

OUR OPINION

Lake-Lehman needs numbers it can rely on

There is more than enough uncertainty in this year's school budget planning, much of it stemming from Governor Ed Rendell's dream of greater state funding that is tied to a realignment of the tax burden from property to income. That's why it is more important than ever that school directors have reliable estimates of the portion of the budget they control. If some directors' concerns voiced at this week's board meeting are to be believed, that may not be the case in the Lake-Lehman School District.

Over the past few years, several Lake-Lehman school board members have complained — often quite loudly — about discrepancies in the budget. There have been charges that the district essentially keeps two sets of books, one that includes capital items and another for operations, and that figures change dramatically from month to month. It would take a thorough audit to determine if any of those charges would bear out, but the perception of lax or inaccurate accounting should be enough incentive for district officials to make a clear and convincing presentation to the board and public and thus erase any doubts.

Given that one of the directors most skeptical of the budget projections is an accountant by trade, it would seem now, as the district awaits real numbers from the state, now would be a good time to be certain of the revenues and expenditures Lake-Lehman is committed to.

That championship season; our condolences to the parents

Congratulations are in order for a whole host of Back Mountain youth sports teams this week, as baseball and softball squads savor the wonderful feeling that comes from being the best, for at least one season. Local teams won both the Little League baseball and softball District 16 championships, a feat made even more momentous when you consider that this is the largest district in the state. Now those teams have moved on to sectional play (softball started last week) and we wish them only the best bounces and most favorable calls.

There are champions or near champs at lots of other levels of play, from seniors to 8-9-year-olds, and if the district playoffs proved too much, there's probably a tournament or two that are still up for grabs. That's where the condolences come in; by the time the kids play the regular season and league playoffs, most families are ready for a break, maybe even a vacation. But it sometimes seems there is no rest awaiting the weary as one series of games follows another, interspersed with nightly practice.

Is it all worth it? Each family will have to answer that for themselves. There is certainly no reason to devalue spending summer days and evenings somewhere other than at the ball field, and even if they don't have trophies to show for it, kids who don't play ball can find other ways to rest, relax and recharge before school opens again. But for the ones who get a kick out of whacking a ball with a stick (even adults do it, but off a tee), there's nothing like grasping a championship medal on a field of dreams.

PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

Universal Studios, which released "2 Fast 2 Furious" earlier this year, has joined the parade of individuals, companies and institutions that are holding fast to a new American credo — "Don't blame me."

It seems that following the release of this film and its 2001 predecessor, teenagers have been killing themselves and others at a record pace as they emulate special effects presented in living color on the screen while piloting their, mom's or dad's car. But despite some compelling evidence, such as ticket stubs from the movie found in six cars that were racing down a California interstate at 120 miles per hour, the studio says to link the movie to actual behavior would be to "confuse cause and effect."

Right. Tell that to the parents of a 17-year-old boy in Florida who was killed as he raced his mother's Corvette after seeing the movie. Now I'll grant that allowing a new driver behind the wheel of a 'Vette might sound nuts to most of us, but viewers of the films know most of the cars in them are souped-up Hondas, Toyotas and similar makes, so the car isn't the only part of the equation that matters.

Whenever a media company or advertiser ducks responsibility for the fallout from its presentations, I want to ask just one question: Does this mean you spend all that money on promotion of your product or service knowing it gets no response at all? This is like cigarette manufacturers denying that they try to convince people to smoke — they do — or beer makers crying crocodile tears over the ill effects of chugging a couple of six packs a day.

Movies like "2 Fast 2 Furious" may not cause kids to drive like crazy any more than beer ads make people become alcoholics. But they certainly have the power to influence our thoughts and emotions, if only for a little while. If they didn't, I'm pretty sure "It's a Wonderful Life" wouldn't still be shown every Christmas and Budweiser wouldn't sell more beer than Schlitz.

It's a pretty safe bet the companies that engage in this "I never had sex with that woman" type denial would say ambulance-chasing lawyers have forced them to take this position, and there may be a grain of truth in that. But all the sophistry they can muster won't fool anyone who lives in a world where we are held accountable for even unintended consequences.



No one's been knocking on this door. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

GUEST COLUMN

Are we one region? Time will tell

Howard J. Grossman, AICP

Are we one region? This question has been a puzzle for many decades, as the search for regionalism has taken many directions. Today, this search has enabled new initiatives to be established and the refreshing of some older ones. Some examples include the rebirth of Penns Northeast as a major regional marketing tool for the region with the recent selection of a new CEO who is now based at the office of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (formerly the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania). The marketing program is being funded with monies from the private and public sectors and special targeting of the "new economy" and other sectors.

A second newer initiative is the Great Valley Technology Alliance that recently employed a CEO, and has continued to promote and market seminars and other activities designed to instill through private sector and educational institutions, a sense of new technology functions that would be a new approach to economic development in the region. One newer step in this process is the investigation of a new Great Valley Technology Institute that could involve many of the colleges and universities already serving the region.

A third component is the NEPA Alliance. This organization employed a new executive director two years ago, has continued some of the programs that were initiated many years ago such as the award winning enterprise development program of assistance to businesses and industries including loan interest loans, small business procurement technical support, export promotion and international trade, and other activities. As an adjunct to these programs, the Alliance is implementing a regional entrepreneurial network to help up

and coming small businesses survive and prosper.

While these activities are a few of the examples of regionalism, they are the tip of the iceberg in the region to explore other ways for local governments, community groups, and all parts of the economy, public, private, and nonprofit to work more closely together. Examples include the budding formation of a Back Mountain Council of Governments, something that was tried many years ago, but at the time could be sustained. The newer step is a major, progressive opportunity to have local governments work together, similar to many other examples across the Commonwealth. One such technique is the Northern York Regional Police Force that has survived for many years and has actually increased more effective police service, increased opportunities for professional police forces, and not increased the cost of such service, based on the population service base of that eight county region. Furthermore one council of governments in the state is in Center County where Penn State University is located, and where several local governments have joined together for many years, provided many types of joint services, and has the largest Council of Governments (COG) budget in the Commonwealth. In fact, their staff has visited this region a number of times and discussed their current role and responsibilities.

Shared services is possible through funding available from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) with a Governor's Northeast Office at East Mountain and a DCED office in Scranton. Newer steps being contemplated include the home rule charter for Luzerne County, the battle for which is being sharpened for November voting. This decision will have vital impact on the future of re-

gionalism in the region, since Luzerne is the largest populated county in the entire northeast region. While home rule in and by itself is not a panacea for economic security in the County, there is a certainty that restructuring, if approved, would be a substantial shift from the current way county government exists. How all of this works out will be closely watched as November approaches.

The recreational picture in the Back Mountain has regional implications. The new recreational complex, once opened will serve the Back Mountain area and be another stepping stone toward a view of this area as being geographically spread and a regional asset. Looking at regionalism in another way, the Back Mountain offers two colleges and universities, Misericordia and Penn State Wilkes-Barre, nearby major regional state parks such as Ricketts Glen and Frances Slocum, a Back Mountain trails corridor that has been established, and other region or area wide facilities and infrastructure that stretches over several municipalities. Although not thought of a regional facility, the Lake-Lehman and Dallas Area School Districts are examples of joint functions as is the Dallas Area Authority.

A unified region has many attributes. Both counties and local governments are part of this strategy, and many more examples exist in other parts of the region called the Pocono-Northeast. As this decade proceeds, there will be more initiatives that will fall into place. The answer to the question of being "one region" is yet to be firmly established, but there is much to be proud of in the functions that already have been organized in both the Back Mountain and within the various counties called northeastern Pennsylvania.

Howard Grossman lives in Dallas.

Letters, columns and editorials

The Dallas Post publishes opinions on a variety of topics in many forms. Editorials, which are the opinion of the management of The Post, appear on the editorial page and are written by the editor unless otherwise indicated. Any artwork represents the opinion of the cartoonist, and columns are the opinion of the author.

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published, subject to the following guidelines:

- Letters should not exceed 500 words.
- No writer may have more than one letter published during a 30-day period, except as a reply to another letter.
- Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification.
- Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer.
- The Post retains the right to accept or reject any letter, and to edit letters for grammar and spelling, as well as to eliminate any libel, slander or objectionable wording.

In addition to letters, we welcome longer pieces that may run as columns. The author or subject's relevance to the Back Mountain will be the prime consideration when selecting material for publication.

70 Years Ago - July 21, 1933

CONSOLIDATION VOTE POSSIBLE IN FALL

Possibility of authorizing consolidation of Dallas Township, Kingston Township and Dallas Borough



ONLY YESTERDAY

at an election in the fall became evident as the officials of the three communities moved to sponsor a series of public mass meetings to sound sentiment before drawing up petitions.

The J.K. Mosser Tannery at Noxen, is now working on a full time schedule. The leather produced at Noxen is considered among the best produced in this country.

Some of the items you could get at A & P Stores were: sugar, lb 49¢; tomato soup, 4 cans 25¢; cake flour, pkg 29¢; Camay Soap, 4 cakes 19¢.

60 Years Ago - July 23, 1943

FUEL OIL USERS MUST FILE FORMS

Only fifteen out of one hundred persons who use fuel oil for heating purposes in the area served by Dallas War Price and Rationing Boards have returned their renewal forms for winter use. The District office of OPA warned the local office that many persons will be without fuel oil unless they return their renewals promptly.

Persons in the armed forces of the United States, who were residents of Pennsylvania at the time of their induction into service may obtain resident fishing licenses, without charge.

A rush of more than 75 housewives seeking canning sugar swamped clerks at Dallas war Price and Rationing Board after an erroneous item appeared in the Dallas column of a Wilkes-Barre newspaper stating that this is the last week to obtain canning sugar.

50 Years Ago - July 17, 1953

HIGH SPOT OF THE AUCTION IF SALE OF AUTO

High spot of the Auction was the sale of a 1953 two-door Chevrolet sedan purchased at a discount through the cooperation of Bonner Chevrolet and Strayers City Chevrolet. Profits from the sale went to the Auction. The car sold for \$2,000.

Lieutenant Colonel Frank Townend, was designated commander of the reorganized 109th Field Artillery Battalion.

In an effort to reduce the number of highway accidents that have incensed residents and vacationers at Harveys lake, Chief Edgar Hughes announced that a speed trap will be put in operation.

40 Years Ago - July 18, 1963

DALLAS BOARD TO SELL LAND IN SHAVERTOWN

Dallas School Board in adjourned session approved the recommendation of Solicitor Jonathan Valentine that the secretary execute a quit claim in the Pennsylvania Department of Highways on the section of Shavertown School grounds sought for road construction in the amount of \$975.

Some movies that were at the Dallas Family Drive-In: Tammy and the Doctor starring Sandra Dee and Peter Fonda; The Young Racers with Mark Damon and Luana Anders.

Back Mountain area will have several key figures in this year's Giants despair Hill climb. Two of these personalities are: Bonnie Gross, crowned Miss RaceWeek, and Dave Adams, a leading contender for honors in the F-Production class.

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