

EDITORIALS

Township's favor to churches is ill-advised

"It's the principle that matters," goes an adage meant to remind us that practical considerations sometimes must be made subservient to higher matters, even when it seems petty and illogical to do so. That is the case with an ordinance under consideration in Kingston Township, which would waive building permit fees for "institutions of purely public charity for the advancement of religion."

Few people are opposed to charity, or religion for that matter, but that doesn't change the principle that government and the church must be kept separate, for the good of each. The ordinance itself, which will be adopted upon a second reading that will take place March 13, and the manner in which it came to being are out of line, and threaten the good reputation of both the township and religious institutions. Paul Sabol, the township supervisor who spearheaded the idea, says it sprang from a request made by a member of his church, which is about to embark on a major expansion project. Sabol asked the solicitor to the board of supervisors to draft the ordinance, which was initially believed to eliminate thousands of dollars in permit, inspection and engineering fees. There was even talk that two other churches in the township would be eligible for rebates of fees already paid. It turns out that the ordinance as now written applies only to building permit fees charged by the township, which are a small share of the total, but that doesn't mitigate the error that has been committed. The arguments against this waiver aren't about money - they are about the principles of American democracy, with some practical complications thrown in.

Religious organizations hold a special place in the United States, and one of the reasons they are held in such high esteem is their clear separation from government. One need look no further than the daily headlines to see graphic evidence of the harm that can be done both to churches and to nations when the two become intertwined. This is not to suggest that Kingston Township is the next Iran or Afghanistan, but there is no doubt that when any institution or individual is singled out for preferential treatment, the door opens a crack for resentment and suspicion to creep in. Aside from the question of legality this ordinance poses, the fact that it was spurred on by a township official, without public comment or discussion, taints both the provider and recipients of the benefit.

There is a pragmatic side to this issue, as well. Who will decide what a qualifying entity is, and what will be the criteria? Must a "purely public charity for the advancement of religion" be an established church? Why can't it be a practitioner of voodoo who gives to the poor and wants to add a room for observance of ritual? It's unlikely any clear guidelines exist, or could ever be written to cover all the possibilities for confusion or fraud.

This ordinance is a rare misstep in a township that has a sterling reputation for effective, efficient and sensible government. It is not too late for the supervisors to reconsider this ill-advised ordinance which it turns out offers far less advantage to churches than expected, while skating much too close to the edge of political and religious principles that are the bedrock of our society.

Publisher's Notebook

Ron Bartizek



There's been a lot of criticism lately directed at captains of industry whose companies have fallen on hard times, through no fault of their own. Kenneth Lay, for example, has been bashed unmercifully for failing to rein in renegade Enron employees who concocted exotic schemes in which they paid themselves millions off the books.

I think it is terribly unfair to expect the chairman of the board to know what's going on in every corner of their business. These are busy people, after all, with a myriad of important details to mind. Lay, for example, had six or seven homes to buy, build, maintain and use. If he's like many corporate titans, he also has a collection of expensive cars, artwork and mistresses that compete for his attention. Besides all those mundane details, Lay and his compatriots have their own investments to keep tabs on, and that can take a lot of time. Imagine the pressure these underappreciated bastions of freedom feel when their companies lend them hundreds of millions of dollars to invest - in personal accounts - in other companies that may be doing better than their own. This is what is known as diversification; put money in another company where you hope the boss is paying more attention than you are. Since it would be unreasonably restrictive to expect these men (and an occasional woman) to actually pay back the loan if the investments go bad, sympathetic board members usually find a way to pass the losses on to the suckers - I mean shareholders.

Anyway, you can see by this very short description of a corporate chieftain's agenda that it is ludicrous to expect them to focus on issues like running the company when so many more important personal concerns require their attention. Thank goodness enlightened bosses extend the same courtesy to worker bees below them in the hierarchy, right?



Footprints in the snow on Glendalough Pond. Photo by Ron Bartizek.

LOOKING BACK



70 Years Ago - February 19, 1932

LEHMAN HOLDS LEAD IN RURAL LEAGUE

Lehman clung to first place by margin of half a game as a result of the games played in the Rural League when they easily defeated Trucksville 28 to 17 at Lehman.

Renovation of the interior of the old Dallas First National Bank building is being quickly pushed to completion by employees of A.J. Sordoni construction company.

Members of Dr. Henry M. Laing Fire company held their Leap Year Dance in Dallas High school gymnasium. Round and square dances were held, and Warhola's Orchestra furnished the music. This was a community fund raiser for the fire company.

60 Years Ago - February 20, 1942

467 MEN REGISTERED FOR MILITARY SERVICE

467 Back Mountain men registered for military service at the Dallas Borough High school. The

men were between the ages of 20 and 44 years of age. Men from all walks of life, farmers to business men. Some among them were fathers and sons, such as Henry Fritzes and his son Robert Henry Fritzes.

About 100 farmers of the northern tier townships of Luzerne County met in Dallas township High School Auditorium to discuss plans for tomato canning acreage. It is the plan of the canners, Chef Boyardee Food Products Company of Milton, Pa., to contract within the vicinity of Dallas for at least 360 acres of tomatoes for canning purposes.

Within the week the names of more than 100 men and women from the Back Mountain region serving in the armed services have been placed on The Post's mailing list. They will receive this weekly newspaper for as long as they are in the service.

50 Years Ago - February 22, 1952

PAUL M. WINTER SEEKS SEAT IN NEXT CONGRESS

Petitions are being circulated for Paul M. Winter of Shavertown, as a candidate for the Republican nomination for Congress from the Eleventh District of Pennsylvania. Mr. Winter is known for his ability as a public speaker.

Howard, George and Edward Whitesell, have opened the 180 home Oak Hill Development at Idetown and expect to have twenty houses up this year. Ten styles of homes will be available to customers with prices ranging

from \$8,500 to \$15,000.

Mothers will challenge ladies of the faculty at Lehman-Jackson school in a basketball game. All proceeds will go to equip a dental clinic. Four games in all are scheduled.

40 Years Ago - February 22, 1962

CANCER CRUSADE LEADERS NAMED

The American Cancer Society has named three Back Mountain residents leaders for the Cancer Crusade. They are: Mrs. R. C. Post, chairman, and Mrs. Hanford Eckman, vice chairman, and Lester W. Hauck, chairman.

Two Back Mountain boys have completed basic training at Fort Jackson, S. C. They are: Pvt. Arthur Spencer, and Pvt. Donald G. Steltz. Both have attended Lake-Lehman School. Spencer, was a pole-man for Sordoni Construction Co., and Steltz, was a mechanic at Meekers Garage, Kunkle.

Well drillers are digging a new well at Monroe Township School at Beaumont because the present supply of water has been condemned.

30 Years Ago - March 2, 1972

NEW DALLAS AMBULANCE DELIVERED

A new ambulance, with the latest and most up-to-date equipment, was delivered to Dallas community Ambulance unit. The Cadillac Superior, blue in color, is a larger vehicle than the

previously owned 1968 model.

The possibility of extending the present sewer system of Dallas Area Municipal authority to include the Dug Road area was discussed at a meeting of Dug Road Area Taxpayers Association. The entire in question includes Meadowcrest, Terrace and Highland avenues, and the Checkerboard Inn section of Carverton Road.

Harold J. Rose Jr., Dallas, president of Wyoming National Bank of Wilkes-Barre, had accepted an appointment as chairman of the building and construction division of the Wyoming Valley United Fund.

20 Years Ago - March 9, 1982

HARVEYS LAKE COUNCIL ABOLISHES PLANNING GROUP

In a surprise move, Harveys Lake Borough Council voted unanimously to abolish the community's planning commission and establish in its place a planning committee comprised of three councilmen and five member citizen advisory board.

As a direct result of action by Lehman Taxpayers Association, the Internal Revenue Service has begun a query into the rate increase allowed to UGI Corporation's Luzerne Electric Division by Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

An additional \$102,000 has been approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the proposed construction of a swimming pool at Frances Slocum State Park.

New books on shelves at Back Mountain library

The Back Mountain Memorial Library, 96 Huntsville Road, Dallas, announces the addition of the following books to their collection.

- FICTION**
 "One Door Away From Heaven" by Dean R. Koontz
 "Tishomingo Blues" by Elmore Leonard
 "Thursday's Child" by Sandra Brown
 "Heart of a warrior" by Johanna Lindsey
 "A Little Magic" by Nora Roberts
 "Blackwater Sound" by James Hall
 "Three Weeks in Paris" by Barbara Taylor Bradford
 "The Gingerbread Man" by Maggie Shayne
 "Queenmaker" by India Edghill
- NON-FICTION**
 "J.K. Lasser's Your Income Tax 2002"
 "One Nation: America Remembers September 11, 2002"
 "Every Breath You Take" by Ann Rule
 "History of Women in the Pennsylvania House of Repre-

- sentatives 1923-2002" by Jeanne Hearn Schmedien
 "Wedding Etiquette for Divorced Families" by Martha A. Woodham
 "The Death of the West" by Patrick J. Buchanan
 "How to Buy or Sell Your Home Without a Broker" by Milt Tanzer
- MYSTERY**
 "Agatha Raisin and the Love From Hell" by M.C. Beaton
 "Murder at the President's Door" by Elliot Roosevelt
- LARGE PRINT FICTION**
 "Violets are Blue" by James Patterson
 "The Millionaires" by Brad Meltzer
 "Eden Burning" by Elizabeth Lowell
 "The Evidence Against Her" by Robb Forman Dew
- BOOKS ON CD**
 "Every Breath You Take" by Ann Rule
 "Theodore Rex" by Edmund Morris
- VIDEOS**
 "Christmas Hymns and Carols
 "Songs of the Holiday Season"
 "Songs From the Heartland"



Library hosts Aids Quilt

LINC-ONE, a buddy program of the Northeastern Regional HIV Planning Coalition, is presently displaying volunteer program information and a special names quilt that memorializes people who have died from AIDS.

For further information on volunteering in the LINC-ONE Program, please contact Patricia Schwoebel at 829-6711, ext. 248. Martha Butler, MLS, Back Mountain Memorial Library Director, examines Northeastern HIV Planning Coalition brochure, standing by the regional Names Quilt.

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