

EDITORIALS

County's Comm Ctr. arguments unconvincing

Until we hear better arguments to the contrary, count us on the side of the Back Mountain Communications Center as it attempts to maintain operations independent from the soon-to-be countywide emergency dispatching system. Here's why:

- As a locally-supported service, the Comm Center is much more responsive to those who pay for it. Member municipalities and Wyoming Valley Health Care System provide the entire annual budget for the Comm Center — currently \$150,000 — and local officials serve on the board. That means if service slips or costs get out of hand, you can bet there's an immediate reaction. It's hard to imagine the county paying as much attention to the Back Mountain's needs.

- County spokesmen say emergency crews or police will be dispatched more quickly. That's difficult to believe, since the calls will go to a center in Hanover Township before being transferred to the appropriate department. That's no different from what happens now, only the center is in Dallas Township and the dispatchers are more familiar with the area.

- Non-emergency calls will surely be shuffled down the priority list, and will be handled more slowly, if at all. The Back Mountain Comm Center is usually staffed by at least two dispatchers, who serve five municipalities and eight fire and ambulance companies. The county center will have as few as five dispatchers on hand, to deal with 68 municipalities and dozens of emergency departments. Something will have to give, and it will be "mundane" calls that now are taken care of expeditiously.

- The county has already backed off from some of its promises. The original proposal called for a fax machine in every emergency vehicle (to send a hard copy of the call along with a map) and mobile data terminals in police cars (so that officers could handle license and registration checks directly from their vehicles). Both those items are off the table now. What will be next?

- Since county government isn't noted for efficiency, the possibility exists it will need more money than the \$1.25 per line monthly phone charge generates, if not immediately, at some point in the future. That could lead to higher taxes or a forced contribution from the towns and departments. In contrast, phone line charges from the Back Mountain would provide nearly double the amount of money the local Comm Center now runs on.

There are times when bigger is better, others when small is beautiful. In this case, the latter applies, as the locally-controlled dispatching center — even without all the bells and whistles the county promises — has a proven record of good service. It ain't broke, so let's not fix it.



A peaceful pond. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - Aug. 27, 1937

KINGSTON TWP. HIGH SCHOOL SET TO EXPAND

The new \$47,000 annex to Kingston Township High School will probably be accepted by the township school board next week and will be ready for use when school opens Mon., Sept. 13. With the opening of seven additional rooms and the transfer of 7th and 8th grade pupils from the grade schools to the main building, the township will inaugurate the first Jr.-Sr. High School in the Back Mountain section.

The most important change when Dallas Township schools open next Wednesday will be the inauguration of a commercial course, equipping township pupils for business careers. This step, coupled with the additional facilities in the new annex which was opened last year, will give Dallas Township one of the most up-to-date and well rounded schools in the section.

50 Years Ago - Aug. 29, 1947

GROUP ORGANIZES TO GET LOWER RATES

Back Mountain Consumers' League, organized to gain lower electric light and power rates in the Back Mountain area, will hold a business meeting Tuesday evening at Orange Church Hall. The petitions signed by a majority of the electricity users of the Harveys Lake Light Co. are now before the Public Service Commission in Harrisburg.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence J. Covert of Loyalville celebrated their golden anniversary with a dinner party at their home on Sunday. Mrs. Covert is the former Lydia M. Hughey of Texas. They are the parents of six children, have 15 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

40 Years Ago - Aug. 20, 1957

NEW GOH CLASSROOMS ALMOST READY FOR USE

Classrooms in the newly completed addition to Gate of Heaven School will be ready for occupancy on opening day of school Sept. 4, when a class of 100 first grade children will be admitted and the enrollment of elementary pupils will rise to over 600.

Leslie Warhola, manager of Dallas-Shavertown Water Co. was named "Man of the Hour" and received a leather desk telephone directory embossed in gold with the Rotary insignia at last week's dinner meeting of Dallas Rotary Club at the Irem Temple Country Club.

Back Mt. Baseball for Boys provided supervised baseball for a total of at least 300 boys. Without the assistance of approximately 30 sponsors and advertisers this program would not have been possible.

30 Years Ago - Aug. 24, 1967

SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES SENIOR HIGH ADDITION

Dallas Sesquicentennial waiting for legal red tape to be unraveled now has its charter and legal right to proceed with the celebration of its 150th year. On Friday evening in front of Dallas Borough Building, George McCutcheon and Don Anthony co-chairmen will make known rules and regulations and read the proclamation.

An extensive building program is underway at Dallas Senior High School where growing demands of more classroom space dictated a number of additional instruction facilities. The Dallas School Board gave the go-ahead on the addition to the Senior High School, first in a three year building program.

20 Years Ago - Aug. 24, 1977

ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT COMES TO DALLAS AREA

Back Mountain residents will have an "advanced life support system" according to announcement made by Francis "Red" Ambrose, president of Dallas Area Fall Fair. He stated Dallas Fall Fair in cooperation with Back Mountain Ambulance Association plans to establish the advanced life support system immediately with the first step the training of 10 paramedics from among the ranks of the 11 Back Mountain ambulance units.

Dallas Fire and Ambulance will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year with a carnival on the library grounds Sept. 3-5. On Sept. 2 they will have a giant barbecue "Ox Roast".

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



We use Apple Macintosh computers for everything except business and circulation functions, so I've been following Apple's trials and tribulations with great interest. I also bought and sold some Apple stock a couple of years ago, nearly doubling my investment in 14 months. (I have to brag about the one time I picked a winner.) But our home computer is a Compaq PC, on which I recently installed Windows 95. You may recall the hype that accompanied the introduction of that system, much of it contributed gratis by gullible media types eager to cozy up to Bill Gates & Co. Well, let me tell you, I know the Apple operating system, and Windows 95 is no Apple. But maybe Windows 98 will be, at least now that the Evil Empire of computing has bought into its former competitor.

That's right, Apple fans, former competitor. I'm not sure why or how it happened, but Apple hasn't offered a real challenge to Microsoft in several years, despite producing a far more friendly OS. Many critics say Apple should have licensed the system years ago, and if they had a bevy of companies would have produced millions of Apple clones, as happened with PC's. I'm not so sure. IBM was the first major PC company, and their good name in corporate America had a lot to do with the success of MS-DOS and its successors.

Cooperation between Microsoft and Apple could produce many good results. It could also lead to reduced competition and higher prices, although that's less likely if the new operating system goes to all the PC clone makers. Either way, this will be an interesting test of our modern laissez faire economy, in which companies, not government, decide what is allowed in the marketplace.

Your news is welcome

The Dallas Post welcomes submissions of weddings, engagements, birthdays and other items about people and events in the Back Mountain. The deadline for items for the next issue is Friday at 4 p.m. Photos are welcome. Black and white prints are preferred, but color can usually be used. We will attempt to publish articles based on timeliness, available space and interest to our readers. If you have any questions or comments, call Ron Bartizek at 675-5211.

The economic viewpoint

Howard Grossman



Have you wondered about the extent of gambling and gaming in the United States and the implications this may have on North-eastern Pennsylvania? With the exception of two states, Rhode Island and Utah, each state in the nation has some type of gambling activity whether it be horse racing, harness racing, lotteries, or more extensive gambling activities such as casinos, slot machines, or video game devices.

Since 1988, the growth of gambling and casinos has been phenomenal. In that year, Congress passed legislation creating the Indian Casino Commission. The legislation authorizes the establishment of casinos and other types of gambling enterprises on officially recognized Indian tribal properties which are treated as separate governments. There are now approximately 121 gambling or gaming enterprises operated by 146 tribes out of a total of over 500 across the nation. As each week and month goes by, more proposals are being developed. For example, an Indian tribe developed Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut, which is the most highest volume casino in the world.

In recent years, more attention has been placed on gambling and gaming in Pennsylvania through legislation which was introduced into the General Assembly to establish riverboat gambling. About 15 years ago a major effort was launched to establish casino gambling in the Pocono Mountains. There were at least 23 bills submitted to the Legislature which in one form or another would have authorized casino or slot machines and video game devices. None of these bills passed at that time, and a great controversy ensued between those who advocated

State should take look before gambling leap

gambling and those who opposed it.

Recently, national publications have highlighted the extent to which gambling has become a major economic and business development sector activity across the United States. In fact, it is a worldwide phenomenon. Gambling and gaming functions are rising in many countries of the world, and are likely to expand tremendously as the world moves into the 21st century. What are the costs and what are the assets in relation to gambling and gaming?

Most research studies which have been completed on gambling and gaming have concluded that the expansion of this business sector has led to substantial numbers of new jobs wherever profitable casinos and gaming establishments have been opened. Income flow to municipalities and/or to states where these facilities have been established has been an important contributor to the revenue base of the jurisdiction involved.

On the other hand, the social costs are much more difficult to obtain and to quantify. Generalizations are made regarding the increase in crime and cost to governmental jurisdictions to provide services to areas where increased population occurs as a result of gaming facilities being constructed. In some cases, where gambling has been allowed but where it has been carefully monitored and controlled, there have been more clear and evident positive results from the establishment of these types of facilities.

Many variations and options have been used where gambling has been authorized. There is land based gambling and riverboat gambling. There is a 24 hour a day gambling and 15 or 18 hour a day gambling. There is no limitation on betting versus a very rigid limitation on betting, as low as \$5 per bet in some places. There are

a variety of compacts which exist between states and Indian casinos and between Indian tribes who administer and manage casinos and the gambling operators who have signed contracts to operate casinos on behalf of the Indian tribe. There are examples where Indian tribes have originally signed a contract with a gambling operator for a particular period of time and then have taken over the entire operations themselves. There does not seem to be one set of rules or principles which apply across the board when it comes to gambling functions and enterprises.

Where does this leave Pennsylvania? The basic answer is that the ultimate expansion of gambling in Pennsylvania is very much unclear and needs further rationalization assuming that more proposals will be made for gambling enterprises. Referendums may be a requirement if, in fact, riverboat gambling is eventually authorized. Referendums can take the form of a statewide referendum or local referendums where a specific proposal has been offered.

Undoubtedly, the Pennsylvania experience will be built on the foundation of examples elsewhere in the nation. This is why research needs to be continuously carried out in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to find out how gambling activities have taken place, what the success rate has been in relation to whatever performance measurements are possible, and what difficulties have occurred in the managing, operations, and eventual implementation of gambling and gaming. Clearly, Pennsylvania needs a policy in order to determine what the future role of gambling may be in the 21st century life of Pennsylvania.

Howard Grossman is Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He lives in Dallas.

Have a bright idea?

Share it with your neighbors by writing to The Dallas Post. We welcome letters to the editor and longer pieces that may run as guest columns. Send yours to: The Dallas Post, P.O. Box 366, Dallas PA 18612, or drop it off at our office at 45 Main Road, Dallas (across from Offset Paperback). Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number.

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