

OUR OPINION

Tax on businesses could do more harm than good

Desperate times call for desperate measures, but even so, slapping a tax on businesses in Kingston Township makes little sense. The idea for a \$500 to \$600 annual "Business Privilege Tax" popped up unexpectedly at one of a series of supervisors meetings on the 2004 budget. It joins higher fees for the recreation program, charges for spring cleanup and other proposals meant to extract the township from a projected deficit in its operating budget of more than \$200,000. The capital budget as originally proposed contained another nearly equal shortfall.

There's no doubt the supervisors are desperate to stabilize the budget, but are constrained by public demands that services and employment be maintained. Even people who don't like to pay more taxes are willing to accept them if they are proven to be truly necessary. We'll leave that determination to others, but if more revenue is needed, this tax is not the smartest or most effective way to get it.

The biggest shortcoming of this type of tax is its extremely regressive nature. Unlike an income tax — or even a tax on property — this one hits tiny and huge businesses with unequal force. Surely the supervisors who favor this plan recognize that it will have far more impact on a two-chair beauty salon than on a thriving convenience store. Yet, each will pay exactly the same amount. You can in part thank a ruling by the state courts barring any new "mercantile" taxes for that circumstance. A mercantile tax is levied on gross sales, thus assuring that larger enterprises pay more than smaller ones. But in their wisdom, the courts found it constitutional to charge each entity the same amount, just as the "per capita" tax on individuals.

Based on a list of 145 business entities in the township, this tax could bring in up to \$87,000, which is nothing to sneeze at. But before the supervisors rub their hands in anticipation of a windfall, they need to realize that the net effect will be much less once collection costs are taken out and a reasonable number of non-payers are factored in. In the end, it's likely the township would see little more than an eighth of the amount needed to close the gap. The long-term effect could be even less positive if small businesses were to decide that moving out of the township could preserve more profit without a loss in customers.

The supervisors are not in an enviable position, and they must take firm action to put the township's finances on a sound course. Tax hikes may be part of the solution, but not one that poses so many risks for so little reward.

Back Mountain Library thrives with your support

Townships, boroughs and cities aren't alone as they face budget challenges this year; libraries are among public institutions waiting anxiously to see what the final state spending plan does to their ability to provide services. For the Back Mountain Memorial Library, cutbacks proposed so far could mean fewer new books, less access to the resources of other libraries and reduced internet opportunities.

The library also depends on contributions from municipalities in the Dallas and Lake-Lehman school districts, and the districts themselves. The picture there is less bleak than on the state scene, with most towns and the school districts maintaining their level of support.

The Back Mountain library is fortunate to have the support of dozens of volunteers who not only help with day-to-day functions, they also are the power behind significant fundraisers, chief among them the annual auction. In response to the looming shortfall in funds, they have added smaller events, such as the Haunted Library and a Giving Tree, which contribute a few hundred to a few thousand dollars to the \$340,000 annual operating budget.

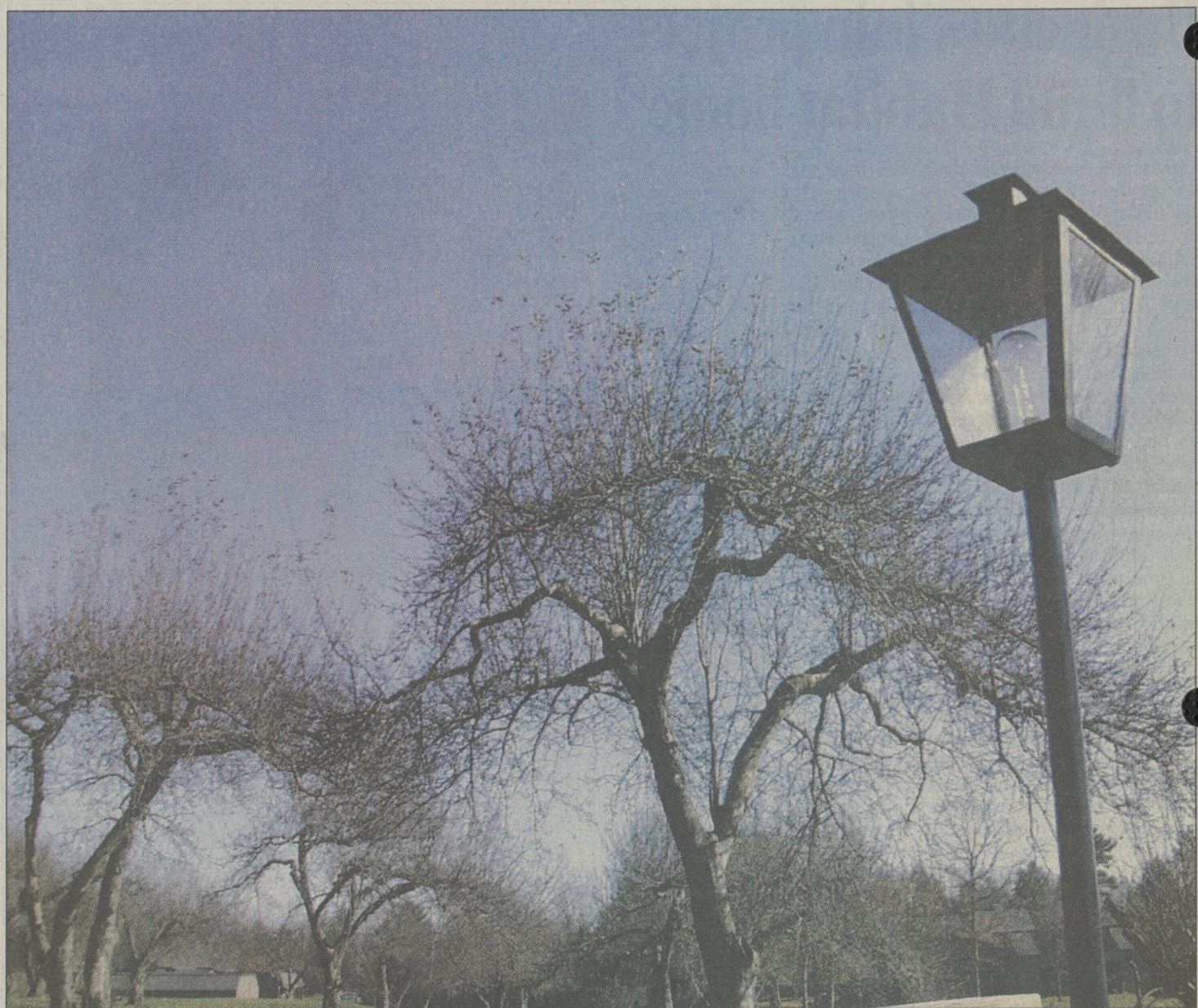
Still, something will have to give if the state follows through on a projected 50 percent cut in funding, a roughly \$48,000 reduction. Already, library employees have been told they will not receive raises in 2004. As hard as that may be to swallow, though, it's a whole lot better than what happened at the Osterhout Library in Wilkes-Barre, where 20 workers have been given pink slips and closing one or two branches is a possibility along with cutbacks in hours and children's programs.

While future support from the state is uncertain, we feel confident that individuals, families, businesses and institutions will step up to maintain the Back Mountain Memorial Library as an important resource for our community. Not everyone has the personal wealth to have home computers or to buy books, but we all share access to the library and its valuable programs, and we should all be willing to help it survive and thrive.

Letters, columns and editorials

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

- Letters should not exceed 500 words.
- 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.



Lighting the way at the Meadows Nursing Center. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LIBRARY NEWS

Crafty kids invited to the library on Saturday

A special holiday "make and take" craft session is scheduled for young adult patrons between the ages of 12 and 18 at the library on Saturday, December 13, at 10 a.m. Cheryl A. Sutliff, an independent demonstrator with Stampin' Up!, will conduct the session. Participants will complete two holiday projects. Registration is required; call the library. A fee of \$3 for supplies is payable to the instructor as the class begins. Extra supplies may also be purchased.



CAROL KING

For those who ordered fruit or cheesecakes in the Friends citrus fruit sale, one final reminder: the pickup dates are Friday, Dec. 12, 4 to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 13, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Remember that cheesecakes should be picked up on Friday for optimum quality.

The library will hold its annual Holiday Open House on Tuesday and Wednesday,

December 16 and 17, from 1 to 5 p.m. each day. On Wednesday the Dallas Middle School Select Chorus, under the direction of Choral Director Jill Antall, will perform a selection of seasonal music. Everyone is welcome.

Registration for the spring story hours for toddlers and 3-5-year-olds will be held on Monday, January 5, 2004. Call the library, 675-1182, after 9:30 a.m. The story hours will begin the week of February 2 and will conclude the week of April 12. There will be no programs during the week before Easter, the week of April 5.

Ornaments on the Giving Trees at the library are growing in number. Be sure to stop by and add yours (the paper ornaments made by the Girl Scouts are available at the library) as you make a contribution from \$1, on the children's room tree, to \$25 or more. You may, if you like, have it inscribed with a book dedication for a donation of \$25. Your contributions are tax-deductible, and will be greatly appreciated as the Back Mountain Memorial Library combats the uncertainties of the state funding for libraries.

Other items available at the library for holiday gift-giving are library tote bags (two sizes), slate chalk boards, and Entertainment Books.

The collection of birds which Alva P. Taylor of Harveys Lake had carved and painted, on display recently in the library, was much admired. A new display by Dave Kozemchak of White House ornaments is now on view. He has been collecting them for about 20 years. Made of a variety of materials, they are very appealing.

Everyone present at the recent discussion by the Monday morning book group of "Life of Pi," by Yann Martel, enjoyed the book. Shirley Forney was the moderator. It's an unusual novel, to say the least. The plot can be interpreted, on the face of it, as a tale of adventure in which a 16-year-old boy survives a shipwreck accompanied by a Bengal tiger on a 23-foot lifeboat — a real challenge. Most felt, however, that it was a religious experience in which allegory plays a large role and accounts for the boy's survival because of his faith in God. A good read, either way.

70 Years Ago —
December 8, 1933

EDUCATIONAL PICTURE SHOWN AT SCHOOL

— "The Gift of Montezuma," an educational and industrial sound motion picture dealing with the



ONLY YESTERDAY

growing and selling of Cocoa beans in the tropics, was shown Wednesday at in Dallas borough high school auditorium.

— The Civil Works Board at Harrisburg approved the construction of an 18-foot roadway on Cemetery Street, Dallas, 450 feet from Rice Street to Foster Ave, including a stone bridge, as the first of the borough's share in the civil works appropriation for the county.

60 Years Ago
December 3, 1943

STEVENS IS NAMED V-P OF MONTGOMERY WARD

— A young man who was born and raised in Dallas is today the vice president and general merchandiser of Mont-

gomery Ward and Company, the giant mail order and retail company.

— Funeral services were held Thanksgiving day for Mrs. Elizabeth Bradel Staub of Trucksville. Mrs. Staub was stricken with a heart attack Monday at her home.

— Lehman Township schools have been awarded the grand prize of \$20 for the highest per capita collection of waste paper, 442 pounds.

50 Years Ago
December 11, 1953

HOLIDAY LIGHTS GO UP ON DALLAS MAIN STREET

— Main Street Dallas is beginning to take on a holiday appearance. Paul Shaver has had a crew of men at work erecting Christmas lights.

— In spite of heavy down-pour, sixteen interested residents met at Back Mountain Library Annex to discuss the need of the formation of an ambulance association to service Dallas borough and Dallas township.

— Items that could be purchased at Halls Pharmacy: Whitman's sampler chocolates, 2 pounds for \$4.50, wrist watches from \$6.50 to \$12.50,

Yardley bath powder, \$1.50 to \$3.75.

40 Years Ago
December 5, 1963

HUNTING TRIP ENDS IN HEART ATTACK DEATH

— Death came to Ervin Denmon at dusk on the first day of hunting season, as he was nearing his home in Beaumont after shooting his buck in the nearby woods and dragging it to his car. He suffered a heart attack.

— The Dallas Rotary met at Irem Country Club, Myron baker presiding. The club voted in favor of joining other clubs in discouraging the erection of billboards along the newly modified Luzerne-Dallas Highway.

— Beverly Eck, Shavertown, made a notable record at the Junior Miss Contest by winning top honors in the scholastic achievement competition.

30 Years Ago
November 29, 1973

MCCARTY CHOSEN ARAB PATROL HEAD

— Victor McCarty, Hillside Road, Shavertown, was recent-

ly elected president of Arab Patrol, Irem Temple AAONMS, at an election held at Irem Temple Country Club.

— Art Mooney will join the Big Band Cavalcade scheduled to be presented by College Misericordia's Theater 3 organization.

— Items that could be purchased at the A&P: Beef liver, .69 cents a pound, chuck roast, \$1.28 a pound and western carrots, 2-1 LB. bags for .35 cents.

20 Years Ago
December 7, 1983

FARMERS ARRESTED FOR SHOOTING AT SPOTTERS

— One hunting season incident has developed into a criminal matter as Martin Murray and William Murray were arrested for allegedly shooting at four people spotlighting deer on their property.

— John Gabriel has decided to appeal the Dallas School Board's decision to fire him from his position as supervisor of grounds and maintenance.

— Michael Romanchick of RD 2, Box 71, Harveys Lake, bagged his biggest buck in 35 years of hunting when he brought down a 12-point deer.

Lake Township recycling December 13, no paper this month

The voluntary recycling dropoff center for Lake Township accepts items from 10 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of each month. The center is at the township building on Rt. 29. The following items may be dropped off: aluminum and bi-metal cans,

clear, brown and green glass, plastic #1 and #2 only. No motor oil containers or scrap aluminum can be accepted. Newspaper will not be accepted this month. Do not drop off items before the center opens.

Q: Where do you find the most Back Mountain news each week? A: Only in The Post



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