November, stated that he had a court order dated August 31, 1990, prohibiting the building's owners, named as T.L.C. Enterprises, from repairing, maintaining or renovating the existing building and ordering that either the owner or Dallas Borough demolish the structure. The court order further stated that the owners must assume all costs incurred from demolition of the structure; thus, if Dallas Borough demol-

ished the former bar, its costs would be assessed as a municipal lien against the property.

The Hearthstone Pub has been an ongoing headache for Dallas Borough officials since September, 1988, when council first resolved that the premises constituted a danger and a public nuisance and directed borough solicitor John S. Fine, Jr., to file an Action in Equity and any other necessary legal documents in Luzerne County court so that the dilapidated structure could be razed.

Between September, 1988 and August 31, 1990, the date of the present court order, several legal exchanges between the borough

See PUB, pg 15

3-year-old drowns in Idetown pool

By GRACE R. DOVE
 Post Staff

Three-year-old Michael Patrick Blaine of Harveys Lake died Monday evening after accidentally falling through the ice in an above-ground swimming pool owned by his aunt, Shirley Wentzel, according to Harveys Lake police.

Police said that the child was playing with his six-year-old cousin, Scott Wentzel, when he climbed onto the pool's deck and began to walk on the ice that had accumulated in the partially frozen pool. He fell through a weak spot near the pool's pipes, police said.

Shirley Wentzel pulled Michael out of the pool after Scott ran in to tell her that Michael had fallen in. Another relative called 911; Lehman Township Ambulance responded, assisted by Medic 302, Harveys Lake police and Lehman Township police.

The child was transported to

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Community Events

- BACK MOUNTAIN SENIOR CITIZENS-** Thurs., Dec. 19, 1 PM, St. Therese's Church, Shavertown. Christmas fun fest, games and refreshments.
- CHRISTMAS CANTATA-** Sun., Dec. 22, 7:30 PM, Dallas United Methodist Church. 45 voice choir and instrumentalists.
- CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY -** Sun., Dec. 22, 2 PM, Franklin Twp. Fire Hall. Santa will be there with gifts for children.

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