

## Cop

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"He's not making arrests. No sins were committed."

Questions about Klinger's certification surfaced when police Chief Jack Fowler and Councilman Dennis Garvey expressed concerns about Klinger performing police duties while not being certified by the state.

A lack of certification prevents Klinger from being allowed to perform police duties, such as making arrests or traffic stops.

But Klinger is not doing those duties, Carroll said. He is only watching patrol officers.

"He does no police work," Carroll said. "Steven Klinger has never been sworn in. He doesn't have a badge."

The borough hired Klinger in July with the understanding he would have to be fully certified before doing real police work, said Councilman John Oliver.

Oliver said Klinger has finished all appropriate schooling and training, but is still waiting for his paperwork to be certified by the state. Once he becomes certified, Klinger will be a part-time patrolman, Oliver said.

Klinger has completed a two-year program at Lackawanna college and received mandatory state training.

"He had the book smarts, but no experience on the road," said Carroll.

So, in the meantime, the borough allowed Klinger to ride along with other officers to observe their duties.

Carroll said Thursday that an application for Klinger's certification was "on its way in" to Harrisburg.

"We've asked him to ride along with an officer to learn the ropes, procedures and so forth," Oliver said. "He's not doing any police work."

Klinger is paid the rate of a part-time police officer, Carroll said, about \$11 an hour, he thought. Borough Manager Joe Moskovitz estimated that Klinger has been paid for about 80 hours so far.

Dallas Township police chief Robert Jolley said paid training is also the norm in his department.

Other borough officials showed concern about Klinger driving a patrol car while in uniform and carrying a firearm.

Carroll said he's seen Klinger in uniform, but he did not notice if Klinger carried a gun.

But there should not be any concerns about those issues, Carroll said. Klinger has valid drivers and firearms licenses, Carroll said.

"This is ludicrous," said Carroll, who believes the complaints were made simply to cause controversy. "It's not true."



## Sweeping away fall

Students from College Misericordia and Dallas High School turned out last weekend to do their part in maintaining the Back Mountain Trail. They joined other volunteers for an afternoon of sweeping up and cleaning out on the section of trail near the DAMA facility.

In photo at right, Misericordia students Stacey Kendra, Jodi Kozlevcar, Lauren Gaskill and Brandy Freeland framed Margaret Bakker (center) as they swept away fallen leaves and branches. Below, Dallas students Frank Buzin and Jake Kovalchik, members of the high school's Rails to Trails Club, worked along the edge of the trail.

The cleanup continues today (Nov. 16) from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

POST PHOTOS/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

## Dallas

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Ashbridge then walked out, accompanied by Thomas Russ, Maureen Matiska, and John Litz.

Natitus said after the meeting that to date the district had received one letter of interest for the position. "I just thought the public should know that we got a letter," he added. "I felt it should have been included in correspondence."

The meeting was the second and last regularly scheduled November meeting.

Gochoel beat Ashbridge, Russ and Litz in last May's primary. It is possible that any one of them could be appointed to fill the vacancy. After Barbose's resignation, Ashbridge said he would accept an appointment to the position, but that he had not lobbied for it. Both Litz and Russ said they had not sought the position.

After the meeting, some current and recently elected board members gathered.

"Why not let him read the letter?" asked incoming board member Gary Mathers.

Dave Usavage said the four who left showed a "lack of respect."

"Let me tell you this, that will change on December 2," (when new members will be sworn in) he added.

Some of the board members who walked out later said they did so because they felt it was inappropriate to bring up Gochoel's interest in the position

during Russ, Ashbridge and Litz's last meeting with the board.

Russ and Matiska said they feared once the letter was read, that a motion could be made to appoint Gochoel, a move they felt would be even more inappropriate — especially since the three lost to Gochoel in the primary, said Matiska.

"Why did we have to rub salt into the wound?" inquired Matiska.

"It was totally disrespectful on a night that they were being honored, to try to get them to vote to put someone else in their place," she said.

Ashbridge said the letter and the position vacancy weren't discussed during the meeting because it had been decided ahead of time to meet afterward to talk about it. That meeting never occurred, he said, because the board members walked out.

He said not reading the letter was in keeping with the evening's protocol.

"First of all, we received several letters in complaint of teachers and coaches. We weren't reading any of them."

He added, "If you don't read one, don't read any."

The board has the option of calling a special meeting to appoint the new board member. According to Ashbridge, if the board fails to do so by November 30, a Luzerne County judge will decide.

## Board appears to be split on choice for appointment

Asked whether Monday's walkout of board members was evidence of a division among them, Usavage said no, but explained that there had been a great deal of campaigning for the open position, "more so for Litz than for Ashbridge," he said.

"What you have is two people who want to return to the board," he said referring to Ashbridge and Litz.

He said James Richardson and Matiska have taken up the torch for Litz to be appointed. Matiska said Russ has been pushing for Ashbridge.

Matiska said she thinks the loss of both Ashbridge and Litz would mean there would be a serious gap in the board's ability to understand financial issues.

"My gut reaction is we need a finance person on the board and we won't have that," said Matiska.

She said her vote is with Litz because he "votes his conscience."

Matiska questioned Gochoel's level of commitment to the board. "He said he wants it (the position), but he has showed up at two meetings."

Russ agreed. Referring to Gochoel's campaign slogan, he said "New ideas" are great, but why don't you come and see what we're doing right?"

While those members push to keep Ashbridge or Litz, newly-elected members

Mathers, Bigus and Morgantini have said they think Gochoel's win over Ashbridge, Russ and Litz in the primary makes him the logical choice for the position.

Usavage said he thinks the current board is divided 4-3 between Litz and Gochoel with the majority leaning in Litz's favor.

The board has the option of calling a special meeting to appoint the new board member. According to Ashbridge, if the board fails to do so by November 30, a Luzerne County judge will decide.

## Low-cost dental care available

The Luzerne County Community College Dental Health Clinic at the College's campus in Nanticoke is open to the public. The clinic provides low cost preventive dental hygiene services including teeth cleaning, dental x-rays, and fluoride treatments. Appointments are available Mondays at 4 and 6 p.m.; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call 740-0446 or (800)377-LCCC, extension 446.

## Deputy super returning to Chase prison

Staff report

Edgar Kneiss says he is better equipped today to be in charge of security at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas than he was in 1999.

That was the year serial arsonist Anthony Yang and convicted killer Michael McCloskey escaped from the facility, when Kneiss held a similar position to the one he has been appointed to.

"In the end, I was responsible for security, and the buck stops here," Kneiss said last week.

Kneiss is returning to Dallas as deputy superintendent for

centralized services. In the wake of the escape, in which the two men were at large for five days, Kneiss, a 24-year corrections officer who was deputy superintendent for centralized services, was transferred to Mahanoy City, and prison Superintendent David Larkins retired.

"I learned from that, and I've learned from my experiences since. Now I'm just excited about this new position and new opportunity," Kneiss said.

Yang and McCloskey escaped by using a stainless steel mirror to cut bars on their cell window; jumping 15 feet to the ground; and utilizing a

makeshift wooden ladder, an electrical cord, clothing and bedding to scale two razor wire fences.

"You grow up in a system, and you think that system is the best possible, but now I know that it needs to be constantly tweaked and improved," Kneiss said.

At the time, allegations surfaced that Kneiss and other officers had been made aware of security issues but had not responded. No official guilt was ever placed on anyone.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Sue McNaughton said: "We're not al-

lowed to discuss personnel issues, but I don't even know that Mr. Kneiss' transfer was related to the escape. I do know that we had a number of applicants for this position and Mr. Kneiss was awarded the job on merit."

"In 1999 two inmates escaped, and changes were made," said SCI-Dallas public information officer George Matthews. "Those changes were related to the escape, but Mr. Kneiss knows this prison and he was the best applicant for this position, and we feel very comfortable with his return."

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