

Sign

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surmised. Some of the neighbors that worked on the project are no longer in the development.

One moved out and another passed away. It's not so much the time or cost that went into making the sign, said Runner, "It's the principle."

"It's probably in some college dorm room somewhere."

Bill Runner
Druid Hills sign creator

"My only hope is some mother will say (to the guilty party) 'I thought you said you made that in wood shop,'" joked Runner.

"All I would like is that the sign be returned to its spot — no questions asked."

If it's not, though, he said he'll most likely get out the tools, paint and ladder again, but not until spring.

A friend of his pointed out one positive to outcome of the situation. "That proves it was a very nice sign," he said.



POST PHOTO/ERIN YOUNGMAN

Bill Runner spread his arms in resignation as he stood by the sign pole at the entrance to Druid Hills. A sign he and others cooperated to make and hang has been stolen.

Special meeting on possible loan against taxes

By RONALD BARTIZEK
Post Staff

KINGSTON TWP. — Township Manager Eddie O'Neill has begun to investigate terms and rates for a tax anticipation note, should the supervisors decide such a loan is needed to tide over finances until tax revenues begin to flow at a stronger rate.

A special meeting of the supervisors will be held Wed., Feb. 25 at 8 p.m. to consider taking out a loan. O'Neill said

Tuesday that he had several quotes from banks that have local branches.

O'Neill has been using a figure of \$50,000 to \$125,000 in his discussions with banks, although there is no certainty that amount, if anything, will be required. "To venture a guess at that now is not appropriate," he said.

Township officials are monitoring tax payments "on a daily basis," O'Neill said, and will continue to do so until the day

of the meeting.

"We're going to have to take a snapshot on that day and estimate as best we can," he said, so the supervisors can decide whether or not to proceed with a loan.

Kingston Township adopted a 10-mill property tax for this budget year, but mailing of tax bills was delayed by late adoption of a budget by Luzerne County. Township and borough tax bills are printed by the county.

There also is a possibility for a one-time infusion of tax revenue from past years. In the course of an audit last year, the Don Wilkinson Agency indicated that some funds had not been credited to the township.

Lehman Township supervisors chose last week to apply for a line of credit at a local bank. O'Neill said Kingston Township could take that approach, but he believed it would come at a higher cost than a tax anticipation note.

Festival

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committee chairman Rich Fufaro.

"Most aspects of the festival were clear winners and will be continued and expanded, said committee members. Who wouldn't enjoy fresh made caramel apples, a ride on the old Dallas fire engine and entertainment put on by local acts?"

Other features — such as trolley and bus service to bring people to Main Street from outlying parking areas — will require better planning, said Fufaro.

"We're taking our cues from public comments and those that attended the festival," said committee member Connie Scott. At last year's event, members conducted an exit survey, and they are using the information to plan this year's festival.

The kiss the pig contest, pie baking contest and live music were very successful and are likely to be back next year — only tweaked a bit, said Scott.

"No one knew exactly what to expect," commented Fufaro. The group hoped 1,000 people would attend the inaugural event, but four to five times that number showed up.

Fufaro said the music will likely be moved to another location to accommodate more onlookers. Two to three more tents able to hold 12 to 18 additional vendors will be ordered. The parking lot between Libations Pub and the barbershop could be opened for booths.

Join the fun

The committee planning the 2004 Dallas Harvest Festival welcomes new members who want to help plan the event. The next meeting will be Wed. March 24 at 7 p.m. in the Dallas Borough municipal building.

"Last year we had a waiting list (for vendors who wanted to participate); every booth was filled on Main Street," Fufaro said.

The unexpectedly large crowd quickly ate through the festival's available food stuffs. More vendors selling a wide variety of nourishment are being planned, he said.

The very successful pie baking contest will likely be moved under a tent so attendees not only can see them, but can watch the judging as well.

The committee hopes to better coordinate bus and trolley shuttles with businesses on Routes 309 and 415 so festival goers can move back and forth between Main Street and the parking.

The Dallas Harvest Festival is an outgrowth of the borough's Our Dallas - Today and Tomorrow visioning exercise.

"The downtown is going through a revitalization," said Fufaro. "By improving the look of the downtown and having events like this we hope people will say 'Dallas is a neat place' and come down more often."

Borough seeks grants for park, building renovation

By VICKI KEIPER
Post Correspondent

DALLAS — The Dallas Borough Council agreed Wednesday to submit applications for three grants aimed at improving building and land uses.

One of the two community revitalization grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development will fund the installation a "Tots Lot" playground at the borough-owned Bicentennial Park on Huntsville Road, said borough Manager Joe Moskovitz. The park, he said, was "left dormant" and the borough wants to use the \$23,500 grant as an "opportunity to improve the lot" for nearby residents.

Designed for preschool-aged children, the park would include a six-seat swing set, a sliding board, and a climbing area, said Moskovitz, who completed the grant applications. The grant would also pay for benches, picnic tables, and landscaping.

The other revitalization grant would be used for alterations to the borough municipal building. With the \$10,000 grant, the

borough would convert one of the garage bays used by the Public Works Department into an office and move administrative offices from the second floor to the first, Moskovitz said. While the police department would remain the same, the newly vacant second floor would become a residential rental unit, he said.

"We can enhance services by moving things downstairs," Moskovitz said. "And we'll increase revenue with the rental."

He also said that new changes would actually return the building to a former floor plan used before the building was shared with the fire department, which moved to a separate building about five years ago.

The borough will also submit a grant application to the Department of Environmental Protection for a study of the Toby's Creek/Urban Greenway. The "growing greener" grant would allow the borough to hire a consultant for a comprehensive study that would look at "how to enhance and develop the Toby's Creek area" near Center Hill Road, Moskovitz said.

Water

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sure to support them.

Low pressure also is a concern in the Oak Hill development in Lehman Township, where Joe Pagoda became a thorn in the old company's side.

"Water pressure is just absolutely horrendous at times," he said, to the point that he sometimes thinks the water is out, only to have it return in a few minutes.

Like Jones, Pagoda has seen improvements, although he's heard lately of a large leak somewhere in Oak Hill that the company hasn't located.

"I don't see a big need for me to be involved the way I was," he said. Still, Pagoda said he will try to make it to a hearing on proposed rate increases for all the company's properties in the region.

Oak Hill customers aren't being asked to pay higher rates, since they were already the highest-priced around.

"Nobody likes to see a rate hike. But I have seen some improvement."

Lee Jones
Midway Manor

A public hearing will be held Thursday at the Kingston Township Municipal Building, starting at 7 p.m., and Pennsylvania Suburban Water Company customers can have their say about proposed rate increases.

Donna Alston, Manager of Communications for Aqua Pennsylvania, the parent company, said the company had made good on a commitment to invest \$1.8 million immediately after acquiring the assets of National Utilities. She said two small divisions at Harveys Lake — Rhodes Terrace and Warden Place — had seen extensive replacement of piping, and generators have been installed at both Oak Hill and Midway Manor.

The company is planning this year to replace mains at Warden Place and Oak Hill, to buy land and drill a new well at Rhodes Terrace and to draft a design to connect the systems that serve Midway Manor, Sunrise Estates, Cedar Lane and Windsor Farms.

Irwin A. Popowsky, Pennsylvania's Consumer Advocate, said his office will be represent-

"This proposed rate of return is excessive and would result in a level of rates which is unjust and unreasonable..."

Irwin A. Popowsky
PA Consumer Advocate

ed at the hearing. He filed a complaint against the rate increases on December 16, a month after the company proposed them.

While Popowsky agrees with the policy of the state Public Utility Commission that rates within a company should be roughly equalized, he said these increases are too large.

"We also think that rate changes should be gradual," Popowsky said, even if in the long run the higher rates are justified.

In the complaint, Popowsky wrote, "This proposed rate of return is excessive and would result in a level of rates which is unjust and unreasonable..."

These companies may represent something of a special case, though, since they were in such poor condition prior to their purchase by PA Suburban. After years of frustration with poor water quality and service, the state ordered National Utilities Inc. to get out of the business.

The company's assets were purchased by then Philadelphia Suburban Water Co. in June, 2002 for \$3.7 million. The new parent company, Aqua America, calls itself the nation's largest United States based, publicly traded water utility, with operations that serve 2.5 million customers in 13 states.

When it took over the companies, Philadelphia Suburban's chief executive said it had in place a plan for \$1.8 million in short-term capital improvements, and would seek an additional \$9.4 million low-interest state loan to be used for infrastructure work over five years. Alston said last week there is a request pending for a loan of about \$2 million.

Rates were last raised in July, 2002, when the PUC approved a \$21.2 million base rate increase. The company had asked for \$28 million. The local companies were not a part of that rate increase.

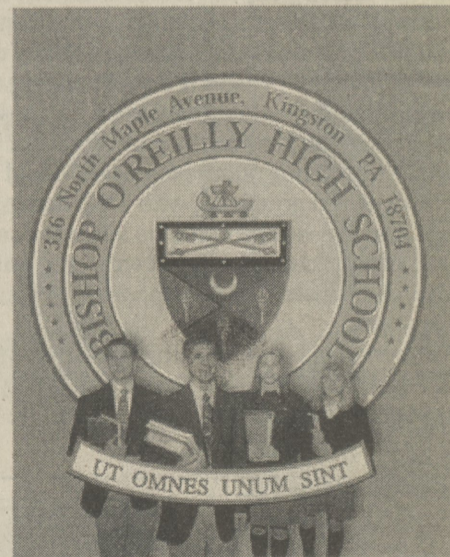
Rate Increase Request

Here are the rate increases in average monthly rates being requested by Pennsylvania Suburban Water Co. for systems in the Back Mountain:

Company/Customers	Old Rate	New Rate	% Increase
Maplecrest / 35	\$24.44	\$35.29	44%
Midway Manor / 250	\$20.64	\$29.35	42%
Oak Hill / 100	\$39.83	\$39.47	-1%
Rhodes Terrace / 50	\$29.69	\$35.29	19%
Sunrise Estates / 200	\$26.47	\$35.29	33%
Warden Place / 100	\$20.64	\$29.35	42%

Percentage difference between highest and lowest 93% 34%

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BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Pierce Counseling announces the formation of Bereavement Support Groups for Parents Mourning the Death of a Child and for Spouses or Significant Others Dealing with the Death of a Partner. The groups are bi-weekly, 90 minutes in length and include light refreshments. The groups are led by Carol Greenwald, MS, NCC, LPC and Sally Alinikoff, MS, NCC. Both Ms. Greenwald and Ms. Alinikoff are certified Grief Counselors/Thanatologists.

Upcoming Grief Support Groups • All groups are held 7-9pm

March 3rd Spousal Grief Support • March 8th Parents Grief Support
March 22nd Parents Grief Support • March 24th Spousal Grief Support

For further information regarding fees, times and location, please call our office at 288-7231.

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