

Lehman board will seek cost cuts Amusement tax is voted down

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

After weeks of controversy, Lake-Lehman's proposed 10 percent amusement tax is officially a dead issue.

Eight board members said that they could not support the tax because it could harm small businesses and non-profit organizations using professional entertainment.

"It's not because of Thom Greco and the amphitheater, but because of all the small businesspeople out there fighting to make a living that I cannot support it," said Ed Kern.

Martin McMahon agreed with Kern and other board members, but noted, "Throughout this entire debate, no one mentioned our primary goal - quality education for our children. What are our priorities?"

Only Dr. John Presper still supported an amusement tax, although he called for five percent.

"It's amazing how something can be put into a budget and everyone agrees on it, but they later change their minds. What's wrong? Can't we take a little heat from the people?" Presper asked.

Despite some misgivings, the board agreed to use \$173,746 from this year's fund balance and withdraw \$13,000 from the budgetary reserve fund to help keep next year's tax increase at 12 mills.

President Liz Sichler explained that if this were not done, taxes would increase by 18 mills. She said that it is difficult to work with estimates of income from the county and state governments; these figures will not be available until the state budget is finalized.

Presper offered the board several suggestions, which he calculated could save the district approximately \$500,000 and prevent any increase in taxes, including:

- Freeze all administrators' salaries, saving \$51,000.

- Refuse to pay for all graduate courses for professional staff, saving \$70,000.

- Require all staff members living outside the district who send their children to school at Lake-Lehman to pay tuition, generating \$85,000 in income.

- Do not fill the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction, saving \$67,000.

- Eliminate the position of attendance officer, saving \$50,000.

- Use a Geisinger or Blue Cross HMO health care plan instead of the existing Blue Cross/Blue Shield medical insurance, saving \$65,000.

- Make a 10% across-the-board cut in funding for all extra-curricular activities, saving \$30,000.

Presper said that implementing his suggestions would not only prevent a tax increase, but also would make money available to purchase more books for the Junior High School library.

Eagle Scout

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brush, cleaning the sandbox, picking up litter and sanding, priming and painting nearly everything in sight - the recreation building, playground equipment, basketball uprights, spring horses, a section of the tennis court's fence and the steel poles used to block off the road.

Now that his service project is complete, Matt is only three badges away from earning the right to wear the coveted Eagle Scout's pin and dark blue scarf. He plans to

work on the backpacking badge with several friends this summer and hopes to complete badges in communications and personal management by the end of the year.

Matt is the first scout in Troop 241 to complete his Eagle project and to progress this far along the "path to the Eagle." Five other scouts in his troop plan to begin their Eagle projects in the near future.

Children's film festival on June 27

Gifts from Above Christian Bookstore in Dallas invites children to a Saturday morning film festival on June 27 from 10 a.m. to noon.

There will also be a story time and a visit from Noah. For more information, call the store at 675-0354



THE WAY IT WAS - In the photo above, a boat house at Harveys Lake was inundated by the floods caused by Hurricane Agnes in 1972. At right, a section of Route 29 was among many roads that were washed out as every stream in the region became a raging river. (Photos by James Kozemchak)



Agnes

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Pitcavage, 19 at the time, recalled that all of the grocery stores were sold out. Bread, eggs and milk were impossible to find. And travel was extremely difficult because Route 29 and many other roads were washed out by the heavy rains.

Jane Stair remembered Shavertown United Methodist Church housing 200 people.

"We received a call Saturday morning, June 24, that several busloads of flood victims were coming up from West Side Tech, which had run out of room," Stair said. "I never cooked breakfast for so many people in my entire life!"

Harveys Lake hosted 900 evacuees, many in private homes. Dick Williams, Civil Defense Director at the time, recalled how almost the entire community pitched in to help.

"Residents came forward and told us how many people they could take in," he said. "Although we had food donated by the government, most came in through private donations. Some families fed refugees at their own expense."

College Misericordia had only a few hours to set up housing in the dormitories for nearly 900 flood victims. The basement of Alumni Hall became the Nesbitt Hospital, where 52 babies were born.

"No one was prepared for something of this magnitude, but people

materialized and did whatever was necessary," said Tom Pugh, director of public relations at the college at the time. "Evacuees pitched in and worked alongside Back Mountain volunteers."

Fred Rosencrans and Charlie Heiser worked at Frances Slocum State Park, where trailers were set up in fields, parking lots - anywhere that a mobile home could fit. The park had its own security personnel, a sort of town council and even its own fire department.

Trucksville Fire Company brought in "Old Betsy," a venerable antique fire engine which lived at the park until the last trailer pulled out. Park rangers took turns staging fire drills with "Betsy" until everyone was completely familiar with her equipment.

"The residents treated us like old friends," Heiser said. "The older folks liked to talk to us, but often they broke down in tears when they talked about their homes and what they had lost."

An article in the June 29, 1972 issue of The Dallas Post, written by Eric Mayer, described the scene.

"The constant din of helicopters and ambulances gave Dallas, far from the river as it was, a feeling of crisis."

Stores were packed and quickly sold out of merchandise, Mayer wrote.

"The town's chain stores were

inundated with shoppers. Smaller country stores had sold out and closed by early Friday. Service stations hung hastily scribbled 'out of gas' signs on empty pumps. Trying to conserve gas while being forced to drive circuitous routes pointed out the fragility of our modern civilization."

Mayer described conditions at one of the evacuation centers that dotted the Back Mountain.

"The scene at Dallas High Senior School was much the same; The cots lined head to toe throughout the school's corridors, the throngs of people seeking word of relatives they had heard via the grapevine might be housed at Dallas, the Herculean efforts of cafeteria workers to prepare appetizing and adequate meals for the 900 persons lodged there."

"The lines at checkout stations in food markets curled up and down the stores' aisles for two days following the flood, and impulse buying became a way of life. Supplies of bread, milk and eggs were sold out as soon as they were received, and shoppers loaded their baskets with all manner of goods 'just in case.'"

After 20 years, the memories of mud, discomfort and loss have faded. But the memory of ordinary people doing extraordinary things to help one another has not.

REVENUE/TAX COMPARISON Dallas and Lake-Lehman School Districts 1992-93 Proposed Budgets

Tax Revenue	Dallas	Lake-Lehman
Per capita (\$5/person)	\$47,000	\$34,500
Earned Income (1%)	\$1,135,000	\$882,000
Occupational Privilege	\$45,000	\$15,000
Real Estate Transfer	\$160,000	\$83,000
Mechanical Device (\$10 each)	\$0	\$255
Real estate	\$6,704,601	\$5,093,222
Totals	\$8,091,601	\$6,107,977
Number of households on district's tax rolls	9,373	8,863
Average school tax burden per household	\$863	\$696
Total budget	\$14,361,072	\$14,314,564
Number of students 1992-93	2,452	2,328
Amount spent per student	\$5,857	\$6,149

According to figures released by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Dallas School District's per-student instructional cost is the highest in Luzerne County, while Lake-Lehman's is the lowest:

Instructional amount per student	\$3905	\$3162
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Administration

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Presper has suggested that the district freeze administrative salaries, saving \$51,000; eliminate the position of an attendance officer, saving \$50,000; and eliminate the position of director Curriculum and Instruction, saving \$67,000.

Many of Presper's suggestions echo those of the Lake-Lehman Taxpayers Association.

At least some of Lake-Lehman's administrative costs are unavoidable. Lehman has three elementary schools while Dallas has only two.

Lake-Lehman also has had an assistant principal at the high school for the past two years. Dallas has no assistant principals.

Lake-Lehman superintendent Nancy Davis explains that assistant principal Fred Sponenburg's job is to deal directly with students and student activities, giving principal John Oliver more time to work with the school's teachers.

Lehman's position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction, un-

der fire from the taxpayers, is held by Dr. Steve Boston, whose counterpart in Dallas is Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Gilbert Griffiths.

Having a director of curriculum and instruction has allowed Lake-Lehman to become one of the first school to adopt the state's new education requirements, said Davis. The new requirements are designed to insure that high school graduates are prepared for employment, even if they don't plan to attend college.

"We're looking into each one of these things and we have been right along," said Davis, of the suggested cost savings. She adds

however, that some of the suggestions are "easier said than done."

The Lake-Lehman Taxpayers Association has suggested reducing tuition from students whose parents are teachers not living in the district. Presper has added the suggestion of refusing to pay for graduate courses for professional staff.

"Each one of those things has long-range ramifications," said Davis. "Most of these items have negotiated contracts behind them."

And in some cases, said Davis, "I know that the litigation would cost more than changing the policy would save."

Kingston Twp. taxes due June 26

Kingston Township Tax Collector, Janice Castellani, reminds residents that Face Value for 1992 County/Municipal tax bills will end Friday, June 26, with Penalty Value being in effect after that date. Office hours at the Township Office, 11 Carverton Road, Trucksville are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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