

THE FOREST CITY NEWS



GUEST OPINION
Waymart facility
Should not close
By Honesdale Attorney
and Counselor at Law
Mark R. Zimmer

I object to the closing of any state prison at this time.

Governor Wolf is wrong in accepting the Department of Correction's suggestion that this should be done.

The Governor has, of course, left himself an out by noting in his statement that this recommendation to close two state prisons comes from Secretary Wetzel of the Dept. of Corrections.

In that way, the Governor can back away after the legitimate public outcry stops this idea in its tracks before the budget address next month.

I have been honored to serve as the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) for four years (2011-2015) after serving as prosecutor for 21 years and President of both the Pennsylvania District Attorneys' Association and the District Attorneys' Institute.

During my Chairmanship of PCCD, I also served as the Chairman of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. (JRI).

That initiative had highly experienced criminal and social justice people as its members. Secretary Wetzel was among them.

During that process it became evident that simply shutting down prisons was not good policy on any level.

Over-crowding of prisons in order to accomplish such a goal was even worse public policy.

I agree wholeheartedly with Jason Bloom, President of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association, who notes that currently even the DOC's own figures show the prison system in Pennsylvania is operating over capacity at 103.8 percent.

It would be 104.9 percent, but the state is paying counties to keep state prisoners in county jails. This fact alone should be enough to show the folly of this apparent decision.

The closing of even one prison when the system is over capacity begs the question, "Where are the prisoners to go?"

Does the Governor expect the counties to accept more prisoners in their jails? Isn't this going to cost a lot of money as well?

What about the rehabilitation services and programs that are only available at the state prison level?

Does DOC expect to simply parole a large number of prisoners in order to accomplish this closing of two prisons?

This was examined by JRI as well and it was obvious that the parole board could not accomplish such a task that quickly and there would be inadequate supervision of the parolees.

Such a move would also make victims and victim services understandably angry and scared.

Secretary Wetzel is an intelligent man whom I respect. He is also a very skilled politician.

I feel certain that he was asked by the Governor to bring in a cost cutting budget for his department. This proposal does that and highlights the Governor's education funding agenda.

Local Legion Membership Votes to Sell Legion Hall

The membership of the Forest City American Legion has accepted an offer to sell the Legion Hall. Col. Jeffery Swegel (Ret.), commander of the Charles & Martin Skubic Post, told Forest City Council on Jan. 9th that most of the membership at a recent meeting voted in favor of accepting an offer from Wayne Memorial Hospital, Honesdale to purchase the building and site on the corner of Dundaff and Hudson Streets.

Wayne Memorial Hospital has been in the process of seeking a site in Forest City in order to consolidate the former McAndrew Medical office in Vandling, as well as the practice of Dr. David Tomazic, and the WMH out-patient blood and x-ray center on Main St. into a single facility.

Col. Swegel, who assumed the leadership of the local Legion Post last year, told Council he had hoped to rejuvenate the local American Legion with some new faces and some new ideas for raising money to repair and modernize the longtime local facility. However he said that after a long and thorough discussion and debate, the Legion membership voted overwhelmingly to accept the WMH offer.

Commander Swegel added that there are a number of caveats in the offer agreement which could interfere with the completion of the deal, among which, he said, was a determination if a medical clinic could be built in a residential neighborhood.

Council President William D. Orasin stated that Council is looking carefully at the project. Orasin said he is very anxious to have Wayne Memorial relocate and expand its Forest City operations however he, and some others, "would like to see it on Main Street or in the VISION 2000 Industrial Park, not in our neighborhood."

Pres. Orasin said he sent a letter to Wayne Memorial asking them to sit down with Council and other interested parties to discuss their plans for the Legion site. He confirmed that he received a favorable response from them

that they would be willing to meet.

Col. Swegel added that there was a feeling among some of the members who voted for the sale that the Borough may be over-reaching in attempting to influence a private transaction

The question of whether such a facility would be allowed in a residential site may await the search for an attorney to serve as solicitor for the Forest City Zoning Board. Earlier in the meeting Borough Solicitor Paul Smith asked Council to look for an attorney to work for the Zoning Board as he is unable to do so since he serves as Borough Solicitor. He noted then that some zoning issues may be coming up that will require legal advice, obviously referring to the Legion site matter.

The News has learned that officials of the Wayne Memorial Hospital looked at a site in the VISION 2000 Industrial Park last year and GFCI presented them with an offer to purchase a site. WMH was seeking to construct a 6,000

sq. ft. building with sufficient parking to serve the consolidated Forest City area facilities.

WMH eventually told GFCI that they preferred a site which would be more visible to the public than was afforded in the Park. WMH reportedly also looked at other sites in the area.

Col. Swegel said he felt there was an opportunity to turn things around last year and his plans for rejuvenating the Legion were to put fraternity back in the organization. Ideas included more Legion



American Legion Hall, Forest City

events and fundraisers to do the work needed to modernize the facility.

Swegel stressed that even without the Legion Hall the local American Legion will still continue. He said they can meet elsewhere and can still be the conduit to provide services to local and area vets.

Mayor Pauline Wilcox thanked Col. Swegel for assuming the leadership at the Legion. She said many local people had done a lot of things over the past few years to save the Legion.

Medical marijuana facility Seeking site in Forest City

Forest City Borough Solicitor Paul Smith told Council, at their Jan. 9 meeting, that the town has been approached by parties interested in locating a medical marijuana disbursement facility in the town. He indicated that Borough officials have indicated a negative response to the request.

However Atty. Smith said that since medical marijuana is legal in Pennsylvania, Forest City cannot refuse to allow it here. However, he said, the town's Zoning law can be used to determine where it can be located.

Smith said among the rules the state has for determining locations for such facilities include such rules as no closer than 1,000 feet from a daycare center, and also rules about screening truck access. Such a center must have a doctor and pharmacist on its staff, he said.

Council then directed that Atty. Smith prepare the present zoning ordinance to include the locating of marijuana and methadone centers in a C-2 Zone which is located on both sides of the Browndale-Forest City Road and south

of the Rte. 247 intersection on South Main Street.

Smith said all changes must go to both the Forest City and Susquehanna County Planning Commissions and the Zoning Board.

The zoning action was approved by Council on a 6-0 vote.

Four on Council, Tax collector And Mayor to Face voters

This year's Municipal Primary Election on May 16, 2017 will have six Forest City Borough positions on the ballot. They include Mayor, Tax Collector and four Council members.

The four Council members whose terms are up in 2017 are: Council President William D. Orasin, Ed Pearsall, Robert Lesjack and Chris DeGonzague.

The four year terms of Mayor Pauline Wilcox and Tax Collector Pam Green also are up for election.

Any candidates for these offices will be required to secure nomination petitions from the Voting Office in Montrose. After securing the required number of signatures of members of the candidate's party, the petitions will have to be filed at that office.

Forest City seeks Coordinator for Main Street

Forest City Borough Council is looking for applicants to serve as a Main Street coordinator. An ad for the position is in this week's News.

Council put \$2,500 in the 2017 budget for the position which is part time and has a salary of \$215/month with no other benefits. There are no set hours for the work. Councilman Nick Cost will be the employee's boss.

Council wants a person to serve as a liaison between business owners and property owners to promote and encourage new businesses to locate in the Borough. Other duties include plan and coordinate Borough events to promote the downtown businesses.

Letters of interest will be accepted at the Borough Office, P.O. Box 63, 535 Main St., Forest City PA 18421 until the next Council meeting on Feb. 6th.

Applicants will be interviewed by Nick Cost, William D. Orasin and Joann Matarese.

Three properties In Forest City On sale block

Forest City Borough Council has granted the Susquehanna County Treasurer permission to accept any price negotiated by the bureau on any of three properties in the Borough. The properties may be sold free & clear of any taxes, fees or levies from the county repository of properties.

The properties have already been through two public sales and no longer generate income from taxes.

Properties available for sale are: Christine Evans property at 508 Delaware St.; Mark Scone property, 86 South St.; and Joshua L. Smith property, 1104 N. Main St. Treasurer Jason Miller reported there is currently a bidder on the Smith property.

Anyone interested can contact Susq. County Treasurer's Office, Montrose, at 570-278-4600

C'dale Chamber of Commerce 11th Annual Celebrating Progress Dinner set for Jan 26

The Greater Carbondale Chamber of Commerce will host its 12th Annual Celebrating Progress Dinner, Thursday, January 26th at the Carbondale Grand Hotel, in Carbondale according to Executive Director Laure Carlo.

According to Mrs. Carlo the guest speaker for the evening is Dirk Mumford Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Wayne Memorial Hospital and Health System.

Dirk Mumford is Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Wayne Memorial Hospital & Health System. He retired after 38 years with Exxon Mobil in 2002 and moved up fulltime to Lake Como in northern Wayne County in 2003. During his employment with Exxon, he worked in various marketing and marketing support functions. The last segment of his Exxon career he managed regulatory compliance and lobby

ing in the area of health, safety and environmental issues for the products Exxon sold outside the U.S.A. He joined Wayne Memorial Hospital's Board of Trustees in 2008. Since then, he has served on many board committees and as chair to two, Quality & Professional Affairs and Governance. He is married with two sons and two grandsons.

The following Chamber Members will be recognized for their contribution to the business community by enhancing and the expansion of these businesses; Wayne Memorial Health Care, Propst Transportation, Hendrick Manufacturing, Jam Works and Grimm Construction. This dinner is an opportunity for networking, camaraderie and education said Carlo. The Greater Carbondale Chamber of Commerce is proud to be a membership driven organization committed to fostering



Dirk Mumford

economic vitality in our communities.

Introduction of the 2017 GCCC board will be presented by new board president Michele Bannon.

Tickets are \$45 per person; contact the Greater Carbondale Chamber of Commerce at 570-282-1690 for your reservation.

School Directors honored for a total of 95 years of service to the Forest City Regional School



Every January, the school recognizes a special group of individuals who establish the policies and vision for the Forest City Regional School District, the nine elected members of the Board of School Directors. Together, our Forest City Regional School District Board of Directors have over 90 years of service to the Forest City Regional School District.

Our members include Dr. Henry Nebzydowski (33 years), Mr. Fred Garm (19 years), Ms. Mary Emmett (13 years), Mrs. Lorne Powell (12 years), Mr. William Heller (9 years), Mrs. Linda Zefran (7 years), Mrs. Joanne Sterchak (3 years), Mrs. Christina Albright (2 years), and Ms. Bernice Lukus who just completed the first year of her term.

Our Board of School Directors have distinguished themselves and the community in this non-paid, volunteer, public service commitment. School directors generously contribute their time and talents toward the advancement of public education. They establish policies that provide the framework for our public schools.

These dedicated volunteers reside in our community. They are our friends, neighbors, community leaders, parents, and engaged senior citizens.

During January, we ask everyone in the community to take time in some way to thank a school director for the time and effort they put into helping our schools. Thank them for the long hours spent at meetings and reading through paperwork. Thank them for making the difficult decisions on our behalf. Thank them for listening to our concerns. Most importantly, thank them for making our students' success their priority.

Pictured seated is Board President Mary Emmett, and Dr. Henry Nebzydowski. Back row left to right are: Bill Heller, Fred Garm, Joanne Sterchak, Bernice Lukus, and Dr. Jessica Aquilina, FCR Superintendent. Absent from photo were: Chris Albright, Lorne Powell, and Linda Zefran.

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