



PETE G. WILCOX/ THE DALLAS POST

Dallas Township solicitor Tom Brennan responds to residents' questions during public comment at Tuesday's Dallas Township supervisors meeting where the discussion was about the proposed building of a gas compressor station near the Dallas High School campus.

DALLAS TOWNSHIP

# Residents want answers regarding gas compressor

By SARAH HITE  
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UP NEXT

The next meeting of the Dallas Township Board of Supervisors will be held at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 15 in the municipal building.

Amid troubling road conditions and an impending ice storm, nearly 40 residents attended the supervisors' meeting Tuesday evening to discuss the potential effects of a proposed natural gas compressor to be built about 1,340 feet from the Dallas School District campus.

Chief Gathering LLC submitted plans to township officials to build a compressor station off Hildebrandt Road. The company is asking for special zoning exceptions because the zoning district does not prohibit or permit the type of structure proposed. The township's zoning hearing board will make a decision on the matter on Feb. 9.

Residents used the public comment portion of the meeting to ask questions of the board about the topic that wasn't even on the agenda. Several attendees fielded concerns about how the decision will be made and what they can do to stall plans.

Solicitor Thomas Brennan replied to many of the questions in a similar manner — he said the board of supervisors has no control over the outcome of the zoning hearing board's decision.

He said the zoning hearing board can approve the application, approve it with limitations or deny it. He said the facts and data presented to that board are applied to the township's laws, and the outcome will reflect that process.

Brennan also said the company will need to appear before the planning commission, which will determine if the proposed plans comply with the township's land development and subdivision ordinances.

"The planning commission's decisions are final," the solicitor

said. "If residents are dissatisfied, they can go to the courts."

He said the object of the two appointed boards is "not to say what they themselves want," and they are "duty-bound" by the law.

Resident and Gas Drilling Awareness Coalition member Diane Dreier asked Brennan whether the municipal meeting room will hold the number of residents planning to attend the zoning hearing board meeting on Feb. 9.

Several residents stood to the side as she spoke, providing an example of the lack of seats in the room.

Brennan told her that hot button issues in the past have attracted the public in crowds, but the meeting room has always sustained the attendance. He said the decision to hold the meeting in a different venue is also up to the zoning hearing board.

Ben Uzdilla, who lives directly across the street from the proposed site and who is employed in the gas industry, said safety has taken a backseat to productivity in the 34 years he has spent in the business. He said his colleagues totaled 240 when he started, and now there are about 60 due to downsizing.

"Safety has suffered," he said. "People want to do more with less. It's a disaster waiting to happen."

Scott Pertl, of Trucksville, also spoke out during the meeting to address what he felt is the most important underlying issue — the safety of children in the neighboring schools.

"It's not just one neighbor-

hood that's affected by this," he said.

Chris Oremus, of Franklin Township, wanted to know how the township's fire and ambulance departments would respond to an emergency if something were to happen at the facility just 1,400 feet away from 2,800 students.

Brennan said the township's emergency management agency, along with the county and state Emergency Management Agency are equipped to respond to emergencies as best they can, and he didn't believe there could be a separate plan in place to handle one facility's potential problems.

Some residents' comments elicited applause from the crowd, and many attendees left shortly after the public comments portion of the meeting concluded.

Resident Norm Tomchak spoke last on behalf of the "thousand of irate people" he said are living within the township.

"To them, it's a job," he said. "To us, it's home."

*In other news...*

• Brennan presented the board with a storm water ordinance draft for which a hearing will be advertised and announced at a future date.

• A letter was received from Todd Holmes, engineer for Dorchester Development, requesting a reduction in their letter of credit for the Geisinger construction project from \$288,898 to \$81,728 due to the amount of work completed. A decision will be made after the supervisors receive recommendation from the township engineer.

# Reese portrays Sister Amnesia

Amanda Reese of Dallas will play the role of Sister Amnesia when the Music Box Players present "Nunsense."

A graduate of Dallas High School, Reese earned a degree from DeSales University. She has been involved with the Music Box for over five years, performing in numerous shows. Last season, she appeared in productions of "Annie," "The Great American Trailer Park Musical" and "Nashville 2" as well as portraying the title role in "Gypsy."

The Music Box Repertory Company will welcome the Little Sisters of Hoboken back to the Playhouse for a limited engagement on February 18-20, 24-27 and March 3-6.

First performed by the Sisters in an act of desperation after the convent cook, Sister Julia, made an unfortunate mistake, "Nunsense" has become a world-wide sensation. Spawning long theatrical runs off-Broadway and throughout the country, a best selling compact disc, a DVD starring Rue McClanahan and a general interest in nunnery, "Nun-



Music Box veteran actress Amanda Reese will play the role of Sister Mary Amnesia in the Music Box Repertory Company's production of "Nunsense."

sense" is a side-splitting musical appropriate for those of all ages and religions.

For tickets and additional details, contact the box office at 283-2195.

# John Ruckno seeks county council seat

John C. Ruckno, 62, a financial advisor and former business owner from Dallas, has officially announced his intent to run for the new Luzerne County Council.



Ruckno

A Republican, Ruckno lives in Dallas with his wife, Becky, and is the father of two grown children, Heidi, of Forty Fort; and John R., of Wilkes-Barre.

He attended Marquette University, took various business courses at Misericordia University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from

Bloomsburg University. Ruckno is now largely retired, most recently from a position as a trust officer and investment professional at Mellon Bank.

He has lived in Luzerne County all of his life and was formerly president of Forty Fort Lumber Co, a family-owned business.

# Grant money available to municipalities

Rep. Karen Boback (R-Columbia/Luzerne/Wyoming) has announced the availability of grant funding to municipalities and non-profit organizations for the acquisition and development of parks and trails and the preservation of open space through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2).

"Outdoor recreational opportu-

nities and open space truly impact the quality of life in our communities," said Boback. "When a family is looking for a new home, one of the major considerations is its proximity to parks, trails and other recreational opportunities. People want to live in areas where their children will have access to healthy recreation and the outdoors."

The grants can be used for recreation, park and conservation facilities, river corridors and resources,

greenways and trails, heritage areas and facilities and critical habitat, natural areas and open space. Funding for the grants comes from a combination of state and federal sources.

Applications are due by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20.

More information is available at Boback's website, RepBoback.com, by accessing the Community Conservation Partnership Program tab.

# Daddow-Isaacs Dallas American Legion Post 672 will conduct its annual essay contest

Daddow-Isaacs Dallas American Legion Post 672 is conducting its annual essay contest.

This year's essay contest topic is "What Are the Pros and Cons of Off-Shore Drilling?"

Any student enrolled in grades nine through 12 in a

public, private or parochial school or who is home-schooled is eligible to participate.

All essays must be no less than 500 words and no more than 1,000 words.

There is also county, district, interdistrict, sectional and state competition.

Prize money is awarded and

the first-place winner will be awarded a \$3,500 scholarship by the Pennsylvania State American Legion.

Information can be obtained at the various schools or by contacting Clarence J. Michael at 675-0488.

Joe Kelley is Commander of Post 672.

HARPIN' ON THINGS

# This is NEPA. You need to learn how to drive in the snow already!

Can anyone tell me when drivers in Luzerne County decided to use their four way flashers more than their turn signals, especially at the first sign of snow?



Heffernan

I'm not talking about the people coming home from second shift or the ones going in for third shift; I'm talking about the ones on the road at night in a snowstorm who are either out for a joy ride but have found out it really isn't that much fun driving on slippery roads or the ones attempting to see if their vehicle really will get 35 miles a gallon.

You know who they are. Like the person in a new Toyota Prius on Route 292 doing exactly 35 miles an hour, uphill and down, trying to squeeze out that last mile of the promised 39 mpg on the sticker they're holding in one hand with the cell phone in the other ready to call the car dealer and complain their car doesn't get what was promised.

Guess they didn't read the fine print that states the average was attained on a closed, flat track near sea level devoid of hills in a stripped down model with properly inflated tires by a professional driver who has a 2x4 under the pedal so it can only be compressed a quarter of the way and not with three other family members and the dog squished into the car like sardines on the way to the buffet at The Golden Corral.

Last week I was on my way home from a night of bowling (a very important reason to be out

in a snowstorm since the Mrs. said I needed to relax and wanted the remote for a few hours) and had the pleasure of getting stuck behind one of those drivers with the flashers on, the wipers going full blast, high beams on and doing a whopping 15 miles an hour uphill on the Cross Valley.

Getting onto the highway from Wilkes-Barre was easy for a change since there was no traffic coming from the mall but I could see flashers in the distance. Deciding to take it easy even though there was pavement showing through the snow, I rapidly closed the distance on the vehicle and within half a minute realized it was not stopped, just going very slowly near the Plains exit.

As I pulled into the passing lane a good 200 feet behind the vehicle, the driver must have decided he was going to set the speed limit on the highway and

no one was going to get by as he moved left from the clear pavement onto the snow to stop my pass. I have never seen a car the size of a Mini Cooper take up two lanes and the shoulder of a road before but he was trying his best. I moved back into the right lane since I figured he wanted to be in the left and started to accelerate when he cut right back in front of me.

I'm driving an 8,000 pound, V-10, four-wheel drive truck and visions of tapping the rear quarter panel of the car like Dale Earnhardt Sr. would do when catching the leader on the last lap at Bristol flashed through my mind. Rubbing's racing, right? We are going so slow, I consider jogging up to his window and asking if he has any Grey Poupon but shelf that idea as the vehicle behind now gets to my bumper and all I can see is a big, gold Chevrolet bowtie on the front of

a hopped up truck in the mirror.

Obviously a Ford hater, this guy wants to get by so I let him have a shot at the little car. He holds his line as the car starts to veer left to cut him off. Realizing the truck is not going to slow down, the car turns right a little too sharply and goes onto the right shoulder. The door has opened and I am past the car in a flash, only to find another one of these drivers in the rock cut.

Not wanting to add another color to the concrete barrier, I stay behind and pray he will not turn onto Hillside Road. He slowly approaches Alan Dukes' garage but decides it would be better to stay on the highway since there are no new tire tracks in the turning lane. I make the turn and get home a little while later.

The Mrs. greets me at the door and, over the racket of three talking heads yelling at each other on the TV, asks how the roads are

and how I bowled.

I answer that a 121 three-game average is not good for the team and, as I retired to the man cave, ask her where the toilet plunger is so I can attach a flag to it which says "Idiot" and stick it on the car of the next guy I get behind in a snowstorm like the comedian Gallagher did in one of his skits.

The Atta Boy and Girl of the week go to Chae Taek and Young Yu, owners of Dallas Dry Cleaners in the Dallas Shopping Center who have been providing excellent service to residents of the Back Mountain for the last five and a half years.

... Harp Heffernan was the associate publisher, outdoor editor and chief photographer of the Sunday Independent, a newspaper that was in his family for 87 years in Wilkes-Barre. You can e-mail him at news@mydallaspost.com.