

OUR OPINION

Kingston Township needs calm, not grandstanding

If it did nothing else, the agonizingly protracted process by which Kingston Township hammered out a 2004 budget attracted dozens of citizens to municipal meetings that had often been held before an audience that could fit around a table at Pizza Perfect. That change is a good thing, and if it lasts beyond the present controversies, will have a lasting good effect on the township and its people. Ours is meant to be a participatory democracy, in which citizens do more than show up at a polling place every couple of years to pass judgement on candidates they may know only by name. This system can be messy and unpleasant at times, but it is the best way to assure that government is run for and by the people, not at the convenience of a handful of elected and appointed officials.

Aside from acting responsibly and responsibly, it seems those officials are charged to manage public meetings in a manner that is respectful of people's time and interests. Surely the patient and persistent citizens of Kingston Township hope that will be the case as new supervisors take their seats. But last week's reorganization meeting may indicate that one member of that body isn't prepared to bring a spirit of cooperation to doing the public's business, but instead appears to be more interested in shoving his preferences down voters' throats by any means possible.

At the latest meeting, J. Carl Goodwin, who was appointed supervisor last year and has not yet come up for election in his own right, loudly protested an attempt by new board members to discuss personnel assignments shortly after the 7 p.m. start. This is the same official who had no problem waiting until nearly 11 p.m. to introduce a motion — which was not on the published agenda of the December 10 meeting — that would impose a controversial ban on open burning.

Later in the January 5 meeting, Mr. Goodwin insisted on reading the full text of two letters regarding support for activities of the Council of Governments that some supervisors feel is unaffordable at this time, an exercise that did little more than annoy everyone else on the dais and in the audience. When all else fails, he pridefully spouts parliamentary gobbledegook, and last week took obvious delight in charging that the board had acted illegally when it voted to hire an auditor that was not his choice, in part because no one told the new members of a potential conflict. Mr. Goodwin knew the situation and should have brought it up during discussion on the motion. Instead he waited until a vote was taken, then pounced on the possible error.

Mr. Goodwin is an intelligent man, and some of his ideas have great merit. For example, he has championed the township's participation in a study that could lead to the Back Mountain's first real effort at regional planning. While some supervisors oppose committing \$17,000 to the study, Mr. Goodwin and others have presented persuasive arguments that their position provides long-term benefits of much greater value.

But one thing he doesn't seem to be good at is simple math. Mr. Goodwin and Paul Sabol, who often but not always votes with him, count for two votes on a five-person board. Instead of citing Robert's Rules at the drop of a hat, it would be better for Mr. Goodwin and the township if he would seek out areas of compromise where they may exist, rather than gravitating toward obstruction for no apparent reason other than to call attention to himself. That is not what Kingston Township needs right now as it tries to heal after a bruising election and budget season.

High school alarm should get third-party checkout

Parents of Dallas High School students have good reason to be concerned about the status of the building's fire alarm. A representative of the company that services the system told the school board at its December 8 meeting and again last week that the system indicates a malfunction. It did not work when a small fire broke out in October, but has performed properly when tested since that time. Still, due to a non-specific error message, the company will not give the district any guarantee that the alarm will work next time it is needed.

Officials in the Dallas administration have pledged that students are not in danger, and weekly tests have so far been successful. While that is reassuring, that experience is not foolproof. The representative from Simplex, the vendor, said in December that a successful test had been conducted the day before the October fire.

Because the system is 40 years old, it would need more replacement than repair. So far, the board has not taken any action in that direction, and even if it does, there could be a several week lag between the time bids are requested and the job is finished. The process is complicated by planned building renovations that might undo work done now.

None of those elements justify the wait-and-see approach the board has taken to this point. A fire in the school could create a tragedy in proportions the Back Mountain has never before seen, and there is simply no defense for foot dragging on such an important issue. At the very least — and it truly would be the very least — the board must commission an independent evaluation of the system by a licensed and bonded inspector, and commit to following the recommendations that result. Right now, an administration that wants to calm people's jitters and control spending is on one side and a company with a desire to sell equipment is on the other. Both need the benefit of a fresh look by a disinterested party at this very important matter.



Korn krib along Krispin Road. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

THANKS

Soldier appreciates all the support back home

Editor's Note: Eric Pimm, a 1999 graduate of Lake-Lehman High School, is serving as the crew chief for an Apache Longbow attack helicopter based at the Qayarah West Airfield, near Mosul in Iraq. We have asked him to keep our readers posted on the activities, mood and morale of soldiers there. He sent this e-mail message last week.

The Post welcomes news about all Back Mountain soldiers, particularly those serving in the Middle East. E-mail messages may be sent to us at thepost@leader.net.

Please include as complete identification and contact information as possible.

I just received in the mail the article in The Post about my return visit home. I would like to thank you so very much for a beautiful writeup.

The people of the Back Mountain have shown amazing support for all soldiers, not only those in Iraq, but all soldiers serving worldwide. The signs hanging from storefronts reading "We Support Our Troops," yellow ribbons tied to telephone poles and American flags hanging from every house

gave this soldier the ability to return to an unfriendly area with a smile on his face. Reading articles in the newspaper and seeing news on CNN can sometimes be discouraging. But now that I have seen the astounding support of the American people, it puts things in a new perspective.

Again thank you for the article in the paper. And thank you for your support. Please pass my thanks to the people of Back Mountain. I hope to stay in touch.

Proudly Serving,
SPC. Eric J. Pimm

LIBRARY NEWS

Spring Story hours start February 2, register now

Registration for the Spring Story Hours for 3-5-year-olds has started at the library. Call 675-1182

to find out the full schedule and to register your child. The programs start the week of February 2 and run through the week of April 12.

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The Slightly Read Book Store at the library is running a sale on hardcover books, at \$1 a bag, through January. The library is selling them, as well.

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The new exhibit in the display case is from the collection of Wizard of Oz artifacts owned by Linda Morgan.

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Brace yourself...federal and state tax return forms are available at the library, on the table just inside the front door.

Back Mountain Senior Citizens

The Back Mountain Seniors meet on the first Thursday of the month, starting at 1 p.m. in St. Thereses' Hall at Pioneer Ave. and Davis Street in Shavertown.

For information call Lil at 696-1828 or Marie at 696-3095.

70 Years Ago
January 12, 1934

PLANS FOR NEW TRUCKSVILLE SCHOOL FOUGHT

— When the decision to construct a new Junior High in the borough was made last Friday, many objections were heard. The opposition has increased and a protest petition is being circulated.

ONLY YESTERDAY

— The necessity for prompt reports from parents in whose homes symptoms of any contagious disease are evident was stressed by the district health officer yesterday as cases of whooping cough, diphtheria and scarlet fever continue to appear throughout the Back Mountain.

— Items that could be purchased at the A&P Market: Pastry Flour, 12 pound bag, 45¢; Fancy Creamery Butter, five pounds, \$1; Lard, three pounds, 19¢.

60 Years Ago
January 14, 1944

MOTHER OF BOY IN ITALY DIES

— Mrs. Ella Mae Space, Noxen, a fifty-seven year old mother of a son on the Italian Front, died Tuesday night at her home, after an illness of a year.

— Peter Skopic, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Skopic, Dallas, was one of a group of aerial navigators who received their silver wings at the Army Air Forces' Flying Training Detachment, at University of Miami.

— Advertisement: "Bethlehem Steel in '43 built 380 fighting cargo ships. The

year's work in Bethlehem's shipyards has been done by 300,000 men and women."

50 Years Ago
January 8, 1954

LAKE CHIEF SAYS OBEY LIQUOR LAWS OR ELSE

— Lake and Lehman Township officers laid down the law to tavern keepers last week. With the murder of Mrs. Joseph Gilhool fresh in everyone's mind, licensees promised to cooperate in maintaining legal closing hours and not serving alcohol to minors.

— Fire destroyed a barn on the property of Elbert F. Coombs, Lehman, formerly known as the Old Wilcox Place, early Saturday evening.

— Homes that could be purchased in Oak Hill development: "Homes at Oak Hill are now under construction (Oak Hill is a restricted suburban community) for \$10,900 (garage costs extra)."

40 Years Ago
January 9, 1964

BOARD ORDERS NEW BOILER

— A defective boiler at Dallas Junior High School prompted Dallas School Directors to order a new \$6,775 boiler.

— The first local baby born in the New Year was the child of Back Mountain parents. Jay Theodore, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen A. Crispell of Dallas, arrived at 1:36 a.m., January 1.

— Mr. and Mrs. Gershom Hoyt, R.D. no. 1, Dallas announce the recent marriage of their daughter Constance to Howard E. Dymond, son of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Dymond.

30 Years Ago
January 10, 1974

BACK MOUNTAIN OFFICIALS: STATE ROADS POORLY KEPT

— Area police and road supervisors are in agreement that the state road department deserves no congratulations for their maintenance of Back Mountain secondary roads, thus far this winter.

— Lehman Township supervisors will continue Lionel Bulford's employment as police chief until June of this year. The supervisors have, however, expressed dissatisfaction with his performance.

— The Jackson Township Board of Supervisors appointed Don Jones the new police chief at \$211 per month.

— Some items that could be purchased at the A & P:
Grapefruit, 5 pound bag, 79¢; Campbells Soup, five cans for \$1; Tide Detergent, 49 ounce-box, 69¢.

20 Years Ago
January 11, 1984

GIARDIASIS HITS BACK MOUNTAIN

— Health Department reports of two confirmed cases of giardiasis in Shavertown and two in Dallas have started Back Mountain residents wondering about their water.

— The quality of water in the Wyoming Valley has become a major concern in the Wyoming Valley these past few months as hundreds of people suffer from giardiasis.

— Adrienne Marie Kowalczyk, is the winner of the Dallas Post 1984 New Year's Baby Contest. Adrienne was born January 4 at 3:11 a.m.

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