

Candidates respond to questions about Kingston Township now and in the future

Editor's Note: The Dallas Post posed three questions about the present state of Kingston Township and each candidate's opinion on pressing issues. The questions were asked in the same order for each candidate. Candidates were also given the opportunity to identify what they saw as the greatest challenges in the future. Their responses, edited for space and brevity, appear below, separated by lines.



Neil Allen
Republican



Jeff Box
Republican



Chris Concert
Democrat



Jerry Fritzges
Republican



Dave Jenkins
Republican



Sean McAndrew
Republican

John Versari
Republican

Chris Yankovich
Republican

Are you satisfied with the township's current planning and zoning regulations and controls? If not, what would you like to see happen?

"Our decision was already made that we're going to review all zoning ordinances. We're going to take time to go through them bit by bit. We're going to be comprehensive and up to date."

He said the future review is needed because they have "apparent contradictions and inconsistencies." Allen said he was happy with the "forward thinking 50/50 plan. It will establish green areas."

"Whole heartedly." "For Public safety, such as on Route 309. We need barriers. It's a suicide run."

Allen said the COG would also be useful for grant purposes. "The COG is working very closely with the Dallas Visioning Committee."

Do you support the Council of Governments with other Back Mountain communities? If so, what would you like to see the COG involved in?

"As of the beginning of last year, our township board was decimated. We inherited that. We started a program of controlling costs. Our objective is to maximize revenues and control costs."

"We raised questions with the tax collector and are not satisfied with answers so we hired a public accounting firm to do a review of practices and procedures and receipt of money gotten from earned income tax collection agency."

What can the township do to better manage its budget?

"Public safety. The Route 309 corridor is an absolute disaster."

Allen said another aspect of concern under public safety is the news that came last month that the Luzerne County Housing Authority won't be able to pay \$18,000 over the next six months for township police to patrol the Meadowcrest housing development in Trucksville. In fact, the authority won't be able to pay anything over the next year; an amount typically around \$36,000.

"We'll still provide coverage whether we get the income or not."

Finish paving the last .8 of a mile of Green Road. Allen said the paving is the last in the township.

Rev. Bealla

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said. "To come to this church at the near completion of the new addition to the administration building is very exciting. It was a little difficult to walk in at the end of the project, but a capable group of lay people has helped me with my learning curve and has brought the project this far."

Six hundred square feet of the new space will house the Back Mountain Food Pantry, which is a community ministry for Dallas, Trucksville, Shavertown and the surrounding area. "Sharing this resource with the

community is efficient and it takes the load off the individual churches to provide this service," Bealla said. "It will be at ground level which will make it easier for people to donate and pick up food. We thank the township for the use of their basement storage area that served this purpose for so many years."

Bealla has another vision for this new wing. "We want it to become a learning center as we find ways to open our doors to those who want to teach and to those who want to learn. We hope that the community will come for Bible study and stay for church services."

With the dedication of the

"Yes. The problem with zoning ordinances is they need to be enforced equally. They're letting them build too many buildings up here. We need to save our wildlife and environmental surroundings."

"If we keep letting them build and build, we're going to end up like Kingston or Wilkes-Barre. People move out here for the country life. We need to save what we have."

"Yes. As long as it's going to help us, fine. The Back Mountain is a community; we need to work as one."

Concert said he is against police regionalization. "When we have something good, let's keep it."

"Watch what they spend. If you only have a dollar, can't spend two."

Concert said he is against the township giving donations to any group unless it is going to give to all groups. Referring to the time earlier in the year when the township decided to not give a donation to the Raiders football program, but then gave money to the Dallas School District he said, "They play favorites. If we don't have it, none of them should get it."

"We need to take accountability for the budget. People didn't want to take accountability for the budget." Concert said he doesn't believe supervisors should be paid for special meetings needed because supervisors have made errors.

"The road situation needs to be fixed. I support Mr. Balavage in his quest to fix it. A barrier up the middle needs to happen."

"Rental units. Something needs to be done with them. They're unsafe. Something needs to be done about the zoning. They should be inspected prior to tenant occupancy to make sure they're safe."

He said he thinks people moving into the area should register to live in the township so the township knows who is living in it.

"As a citizen I don't know the current rules and regulations. Naturally I'm not as informed as a sitting supervisor."

"I am in full agreement with the 50/50. That is a fantastic compromise. Rather than having homes built right on top of each other, 50 percent has to go to the land. I think that is a great idea."

"I support it, but from past experiences I don't know if it would work. Years ago we tried to regionalize the police departments. That didn't last very long. I believe it is a good idea, but I am hesitant."

"We have to get accurate figures from the two collecting agencies, there was a mistake there. In previous years it was fine."

"There are cost cutting measures that have not been looked at." "There are income getting procedures out there."

"Traffic and accidents. I would like to see the median barriers put in. I know they're ugly but if they're going to save lives, any life saved is worth the ugliness and the cost of the barriers."

"I believe the land use ordinances require a top to bottom review. Through the review you will improve on how developments will fit into the township. Then you get into matters of aesthetics — road width, tree lawns, easements, the impact on traffic flow and existing neighborhoods. We also have to make changes relative to zoning matters such as commercial sign ordinances. Whether it's land use or zoning it can be looked at and modified by utilizing land planning specialists. They did that in Williamsport and Lancaster — you don't have to reinvent the wheel."

"A lot has to be done to get those up to current standards in other communities." "I haven't directly been involved with the COG. I would support the concept however. My question would be what resources are needed to move forward — human resources and financial." "My concerns are how is it going to work, who's going to head it up, and how much is it going to cost the involved to townships."

"I support the idea. The difficulty is the up front money to get it up and running."

Jenkins feels it would be advantageous if through the COG, communities could share things, for example fire equipment and recreational facilities.

"In other years we've had sound budgets. One has to very carefully watch expenses. I'm familiar with working with budgets; I am the treasurer of our church."

"You have to make sure you're not getting ahead on the expense side versus income."

"Land development against natural resources. We have one development after another. There's a lack of easements between. People should be able to move between one development and another."

"Traffic issues. People still have the ability to make jug handled turns. It takes time and work to roll up our sleeves to get involved in this. I'm not opposed (to barriers) if it's a recommendation from PennDOT."

"The town park is 30 years old. It has one basketball court and one tennis court." Jenkins is in favor of a second recreation center with fields for soccer, baseball, basketball and walking areas for seniors.

"Essentially we need to have an overhaul of planning and zoning ordinances as they are now."

McAndrew said it would be good to have an independent planning consultant, experienced in planning and zoning ordinances, do the overhaul.

"One of the things in particular I'm concerned about are land use ordinances."

"I haven't directly been involved with the COG. I would support the concept however. My question would be what resources are needed to move forward — human resources and financial."

"My concerns are how is it going to work, who's going to head it up, and how much is it going to cost the involved to townships."

"We need to look at it like any other budget. What are wants and what are needs."

"How much are our needs going to cost? You don't want to go beyond into negative numbers unless it's an absolute necessity."

"The budget needs to be closely maintained and watched going into the future."

"Land development. Safety — in terms of more and more people moving in. Fire, police and ambulance. As the population is growing, need to make sure those three areas have enough resources. (They) need to increase proportionally to the population increasing." McAndrew said "a big issue-not pressing- is recreation." The population has doubled, but (the township) hasn't added any more parks. I am a young father with children, we should have places to go."

"Preserving natural resources, in terms of preserving green areas and all of our natural resources. As developments are being proposed, the concept of preserving greenspace can be made into an ordinance."

"I'm happy with any ordinance that's been changed or added since I've been supervisor. We just passed a couple ordinances about the 50/50 and keeping the township greener."

"I want to create an ordinance where (the number of) vending machines are limited outside of businesses."

"I want to upgrade ordinances so we don't have problems with x-rated dance clubs."

"Increase permit fee amount for outside vendors coming in (like those selling flowers around Mothers Day) because we want to take care of our merchants in the Back Mountain. I want to make it big enough where it's going to discourage them (the vendors)."

"Yes. I'd like to see the COG involved in an aquifer study, in traffic, cooperative purchasing." Versari added he would like to see limiting of overdevelopment be undertaken by the COG as well.

"It was in red from last year. The current supervisor board inherited it in the red."

"We take a hard look at it every month. Any areas that are over budget are addressed right away." He said supervisors on the board with a financial and business background should continue to review it monthly.

Versari said most important was not increasing taxes.

"One of the biggest problems is traffic on 309, but overdevelopment of Kingston Township; also conservation and the water. Water's going to run out if we keep developing."

Referring to the incident with the Don Wilkinson Agency in which the company, in error, deposited over \$113,000 in township accounts, Versari said getting one tax collecting agency was important.

"We've had to have a forensic audit by a CPA because there were discrepancies in the method of collection in reimbursing the township."

"The planning and zoning regulations that are in place are not bad."

"Some changes we'd all like to see." Overall we have some decent planning and zoning regulations."

Yankovich said while he was on the board, the board brought about the 50/50 ordinance which, if passed into law, requires developers to save 50 percent of the developable land as green space.

"I know there's some objections to it, but in reality you have to save some lands. I don't mean this in a bad way, but you don't want to end up with another Kingston."

"At this time I decline to answer."

"Controlling spending is the top thing. One of the things we are looking at is how to cut costs."

"If we're trying to save money to balance our budget, you don't take out a \$500,000 loan," said Yankovich referring to a loan the board voted to take out last year.

"Really right now we don't have any big problems. Our roads are in good shape. We're in pretty good shape."

"We've taught people how to build, and have bake sales and chicken dinners. It's time to really focus and help them grow spiritually as Christians."

Rev. Mike Bealla
Trucksville United Methodist

new wing being planned for Pentecost Sunday, June 8, and the ribbon cutting for the food pantry to be held at noon on Tuesday, June 10. Bealla finds himself asking the question, "Where do we go from here? With all of the demands on this new generation, we must find new ways of being the church," he said. "We must present the

church in a new way with new energy or we will be left behind."

Bealla has helped author Faith Quest, a Bible study program for the 21st century, and is a national trainer of the program. "It is a journey toward a movement away from the church as an institution to recreating the church as a com-

munity of faith," he said. "Church membership is declining. People no longer want to join a church even though they may come on a regular basis."

"In the 1950s and 60s we built one Methodist church a day in this country. There are more than 39,500 churches today. That's more than the number of post offices in existence," Bealla said. "We've taught people how to build, and have bake sales and chicken dinners. It's time to really focus and help them grow spiritually as Christians. By 2008, 40 percent of the population will be under 19 years old. If we don't reach them, what's going to happen?"

Bealla was born in Wilkes-Barre and graduated from Coughlin High School. He attended Penn State and graduated from College Misericordia. He received his Masters of Divinity from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey in 1982. He was ordained in 1984. Bealla has served Methodist churches in Kunkle, Alderson, Skinners Eddy, Laceyville, Factoryville, Nicholson, Dallas and Endwell, NY.

He is the son of Andrew Bealla and the late Arlene Bealla. He is married to Bonnie Staber and has four children, Wesley, Jeremy, Scott and Ami.