

EDITORIALS

Rec center represents more than a few acres of land

Good things are brewing for the Back Mountain on the recreation front, and we hope they will result in creation of a regional recreation area that can meet the needs of an active, growing population.

Anyone involved in youth sports, or who takes part in outdoor recreation, knows the region is woefully short on places to safely and conveniently play a game of baseball, take a hike or ride a bike. Yes, we are grateful to have Frances Slocum State Park, which offers many opportunities, but an area the size of ours can have so much more. Until now, though, it seemed the idea of six, seven or more municipalities joining forces to meet common needs was a pipedream, something that happens somewhere else, but never here. It may be time to cast off that negativism and enter a new era.

If Back Mountain Recreation Inc. successfully gains control of the 80 acres of land now under consideration, we could have new baseball and soccer fields, outdoor basketball and tennis courts, hiking and mountain bike trails, picnic areas and perhaps even an indoor facility with courts and — if enough money can be found to build it — a swimming pool.

Let's not make the mistake of thinking this would be a place just for competitive sports and body builders. In addition to running and jumping, shooting and throwing, a rec park could offer space for dance classes, adult education, bird watching and a host of activities that make life a little more rewarding.

Maybe we're getting a bit ahead of things, but we can't help be excited by the prospects. From concept to completion, it won't be easy to pull together the diverse interests of the communities, organizations and individuals who need to work together to pull off this ambitious. But with a committed group of people working toward a common goal, it is possible to put together perhaps the largest cooperative project in history in the Back Mountain. They can certainly count on our support.

We'll miss Welcome Wagon, and its representative, too

An era of sorts has come to an end in the Back Mountain. Eleanor Crinnion won't be coming to your home anymore. If you moved into or within Back Mountain, or had a child while living here, you've probably met Eleanor, who has visited hundreds of homes since 1977 as the local representative for Welcome Wagon International. She has served through thick and thin — and several ownership changes for Welcome Wagon — but even her good humor and persistence couldn't overcome the latest changes, which have brought Welcome Wagon to an end. It seems the company that owns Welcome Wagon feels it's better off sending in a coupon booklet than Eleanor and her counterparts nationwide.

Perhaps that's because in many places, it has become more and more difficult to find someone to take on the task of introducing new residents to their neighborhoods. There just aren't that many Eleanor Crinnions — even-tempered, conscientious, genuinely helpful individuals — around.

It's too bad. Our busy, impersonal world needs the people and institutions that help stitch together the bonds of communities. In this case, perceived efficiency has won out over personal contact. The Back Mountain, and the company that has ended Welcome Wagon, will both suffer a little as a result.

And, if you miss Eleanor, don't worry. You'll probably see her and her pets at the next Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction.

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Mundy's district encompasses: Dallas Borough, Dallas Township except for the north voting district, and Kingston Township.



Do you know where this old foundation is? Hint, you probably drive past it often. Photo by Ron Bartizek.

The economic viewpoint



Howard Grossman

Are there opportunities to attract more economic development to Back Mountain communities or any other suburban community in northeastern Pennsylvania? This challenging question asks local governmental officials to determine whether or not the tax base can be balanced with more economic development than is normally attributable to what are often termed "bedroom" communities. How can these types of communities position themselves to be attractive for economic growth?

It will be challenging and daunting to adopt a policy to attract new economic development, particularly business parks or office parks if that is what is desired in suburban northeastern Pennsylvania. Clearly, strip commercial development has occurred, some shopping center development, but very limited industrial development or

Sharing taxes could aid development

even high rise apartments which are tax generators. Needless to say, these uses of land may not be desired and not every available tract of land is useful for these purposes.

Most of the economic development where jobs have been substantially created have gone in to industrial or business parks in other locations in Wyoming Valley, Greater Scranton and other places. However, it should be noted that a major industrial park exists in what is defined as a bedroom community in Mountaintop where the Crestwood Industrial Park is located. Furthermore, in Greater Scranton in the Clarks Summit area, what may be defined as an office park has been situated.

If a policy is established in the future and some effort is undertaken to help balance the tax base, careful attention must be placed on the use and management of land and a plan should be prepared which covers these types of contingencies. There is an absence of planning in many places across northeastern Pennsylvania. While residential development has been established as a major use of land in suburban parts of the region, and while commercial development has occurred by happen-

stance, attention should be directed to the need for long-range planning with a cooperative partnership between and among the municipalities in suburban areas such as the Back Mountain.

Clearly, as development continues in these types of areas, associated services are required. These include police, fire, educational and a variety of other services which are administered by different types of institutions. The school district, the county, and the local government are all beneficiaries of the balancing of the tax base. In fact, while the school district includes several municipalities, and therefore, is a form of tax base sharing, wherever a major commercial structure is located, as the law reads today, only that municipality benefits in a tax sense. Tax pay sharing is a function which has been used in the Twin Cities in Minnesota, the Hackensack Meadows, where the Meadowlands Stadium is located and several other places. Tax base sharing was studied by the Pennsylvania Economy League several years ago, but no action was forthcoming.

As policy changes and perhaps new economic development occurs in the Back Mountain and elsewhere, tax base sharing should

be seriously considered as a technique for shared responsible planning and development purposes.

The land use movement in Pennsylvania is being spurred by a new report by the Pennsylvania 21st Century Environment Commission which came up with 240 recommendations for action. Their primary focus was on land use management. A group called 10,000 Pennsylvanians, headed by the former executive director of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, is further stirring the pot to encourage a statewide focus on land use and growth management. These twin towers represent a strong and continuing focus on issues of importance to the future of Pennsylvania and certainly the future of suburban areas such as the Back Mountain and others which dot the northeastern Pennsylvania landscape.

Planning is a basic requirement if northeastern Pennsylvania is to be competitive economically, in quality of life and in land use management as we quickly approach the new Millennium of the 21st century.

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

Library news



Nancy Kozemchak

The Back Mountain Memorial Library book shop held its grand opening on November 7 and the volunteers who manage the business of the shop are very pleased with the public interest in it. They have decided to open the book shop on Mondays also, due to public interest.

The hours on Monday will be

Book shop busy, will open Mondays

the same as Wednesdays, 1-8 p.m. The Monday sales will begin on January 4. The committee is always looking for more volunteers to man the shop for a few hours each week. Information can be obtained by calling the library. The special holiday hours sales were received and well attended, and concluded on Wednesday, December 30.

The 1999 library auction committee will hold the first meeting on Thursday, Jan. 7 at 7:30 p.m. in the community room at the library. The chairmen for the 53rd auction will be John and Susan Oswald.

Karen Boback will again be chair of the antiques committee

and will again accept antique donations and she has started to purchase some special antiques. Ruth Tetschner and Ed Johnson will be chairs of the auction book booth; Peggy Harvey will, once again be in charge of new goods and will welcome any donations; as always, books and odds and ends will be accepted at the library for the auction whenever the library is open. The 1999 dates are July 8, 9, 10 & 11, Thursday through Sunday.

New memory books: "The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 1, Sixth edition is given in memory of Irene Sheplock Thomas presented by her neighbors in Loyalville. The book in-

cludes 'The middle ages', Donaldson/Davis.

'The sixteenth century', Smith/Lewalski; 'The early seventeenth century', Adams/Logan; and 'The restoration and the eighteenth century', Monk/Lipking, the general editor of this volume is M.H. Abrams of Cornell University.

'The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 2, Sixth edition is given in memory of Dr. Robert H. Brown by Lee and Nancy Eckert. The book includes 'The romantic period', Abrams/Stilling; 'The Victorian age', Ford/Chris and 'The twentieth century', Daiches/Stallworthy.

General editor is M.H. Abrams, professor of English at Cornell.

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