

DALLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Crowd cheers when board opposes station

By SARAH HITE  
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**UP NEXT ...**

The regular meeting of the Dallas School Board will be held at 7 p.m. Feb. 14 in the administration building next to Wycallis Elementary.

The Dallas School Board took a stance on the proposed natural gas compressor to be built about 1,150 feet from the district campus property line Monday night.

Nearly 80 residents packed into the board room for the work session, which usually does not permit public comment. Board President Bruce Goeringer told the audience that statements could be made due to the circumstances and the number of attendees.

Before any citizen could speak, board member Richard Coslett made a motion for the board to resolve to make a recommendation to the Dallas Township Zoning Hearing Board and the Planning Commission to deny Chief Gathering LLC's application for special exceptions to build the compressor station, as its close proximity to the schools would have an adverse effect on the health and safety of students in the district.

Members of the crowd, with some standing along the walls and in the hallway of the administration building, roared with cheers and applause for the board's decision.

Several residents spoke at the meeting, including Justine Fierman, whose two children attend Wycallis Elementary. She spoke at length about the potential health effects the compressor station would have on youngsters nearby.

"This is in regards to children's health," she said. "What we really have to focus on is the children."

She said children are shorter and can more easily breathe in pollutants that are closer to the ground, providing findings in thick binders for the board to review.

"Do we allow our children of the Dallas School District to become guinea pigs?" she asked.

Her 11-year-old daughter, Olivia Ostrowski, and a friend, Maddy Arthur, presented the board with a petition that included 54 signatures from Wycallis students in opposition of the proposed compressor facility.

Resident Wendy Cominski pleaded to the board to garner its support in opposition for the project.

"Please, please, please put pressure on the zoning board," she said.

Franklin Township resident Maureen Oremus expressed her concerns as a 17-year volunteer fire firefighter in the area. She said emergency evacuations need to occur within a half mile of a disaster, and the schools would be within half of that distance, which she referred to as the hot zone.

She said in all of her training, she was told to "never go into the hot zone."

Oremus also said the chaotic scene in the event of a near-emergency at the facility could prevent first responders from being able to do their jobs. She admitted parents would be frantic to get to their children, and traffic could make the situation worse.

The board had previously stated it was not sure what stance to take, and some members of the audience wanted to understand how the board came to its decision to oppose the project.

"I live just a quarter of a mile away from the site, on the other side," said Goeringer.

Coslett told members of the audience how much he appreciated their passion and enthusiasm in "fighting corporate America."

"It just makes no sense to put our treasure in jeopardy," he said.

Superintendent Frank Galicki, board member Dennis Gochol and Goeringer said they would attend the zoning hearing board meeting on Feb. 9 in support of the board's resolution and speak on behalf of the district.

Galicki also told the audience a call would go out to parents on Tuesday evening to let them know about the meeting and ask for support.

Solicitor Benjamin Jones III explained the process of the zoning hearing board to the residents and offered to voluntarily meet with them on Wednesday morning to discuss the nature of Chief Gathering LLC's application.

Jones expressed concerns about the residents' abilities to find expert witnesses to testify at the hearing and prove their case against a corporation with access to environmental experts on a national level and powerful lawyers.

Jones said he doesn't see why a continuance would not be granted. He suggested that residents could file an appeal to the common courts if unsatisfied with the ruling on Wednesday.

One resident asked Jones what the worst case scenario could be if the special exceptions are granted.

"All the things we heard about or saw in the video could come into reality," he said, referring to a YouTube video sent to board members about natural gas compressor stations.

Residents also had concerns about the board's reaction to hearing the news on Jan. 12, when Galicki and business manager Grant Palfey met with Chief representatives for a brief 30-minute meeting.

"We were going to report back to the board today," said Palfey. "Once we saw the acceleration of information, we told the board (on Jan. 25)."

*In other news...*

• Marc Kurowski of K&W Engineering presented the board with a compromise between United Water and the district that would settle a discrepancy on a disputed water line.

Kurowski told the board that United Water has agreed to relocate the disputed water line at its expense as well as install a new combined 6-inch water meter rate for the two elementary schools and the middle school.

He said the water line installation for the new high school was completed two years ago and is no longer in dispute.

The only expense the district would need to pay for is the installation of two water laterals at a cost of \$63,788. The district would also be billed on the 6-inch water line tariff rate, which Kurowski said would save the district money.

"This to me represents a more than reasonable compromise," said Kurowski.

The board voted 6-1 in favor of the resolution. Two board members, Charles Preece and Russell Bigus, were absent.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Father Vincent Dang, pastor of St. Francis Cabrini Church, celebrates Mass and the Vietnamese New Year at the Franklin Twp. Fire Hall.

## Vietnamese New Year is celebrated

By SARAH HITE  
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**VIETNAMESE MASS**

Every third Sunday of the month at 2 p.m., Dang hosts a Vietnamese-language Mass at his parish, St. Francis Cabrini Church on Mount Olivet Road. For more information, call the church at 696-3737 or visit their website at <http://home.comcast.net/~sfcb/>.

Father Vincent Dang greeted more than 200 people at the Franklin Township Fire Hall who came to celebrate the Vietnamese New Year on Feb. 6.

Families set up the Hoa Mai tree, traditional Vietnamese décor for the celebration by taking red ribbons decorated with gold Vietnamese-language messages and gently hanging them on the yellow-flowered tree. The flower is said to bring luck, and the messages written on the ribbons only reinforce the wishes for good fortune.

"In Vietnam, this tree is in every house, like the American Christmas tree," said Dan Nguyen, of Wilkes-Barre. "The flower on the tree opens on New Year's Day, and (the tree

is) decorated with everything you wish for in the New Year."

Nguyen has lived in Wilkes-Barre since 1993 and met Dang, an assistant pastor at St. Mary's Church in Wilkes-Barre at the time, a few years later. Dang has been a touchstone for the local Vietnamese community ever since he was ordained as a minister in 1995 and has hosted a large Vietnamese New Year celebration every year since then.

"It is the most important holiday in Vietnam," said Dang. "You really set the tone for the new year because everything



Kevin Vo and Hanh Le prepare roast pig, a traditional Vietnamese New Year's Day item at the Franklin Twp. Fire Hall.

is new."

Vietnamese families prepare for the celebration by purchasing new clothes, speaking traditional greetings to family and friends, visiting others, offering money inside a red envelope and eating traditional foods. The celebration at the fire hall did not skimp on Vietnamese traditions - in addition to the Hoa Mai tree and passing of the red envelopes, volunteers prepared an elaborate meal.

Whole pigs with cherries for eyes laid across a table while volunteers prepared other dishes,

such as sticky rice filled with meat and tightly wrapped with Dong leaves and candied water chestnuts and ginger pieces. The large buffet that spanned the length of the fire hall also featured pizza and chicken wings as a way to combine the American and Vietnamese cultures.

Volunteers got the distance when it comes to preparing for the event, including driving a few hundred miles to find just the right cuisine.

"We got the pigs from Phila-

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JACKSON TOWNSHIP

## Residents question address changes for 911

By EILEEN GODIN  
Dallas Post Correspondent

**UP NEXT ...**

The next Jackson Township supervisors' meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 7 in the municipal building.

There are 214 township residents affected by the Luzerne County 911 standardized address changes, said John Wilkes Jr., supervisor chairman at the township supervisors meeting Monday night.

The Luzerne County 911 office began reviewing addresses and changing rural route addresses two and a half years ago, Wilkes said.

"It was part of the 911 Standardized Address Act," he said.

In response to several calls by residents, township attorney Jeffrey Malak explained the address changes were sent from the Luzerne County 911 office.

"The township supervisors were not involved in the address changes," Malak said. "It is outside of the township's jurisdiction."

Supervisor Tim Evans said he could imagine how confusing it could be to a paramedic to get a call for "Hillside Road" and see one in Dallas Borough and one in Jackson Township.

Wilkes said the readdressing affected areas from Dallas Borough to the top of Larksville Mountain, which had duplicate street names and numbers.

Aiming to try to protect the township from the natural gas industry, Malak gave a report on the updates to the zoning ordinance.

Under the zoning revisions, gas drilling will be allowed in an M-1 district, the area off Chase Road in the vicinity of American Asphalt.

If a gas company has a lease outside of this area, a "conditional use" variance needs to be filed. Malak said a special meeting will be scheduled to hear the request. Then supervisors will vote on it.

The gas drilling section of the zoning ordinance also has several criteria gas drillers must meet, including noise, fencing and hours of operation. The zoning ordinance was last updated in 2005.

"It is similar throughout the

state," Malak said.

Other items covered in the zoning ordinance will be windmills, indoor and outdoor burners. Supervisor Al Fox said the zoning ordinance was last updated in 2005.

Wilkes was appointed to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency's Intrastate Mutual Aid Committee.

The three-year position will allow Wilkes to serve on a state level advisory committee to help plan mutual assistance from other municipalities for the prevention of and response to a variety of emergency situations.

He said the new position will not hinder his ability to continue

serving his township and hopes the new experience will provide him with new knowledge to benefit the Back Mountain communities.

"I am excited and honored to be chosen," he said.

Wilkes has served the township as supervisor for about 15 years and has been involved with the Jackson Township Volunteer Fire Company and Road Department for about 25 years.

*In other news ...*

• Supervisors approved an agreement with the Back Mountain Volunteer Firemen's Association to provide mutual aid for fire, EMS, rescue, Hazmat and any other emergency.

• Josh Evans of Plymouth and Kevin Lewis of Plains Township were hired as part-time police officers on a six-month probation.

KINGSTON TOWNSHIP

## Supers approve proceedings vs. county

The Kingston Township supervisors approved the beginning of legal proceedings against Luzerne County at their monthly meeting Wednesday night at the municipal building.

According to Supervisor Chairman James Reino, township officials determined the compensation for the township's tax collector is not adequately equivalent to the compensation of other tax collectors

and the township is owed as much as an estimated \$40,000 in back payments. Numerous attempts to communicate with county officials have been unsuccessful, township officials said.

The board also approved several other motions, including the creation of a Facebook page for Kingston Township. The page will be an information-only site; however, residents will be

able to post questions and receive responses. The Facebook page is now in the process of creation and approval.

Another motion was passed to write a letter to Comcast regarding Kingston Township's dissatisfaction with payment to the township and service, leaving residents frustrated, officials said.

Amanda Myrkalo