

Back Mountain trail gets a financial boost

By KASIA KOPEC
Special to The Dallas Post

Hikers and bikers take heart: expansion of the Back Mountain Trail is on again.

Last spring, plans to extend the popular trail appeared to be in peril after it was announced 20 property owners had not agreed to provide easements allowing the trail to cross private land.

Now, with many of the easements acquired and verbal or written commitments for all but a handful of those remaining, Judy Rimple, past president of the Anthracite Scenic Trails Association and the driving force behind the trail's creation, said the group is optimistic it will complete its work by 2005. That's the deadline for wrapping up work paid for with a \$80,000 federal trail construction grant.

The grant was given on the condition the trail association come up with matching funds equaling 20 percent, or \$96,000.

That goal was achieved last month when the Maslow Family Foundation donated \$20,000.

"What an amazing and generous gift," said Rimple, whose husband, David, also made a significant financial contribution to the effort when he purchased a third-mile stretch of rail bed between Franklin Street to Lower Demunds Road.

On top of these and another \$13,000 in private donations, the association received two state grants in December totaling \$52,000.

Significant progress also has been made in the drive to get easements needed to continue building north toward College Misericordia.

Another mile-long stretch linking the Trucksville and downtown Shavertown sections of Kingston Township could be completed as early as this summer, said Mark Albrecht, president of the Back Mountain Trail Association.



POST PHOTO/IRON BARTIZEK

This old stone culvert along Toby's Creek is one sight that walkers of a completed Back Mountain Trail could see. Do you know where it is?

Other projects on tap for the warm weather months include the construction of a quarter-mile path, known as the Luzerne Creek Walk, which will extend the trail at its southern-most end. A new trailhead at Carverton Road in Trucksville will also be built.

The trailhead will be a costly project because it will require steps and railing to be installed, said Albrecht.

"But I'm really looking forward to having it in place, because it will open up the trail to a lot

people, who until now had to risk climbing a pretty steep incline to access the trail or drive to Luzerne," said Albrecht, who added he used to think a trail could be built with \$1.98 and a bunch of rakes.

"It's a long process and it's costing a lot more than I ever imagined it could, but I think we're at a stage where the trail is going to be a lot more visible and just because of that increased visibility more people will be taking an interest in it, which hopefully will make our

work easier going forward," Albrecht said.

At February's meeting, the association will discuss design ideas for the second phase of the trail, linking Shavertown and College Misericordia.

Many easements needed for that part of the path have already been secured, but Rimple said surveying still needs to be done to identify boundaries in a few areas. It might also be necessary to design detours in areas where easements cannot be granted because the land is al-

ready publicly owned. Areas where utility lines or underground pipelines intersect the trail are examples of land on which second easements cannot be granted.

"We will have to go off trail in a few spots," said Rimple. "For example, there will probably be a stretch along Main Street in Shavertown that we'll be utilizing, but we won't be going out to the highway at all."

This article appeared in original form in the Times Leader.

Taxes same in Franklin Township budget

FRANKLIN TWP. — By a 2-1 vote, supervisors passed a \$450,506 budget December 30, with no tax increase for township residents.

Supervisor Michael Prokopchak voted against the budget, saying a 90-cent per hour salary increase for township employees was too much. The employees have not had a raise in two years.

In other business, the board passed a resolution naming Berkheimer Associates the collector of earned income taxes and occupation privilege taxes for five years. Berkheimer is charging the township 1.75 percent of taxes collected, which is less than the 2.75 percent previously charged.

An open records policy also was passed by the board, effective immediately.

"This policy will provide and formalize the request of copies of public records," said Solicitor Benjamin Jones.

Also during the meeting, Donald Boyko of Culver Hill Road asked the board for permission to have the property where resides be surveyed by a telecommunications outfit.

"I'd like them to do a survey and see if it's feasible to erect a tower on my property," Boyko said.

Supervisors said they could not stop Boyko from having his property surveyed.

Jones plans to draw up an ordinance regarding the township's stance on telecommunication towers. The first reading of the ordinance will be during the supervisors' next meeting on Jan. 6.

— Kimberly James

Cub Scout Pack 281 events

Cub Scout Pack 281 has scheduled the following events:
Pinewood Derby truck races, Dallas High School Gym, Sun., Jan. 26 2 p.m.

"Countries of the World" window display, Besecker's Realty, Main St., Sat. Feb. 1.

Scout Sunday Service, Dallas United Methodist Church, Sun. Feb. 2 10:30 a.m.

Huntsville U.M. Church pizza fundraiser

The second Friday of each month the Huntsville United Methodist Church will be selling "pizza" as a church fundraiser. You may call any church member or the church office phone 675-3375 and leave a message if you wish to contact the church, and your call will be returned to you. This fundraiser will go on each month until the Lenten season. The cost of the pizza is \$6 for 12 large cuts.

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