

EDITORIALS

# Zoning plan is there for good reasons

A proposal to rezone 70 acres of land in Dallas Borough from Conservation (C-1) to R-1 Residential has neighbors of the property up in arms. That's an appropriate response from people concerned not only about views of open fields but the long-term vitality of their community.

As it is now zoned, the land could conceivably support 35 housing units, since lots in Conservation zones must be a minimum of two acres. The R-1 designation would change that to a minimum of about one-quarter acre, although the plot plan Robert Post Sr. submitted with his request shows 73 lots of at least one-half acre each. While that is an improvement over the minimum lot size, there's no guarantee the final development plan wouldn't cram more houses on the land, which is one of only a few open areas left in the borough.

As Adrian Merolli, executive director of the Luzerne County Planning Commission pointed out in a cautionary letter to borough officials, there are several good reasons why this tract was zoned Conservation. He listed the land's slope, wetlands and its being a drainage area for Huntsville Reservoir as the primary conditions calling for the C-1 designation.

Other arguments are equally compelling. The road providing access to this proposed development is in poor condition, is inadequate for the traffic that would result, and travels through a neighborhood that is already densely populated. Additional access would have to come through the Stonehedge subdivision, in which streets weren't designed for heavy traffic. Public water and sewer service would have to be vastly expanded to service the homes. Wildlife habitat would be destroyed.

Perhaps the best reason not to alter zoning is less pragmatic. Dallas Borough is the smallest community in the Back Mountain in area, and nearly the smallest in population. Despite its diminutive size, the borough still contains a diverse mix of land uses, from apartments to estates, shopping centers to woods. Undeveloped or lightly developed land is a key ingredient in the recipe for a healthy community, one in which people care deeply about their surroundings, for both objective and subjective reasons.

Alternatives to typical subdivisions exist, and should be explored in this case. But no matter what development pattern is settled on, it would be unwise to allow so many more homes on this site than are called for in the present zoning scheme, which was adopted with the good of the entire community in mind.

# Cheers to Dallas Kiwanis for 70 years' service

This is the 70th anniversary year of the Dallas Kiwanis, an organization dedicated to helping those in need and supporting the youth of the Back Mountain. The longevity of the club is a testament to its position as one of the institutions that make the Back Mountain a better place to live.

Through the years since it was formed, the Dallas Kiwanis Club has assisted in the creation of the Luzerne County Fair, sponsored an annual softball tournament and provided wheelchairs and other equipment that may be borrowed at no charge from the Back Mountain Memorial Library, and more.

Kiwanis is just one of many groups whose members support activities and events in the region, and provide services that would otherwise be unavailable. Its also a social organization, of course, and as such affords a healthy environment for fellowship with other like-minded people.

Not everyone has the time or temperament to join an organization like Kiwanis, but we should be thankful for those who do and by their participation remind us that time spent helping others is some of the best of times.

## Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



The dismal turnout in elections always leads to hand-wringing in some quarters and chiding from others, as fears rise that the foundation of American democracy is eroding. I agree that the low percentage of people who vote is a concern, but here is a suggestion to improve it that is more pragmatic than sentimental: Hold elections over more than one day.

For many people, getting to the polls is a greater problem than deciding which candidate to support. This is especially true for commuters who leave for work early in the morning and return home in the evening. If elections took place on at least one weekend day, say Sunday and Monday, it would be a whole lot easier for more people to cast their vote. The most recent election in France took place on a Sunday that also was the French Mother's Day.

You may have noticed that few elected officials in the U.S. shed tears over the lack of interest in voting. That's because they've figured out that the lower the turnout, the better their chances to win, since they have to persuade fewer people to come over to their side. That's why it's unlikely any call for extended voting hours will come from on high; it will be up to a few rabble rousers at the bottom to begin the process to a more rational schedule.



Two geese on a lake, Harveys Lake. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

## LETTERS

# New thinking needed to better handle growth

Editor:

I was pleased to see your handling of the story concerning the proposed rezoning of land in Dallas Borough (*Dallas Post*, 5/21/97), particularly the illustrated discussion of housing development intended to preserve open spaces. The ideas you present are relevant to development throughout the Back Mountain.

The question of how to site new houses on a tract of land is separate but related to the zoning issue which determines the overall housing density. Conventionally, as your illustration points out, lots are distributed evenly over the land as Robert Post proposed to do over all but one section of his 70-acre property. This means that each homeowner abuts other house lots on all sides.

The alternative which you illustrate places the same number of houses on the tract by clustering them, leaving extensive permanent open spaces—woods,

fields, meadows, and recreational facilities—owned in common by the residents. Generally this is done by outlining the open space to be protected first and placing the houses close together but only on one side of roads, providing views of open space both in front and in back of each house.

A number of land developers in Pennsylvania are finding that open-space developments such as "Farmview" and "Garnet Oaks" outside Philadelphia are more attractive to home buyers than conventional "checkerboard" development and that market values of property in open-space developments rise faster. Residents find more of the amenities for which they have moved to areas such as the Back Mountain in the first place. The beauty of woodland and field and habitat for a diversity of native animals and plants are preserved. Although the lots are smaller, each homeowner has use of an extensive common area

not available under the checkerboard system. The clustering of houses creates a greater sense of community both for adults and children.

Current zoning regulations—based on the expectation of conventional development—deal only with the average size of house lots. To permit—and encourage—open space development, these regulations need to be brought up to date, limiting the total number of house lots on a tract of given size but permitting individual lot sizes to be smaller than at present. Such changes in the zoning regulations have been developed, for example, in Wallace Township in Chester County. The methods and goals of land development—and the zoning rules under which it operates—will play an important role in preserving the beauty of the Back Mountain region.

Samuel Merrill  
Shavertown

# Fire reinforces need for proper care homes

Editor:

Many thoughts are going through our minds since the tragic fire at the Personal Care Home at Harveys Lake. When something like this happens, there is mass confusion and one person is not able to handle the situation.

In our opinion, when a place has 21 residents that are slightly infirmed, mentally and physically handicapped, there should be more than one person on duty at

all times. These places charge enough, they can afford to have more help. If having only one person on duty is within regulations, the regulations need to be changed.

Gov. Ridge was at Harveys Lake to see what happened. This administration has been trying to close places like White Haven Center down. We hope after Gov. Ridge has viewed this tragic scene,

he now realizes how important experienced, well-staffed places like White Haven Center are and that they will remain open for these special people.

We have to remain vigilant as we are hearing the state's master plan still calls for a move toward group homes.

Mr. and Mrs. Carmen  
Attanasio, Jr.  
Harveys Lake

## Guest column



Helen A. Cummings

Days set aside with ceremony to honor men killed in battle predates recorded history. The stories of fallen soldiers, their deaths shrouded in myth, are recounted in epic tales embodying the heroic ideals of their lives.

A funeral bier laden with flowers and greenery honored Beowulf, who died defending his land against a dragon, and Hektor, killed by Achilles while defending his beloved city of Troy. The

# The roots of Memorial Day

Greeks left olives and flowers at the graves of their dead, while the Romans decorated tombs with wreaths, roses and violets.

Two years after the close of the Civil War (as reported in the *New York Tribune*) some ladies in Columbus, Mississippi were seen strewing flowers on the graves of Confederate and Union soldiers. As the news of this tribute traveled across the North, national amity began to grow and heal the wounds of war. Francis Miles Finch, hearing about the incident was moved to write the lyrics to "The Blue and Gray."

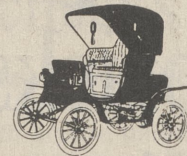
Not until May 1868, however, did Adjutant General N. P. Chipman suggest to Union Commander John A. Logan that the Union should initiate the custom of spreading flowers on the graves of their soldiers at some agreed upon time. General Logan then

issued an order naming May 30, 1868 for the purpose of decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the war. This practice was intended to honor the memory of those brave men who died on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line.

The idea quickly spread from state to state until May 30 (originally named Decoration Day) became a legal holiday in most of the United States.

Though we all have our personal heroes, in the hurry and pressure of our lives, it is good that we take the time to remember the brave patriots who gave their lives for our country. These men are our champions. They bring us back to the true American which lives in all of us: proud to shed a tear for those noble men and feel a stirring in the heart when Old Glory passes by.

## ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - June 4, 1937

### TEACHER CHALLENGES STATE TENURE BILL

No doubt remained this week concerning the complete success of the three day Motion Picture Cooking School conducted by The Post last week.

The State's first test of the new Mundy Teacher Tenure Bill will get underway this morning when Luzerne County Court takes testimony on mandamus proceedings instituted several weeks ago by Prof. James Martin supervising principal of Kingston Township Schools. Martin's attorney Jonathan Valentine filed the mandamus several weeks after the school board failed to give Martin a contract for the next year when other teachers were reappointed. In its answer to Martin's legal action, Kingston Township Directors intimated they believed the new Teacher Tenure Bill is not constitutional.

50 Years Ago - June 6, 1947

### RALPH ROOD FACES FORCED RESIGNATION FOR AGE

Final construction work which has been delayed at Natona Mills because of the carpenters' strike has been resumed. Company officials said this week that they hope to have the plant machine shop in operation before the end of the month so that installation of machines can start. It is expected that actual weaving operations will start in a small way by the end of July.

A mere matter of 70 years is bringing to a close the public career of Ralph Rood, connected for many years with Dallas Borough School and for other years with a local bank. Rood now teaching at the high school faces compulsory resignation with the close of this school year because he will pass the allowed 70 years this summer.

40 Years Ago - June 7, 1957

### BOROUGH WILL PLOW CHURCH PARKING LOTS

Dallas Borough Council at its meeting Tuesday evening in the Borough Building authorized its Street Department employees to assist the 11th annual Library Auction by taking charge of storing materials in the Auction Barn. Council also approved unanimously a motion presented by Councilman Raymon Heddon to plow all church parking lots during the winter season.

A 5-acre site with a 900 foot frontage along Route 309 is being cleared and graded opposite Orchard Farm Restaurant. The property is owned by Louis Goeringer and is being made available by Harry Goeringer & Son.

You could get - Porterhouse steaks, 79¢ lb.; capons, 49¢ lb.; corn, 5 jumbo ears, 29¢; Salada Tea, pkg. 48 bags, 67¢; Long Island Ducklings, 49¢ lb.

30 Years Ago - June 1, 1967

### SKYDIVERS AT SWEET VALLEY LAND IN WOODS

Spectators at the Sweet Valley Parade experienced a tense moment Tuesday evening when Skydivers bailed out from 6,000 feet and were caught in wind currents landing in the woods. The plane, one cylinder giving trouble, made it to Forty Fort Airport where the pilot set it down. The scheduled evening jump was cancelled.

Cold weather put a crimp in the State Agriculture Department's plans to spray for gypsy moths in Northeast Pennsylvania. Gypsy moth larvae are slow in hatching this year because of subnormal temperatures the state has been experiencing. Spraying will probably not start before early June.

20 Years Ago - June 2, 1977

### MIKE GENNETS WINS STATE JAVELIN TITLE

Citizens from the Lake-Lehman and Dallas areas have mixed emotions over the proposed 1977/78 school budgets which include a tax hike of 10 and 15 mills respectively. Teachers' unions, administration costs and rising fixed costs of operation have all been blamed for tax increase. Lake-Lehman Superintendent Robert Belles said the 10 mills tax hike is the largest proposed in his district.

Mike Gennets, Lake-Lehman High School senior brought back a state title in the javelin event last Saturday. Gennets throw of 213' 10" was the longest throw in the state competition at Shippensburg, surpassing the Div. AAA competition.

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