

OUR OPINION

Go slow with water rate increases

While we may not have an absolute right to good water for drinking, bathing and cooking, we surely should expect it in areas that are served by a public utility. But people who live in several neighborhoods around the Back Mountain, while being either encouraged or forced to connect to regulated systems, have for years been abused and neglected by the utility that held a monopoly on their water supply. Thankfully, that reign of irresponsibility came to an end in 2002, when the state Public Utilities Commission forced the takeover of National Utilities Inc. by Philadelphia Suburban Water Co., which has since transformed itself into Aqua Pennsylvania. Now the new company wants to increase rates as it seeks to improve service, but customers think things should be the other way around. So do we.

If some of its actions so far are an accurate indication, it appears that Aqua PA is sincere in its desire to improve service. A commitment to invest \$2 million in replacement piping and other hardware has been fulfilled, and a recent hearing on its request for higher rates drew no comment from customers of three systems that had stark histories of neglect; Oak Hill in Lehman, and Rhodes Terrace and Warden Place at Harveys Lake. Other customers, while noting more responsiveness to complaints, said they had seen no improvement in the overall quality of their water.

There is no doubt that the company has a big job ahead as it rehabilitates these systems after decades of inattention. In many cases, it will be less a repair job than a new installation, as inadequate, corroded lines and other infrastructure are replaced. In some cases, such as with five systems in Kingston Township, Aqua PA will attempt to tie them together into one, with the economies of scale helping to justify enhancements that have been languishing as long as the systems have existed.

These are all positive developments, and given the PUC's desire to "equalize" rates within a company's statewide systems, they justify higher rates, but only after more work has been completed. While it's good to give utilities confidence in their financial well-being, it is at least equally important that customers are assured they are getting what they pay for. The former customers of National Utilities may be paying less than those served by other, more responsible, water companies, but they have gotten a whole lot less for their money. They deserve at least a few years during which the equation works the other way around, and the PUC needs to grant them that reprieve.

'Roundabout' is best option for Dallas center

Slowly but surely, it seems the construction of a "roundabout" in the center of Dallas Borough is moving forward. Officials of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation said recently that money will be allocated to study the roundabout and other solutions to improve traffic flow at the five-way intersection. That is good news, and not just because it may relieve annoying congestion.

Along with the roundabout, which PennDOT feels is a friendlier word for traffic circle, is expected to come a beautification project that will include removal of a now-abandoned gas station and placement of utility lines underground. At the center of it all will be an attractive park-like area that will hold the veterans memorial and other features that will give residents and visitors a positive impression of our community.

That is the best case. The worst would be if the roundabout plan was rejected by local officials and citizens, forcing PennDOT to revert to the usual tactic of adding lanes to accommodate increased traffic. The result would be the complete and utter division of the borough and the creation of yet another unattractive, even if efficient intersection, complete with even more signals and wires.

There is one inescapable fact that must guide consideration of the roundabout: something will be done to alleviate growing congestion at this spot. Given that reality, we support full consideration of installing a roundabout, until and unless it is proven to be less desirable than another option.

Letters, columns and editorials

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 addressing the same topic 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.



Study in red on an old Beaumont barn. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Merger of Dallas police departments makes sense

Editor,

As a life resident and police officer in Dallas Township for 8 1/2 years, I would like to comment on the idea of police consolidation. With the all-too-recent trend of cutting police services and officers, it seems logical to change the old system, and consolidate police departments.

In 2001, Dallas Township and Dallas Borough agreed to have a feasibility study conducted by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services. The study showed that the two local governments would be ideal for consolidation.

Demographically the Township and the Borough have contiguous borders (Township surrounds the Borough) and they are ideally situated to be serviced by one police department. Furthermore, the study concluded that the consolidation of the both departments is both feasible and workable.

The immediate and long-term results would be beneficial in providing 24-hour patrol services and direct response to calls 24 hours per day. The new agency would provide strengthened administration, su-

pervision, and specialized services while allowing for better training opportunities and career advancement. The new services with consolidation will allow for Sergeants, detectives and even juvenile officer(s). In particular only one Chief will spend more time on managerial tasks.

The sergeant(s) will maintain continuity in supervision and efficiency of the department.

The new agency would be able to deploy officers more effectively based on workload. Also the new agency would provide substantially enhanced professional police services at an overall reduction in cost. The study estimated an overall savings with both departments consolidated at \$33,560.00 or 4 percent. This is only an initial estimate, which allows for future savings overall.

With consolidation there are many more opportunities available that would not be accessible to smaller local government agencies. There are many more grants available to consolidated agencies which would help absorb the tremendous expenses involved in having a police department, and also help in absorbing the rising health

care costs.

Officers of each municipality, on a regular basis, assist each other and handle calls for service and investigations. It is fair to say that the departments are consolidated, just not formally. Being a police officer, I have the advantage to seek the input of fellow officers, and it seems they are supportive of consolidation. Each municipality has a great police department, but if merged, could be even better.

I challenge the elected officials and residents to support consolidation, and I am a pioneer for the modernizing of police services in the Back Mountain area. I ask that the residents of Dallas Township and Dallas Borough support consolidation and let their elected officials know. Come to the monthly meetings or call your elected officials and voice your opinion. Please support the idea, and change the "old" way of running local government. We have nothing to lose. Consolidation will enhance and better current local government operations.

Fred J. Rosencrans
Dallas Township Police Department

Free orthopaedic clinic at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital

Wyoming Valley Health Care System and Shriners Hospitals for Children, Philadelphia, will co-sponsor a free outreach clinic on Sunday, March 21 in the admissions department of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital to aid in the examination and treatment of area children with orthopaedic problems. The clinic is free and open to all children up to age 18.

A Shriners orthopaedic physician will be on hand to

examine and treat any child with an orthopaedic condition. Parents who wish to have their children examined must register by calling Shriners Hospitals admission department at 1-800-281-4050, extension 4140. Physician referrals are not necessary.

The clinic is open to children regardless of race, religion, financial status or relationship to a Shriners. Any child who has an orthopaedic problem is eligible. Shriners

Hospitals for Children treats orthopaedic patients from New York to Virginia totally free of charge. Shriners also provides transportation at no charge for patients to be treated at its facility in Philadelphia.

The hospital is equipped and staffed to provide care for virtually all pediatric orthopaedic problems, with the exception of acute trauma. In addition, the hospital has developed special expertise in

spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, scoliosis (curvature of the spine), spina bifida, hand disorders, club foot, hip disorders, brittle bone disease and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis.

Since 1926, Shriners Hospitals for Children has been providing expert medical care completely free of charge to children with orthopaedic conditions resulting from injuries and diseases of the bones and muscles, as well as spinal cord injuries.

70 Years Ago
March 9, 1934

DALLAS NAMESAKE HAD COLORFUL CAREER

Alexander James Dallas, for whom Dallas was named, was an outstanding figure of his time. Washington, Franklin,



Jefferson and Hamilton were among his friends.

ONLY YESTERDAY

Center Hill Road is in the limelight as its bad condition has led to an indictment of the borough and township.

Reports that Battery B armory at Tunkhannock will be moved to Pittston or Hazleton evoked Tunkhannock citizens to vigorous action this week in opposition to the move.

60 Years Ago
March 3, 1944

LEHMAN SCHOOL BAND DIRECTOR, DRAFTED

Sante Ragno, band and music instructor at Lehman grade

and high schools passed physical and mental exams at the draft boards last week and is awaiting call.

Lieutenant Phyllis Whittingham of the Wilkes-Barre recruiting office will open a part time information and recruiting booth at the Dallas Post Office.

William Wright is the sixth son of Mr. and Mrs. William Wright, Noxen, to be called to serve. A record in the Back Mountain region.

50 Years Ago
March 5, 1954

TEENAGERS MAY ABANDON LEAGUE

Discouraged by lack of interest on the part of parents, promoters of the Bi-County Teeners Baseball League are about ready to throw in the sponge.

Grace Cave's new store opens this week in the Durkin Building, Main Street, in space originally occupied by Flannigan's Furniture Store.

Items that could be purchased at the Trucksville Mill Poultry Shop: Roasting chickens, 65¢ per pound; large eggs, three dozen, \$1.69.

40 Years Ago
March 5, 1964

HEAVY REPUBLICAN REGISTRATION

Shavertown YMCA was a beehive of activity on Monday with 155 new Republican registrations and 39 Democrat filed.

Richard Disque, Dallas undertaker, was notified yesterday by Dr. John P. Gibbons, Luzerne County Coroner, of his appointment as deputy coroner for the Back Mountain area.

The old retaining wall on Huntsville Road by the reservoir at junction with Overbrook Road is being replaced by the county.

30 Years Ago
March 7, 1974

FRANKLIN TWP. OBTAINS OPTION TO LAND

Franklin Township Board of Supervisors obtained an option to buy 12 acres of land from Phillip Williams. Located on the east side of Williams Road in Orange, the land will be used for a township garage and general storage.

Those interested in having

little league softball for girls are urged to attend the next Back Mountain Baseball Inc. meeting. League officials have announced if enough interest is shown, the organization will have a girls program.

The General State Authority is attempting to delete a number of items from the planned Frances Slocum Park swimming facilities project, so it will fall within the funds allocated for the project.

20 Years Ago
March 8, 1984

RESIDENTS BATTLE ABOUT HOUSING

Shavertown residents are still meeting, still protesting and still organizing over a proposed housing development on North Lehigh Street.

The Back Mountain now has its very own travel agency with the March 5 opening of the Back Mountain branch of the Valley Automotive Club.

Time Magazine has named George J. Alles, Jr. of Harveys Lake, president of Geo. J. Alles Inc., an auto dealership in Kingston, as a recipient of the 1984 Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award.

THE POST

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