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Who's responsible for notifying residents about gas?

By SARAH HITE
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Williams Field Services LLC isn't the only corporate entity in Dallas Township required to notify residents and township officials about its work, but the natural gas company has come under fire recently due to lags in its communication process.

Residents who live on Fairground Road in Dallas Township, a dead-end road located

off Conyngham Avenue, stormed the township board of supervisors meetings in September and earlier this year due to two incidents in which residents were not notified of work on the pipeline.

Residents said they heard loud noises and smelled natural gas, and called 911 as a precaution.

Helen Humphreys, communication specialist for Williams, said she attended township meetings voluntarily after

According to the law, companies must notify state and local emergency management if there is an accident or incident that results in the release of a hazardous material, which includes a laundry list of details about the incident. The county officials must then notify the fire chief in the local municipality in which the accident or incident took place and with all the (aforementioned) details.

those incidents to apologize, but she said the company is working with the township to provide information as soon as

it's available.

"I think we have some work to do to demonstrate we meant it (when we said we'd notify res-

idents)," said Humphreys. "I think it's appropriate for people to hold us accountable for that, but I don't think the one time that we were unsuccessful in meeting that goal eliminates all the times we tried to reach out to residents."

As a result, newly-seated township supervisor Liz Martin is working with emergency management officials to develop a website that will provide up-to-date information for residents about any work, includ-

ing routine maintenance, on the Springville Gathering Line.

"We're anticipating both Chief (Gathering LLC) and Williams will work with us to help us inform the public whenever there is activity on the pipeline," said Martin. "It will be for anything, any kind of notification, and the primary reason for it being built so that we can inform residents."

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Bowling in support of autism

By SARAH HITE
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Tunkhannock Middle School student Daniel Shannon likes video games, reality TV, game shows, action figures, swimming and playing piano.

The 13-year-old from Tunkhannock said he's not defined by the fact that he has Asperger's Syndrome, and everyone else should celebrate who they are despite whatever condition they might have, too.

That's why Shannon is hosting the "Be Yourself Bowl-A-Thon" today from noon to 4 p.m. at Shadowbrook Lanes in support of Autism Speaks, an autism science and advocacy organization.

Asperger's Syndrome is a neurological disorder on the autism spectrum which affects a person's social skills.

Shannon is hosting the event as part of a requirement needed to receive confirmation from St. Mary of the Lake Church in Tunkhannock.

Shannon's mother, Melinda Shannon, describes her son as a bright boy who sometimes has trouble communicating and is working on his social skills, but maintains a steady group of friends and never needed to be in a learning support class.

Melinda said her son was diagnosed with the condition at the age of 6, after she and Daniel's teachers noticed irregular behavior.

"He was brilliant in school and his teachers said sometimes really smart people just have odd personalities," said Melinda. "His first words were, 'Go away.'"



Daniel Shannon, a 13-year-old middle school student from Tunkhannock, holds his favorite colored bowling ball at Shadowbrook Bowling Lanes, hoping many will join him today from noon to 4 p.m. for a "Be Yourself Bowl-a-Thon" to benefit Autism Speaks.

Melinda did a lot of independent research after that initial diagnosis, and eventually learned how to deal with teachers, other students, and Daniel himself.

"He lets us know when he needs his alone time, and he still won't shake hands with people in church," said Melinda. "But he tries to figure out how the world works by himself."

Melinda said Daniel does have fixations, such as reciting lists of things, collecting little action figures and Pez dispensers and being "unreasonably terrified of spiders," but the teenager doesn't worry about being different.

"He doesn't notice that he has it," she said. "He's happy with himself."

IF YOU GO ...

Who: Daniel Shannon, coordinator
What: Be Yourself Bowl-A-Thon
When: Noon to 4 p.m. today
Where: Shadowbrook Lanes, Tunkhannock
Why: In support of Autism Speaks, an autism science and advocacy organization

The bowl-a-thon will raise money for Autism Speaks through individual donations, concessions sales, business sponsorships of bowling lanes and raffle tickets.

Melinda also said three trophies will be handed out during the event, but she's not sure what the criteria for winning will be just yet.

"We'll definitely have one for

the most donations," she said.

Daniel enjoys bowling, too, and hopes the tournament will help improve his game.

Melinda said her bowling average can't be helped, but she hopes the event will help spread awareness of Asperger's Syndrome and autism.

"We really need more outreach (locally)," she said.

Grant is named new DT super

By SARAH HITE
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A third member was appointed to the board of supervisors and the township emergency management agency was restructured at a meeting Tuesday night.

Residents packed the municipal meeting room before supervisors Liz Martin and Frank Wagner made their choice for a third member of the board. The two had 12 candidates to review and each chose three names. Both had one name in common: 26-year resident Bill Grant.

The third seat on the board was left vacant in December when longtime supervisor Phil Walter abruptly resigned. At the time, Wagner and Glenn Howell were left on the board, and both attempted to appoint former township emergency management coordinator Jack Dodson.

Residents cried foul, claiming the board violated the Sunshine Act, and the board decided to wait until January to name a replacement when Martin would be a board member. Martin defeated Howell in the November general election.

Grant, 58, is the chief executive officer of Hildebrandt Learning Centers LLC and serves on the Back Mountain Memorial Library Board of Directors and the board of the Pennsylvania Child Care Association.

Supervisors also announced major changes to the structure of the township emergency management agency.

The supervisors voted to make Dallas Township part of the Back Mountain Regional Emergency Management Association, which currently includes Dallas Borough and Jackson, Lehman and Lake townships.

Martin said she was the "mastermind" behind the project, which includes a new coordinator and two deputy coordinators.

"With what we have going on in Dallas Township, with being at ground zero for two natural gas pipelines with the possibility of more, I really felt we needed to beef up our EMA..." said Martin.

Alan Pugh, a former Dallas Township police officer and lifetime member of the Northmoreland and Dallas fire departments, was named as the emergency management director.

Dallas Fire Chief Harry Vivan and Kunkle Fire Chief Jack Dodson were named as deputy coordinators.

The board also held interviews for the position of zoning officer with the recent retirement of Leonard Kozick, who



Grant

served in that position for 38 years.

Carl Alber was chosen as Kozick's successor. Alber currently works for Dallas Borough as assistant zoning officer and code enforcement officer.

In other news, residents who live on Sedlar Lane addressed the board about the condition of the road after Williams Field Services LLC recently finished construction on the Springville Gathering Line.

Donna Cave said she had concerns about water runoff as a result of the construction. Much of the right-of-way is owned by John Metz, who owns Metz Culinary Management in Dallas Township, but Cave said Metz hasn't answered residents' requests for the work to be cleaned up.

She continued that multiple phone calls to Williams officials left her at a dead end communication-wise.

"We've addressed everything we could for (Williams), but they did nothing for us," said Cave.

Roadmaster Ron Buchman said he has contacted Williams officials to tidy up the road, but was told that the company "wasn't ready" to clean debris off the road.

Solicitor Thomas Brennan also said the planning commission put stringent guidelines into its approval of the company's pipeline project, and runoff concerns would need to be dealt with by the township engineer.

Resident Diane Dreier also asked whether the zoning map could be redesigned, as pending state legislation would allow gas development in an agricultural district and the township is primarily zoned agricultural.

Though Brennan said it would be difficult given the industry is currently "a moving target," he said it could be put before the planning commission.

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

Safety task force will evaluate evacuation plan

By SARAH HITE
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Parents have demanded a specific evacuation plan tailored to a natural gas emergency for the Dallas School District, and district officials recently announced the creation of a safety task force, comprised of local first responders, board members and natural gas experts, to aid in the development of a plan.

School officials say evacua-

tion plans have been in place for years, and companies are currently working with the district to provide more information about natural gas emergencies.

Williams Field Services LLC's Springville Gathering Line was recently completed at a site located off Lower Demunds Road, about 2,600 feet away from the district campus. Another line, to be constructed by Chief Gathering LLC, will be located off Hildebrandt Road about 1,300 feet from the schools.

Both lines will connect to the Transco interstate pipeline, which runs through Dallas Township. The gathering lines will transport gas from wells in northern counties to the Transco line, which then sends gas to market.

"We provide templates to the schools and the plans are also available online. The state does make modifications every two to three years, and we let schools know when the new plan is on there and ask them to update and submit a copy to us."

Stephen Bekanich

Luzerne County emergency management agency director

Dallas School Board member Fred Parry, a member of the task force who lives near the schools, said the group has already met two times in January. He said the task force is working to strengthen the district's current emergency plan and create specific strategies in dealing with natural gas issues.

"They're updating the flip

chart for all the buildings, updating the procedures manual, and they're going to be training teachers and employees of the school district about how to evacuate the buildings," said Parry.

He said a representative from Williams, safety expert Paul Madey, has attended

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