

THE FOREST CITY NEWS



Our hats off to Dr. Jim and Linda Zefran on the success of their 10 year campaign to get a sidewalk from Browndale to Forest City. It does prove that private citizens can make things better. Must admit that I would never have had the patience to do all that was required of them to see their project come to reality. Seems nobody seemed to care, and government officials only put more obstacles in their path. If you drive that highway, especially at night, you know it was just a matter of time before someone got hit.

There was no Christmas tree pickup by the Lions Club this year as they only picked up about 30 last year compared to well over 100 in years past. Guess artificial trees have become the norm. If you have a real tree, put it out on the curb and Forest City Boro will pick them up and recycle them at the Borough Recycling Center.

If you are looking for a good deed to do as a New Year's resolution why not visit a friend, relative or acquaintance in a nursing home.

Our condolences to the Swegel Family on the recent death of Noreen. She was a wonderful lady and always had a witty comment when you talked to her. She and Bob were frequent shoppers in town and visitors to local restaurants.

Our sympathies also to Melody Sherry and family on the death of husband Pat. So young, at 57, to have suffered for so long. Great guy who was always doing something for his fellowman. Active in the Browndale Fire Company and as a Vandling Borough Councilman, he was always the first to volunteer to help. He will be sorely missed!

Had a visit last week with former Council President Ted Kowalick. Ted is the local registrar of vital statistics and is always a hard worker for St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church. He retired from the insurance business here in 1991. Despite his health problems he keeps on the go.

We welcome AAA Motor Club as a new advertiser. Forest City resident Donna Gasper manager of the Honesdale AAA office after the closure of the Carbondale office. See her for any of your travel plans. See their ad on page 9.

This year's ice fishing season has been spotty at best. We were rather shocked to see fishermen on Stillwater in mid December since the ice had not formed on the east shoreline. As December wore on, the ice got even more spotty. Last week's cold mornings may have hardened things up but conditions must still be poor. All experts agree that four inches of solid ice is usually safe for anglers accessing ice on foot. However, ice thickness can vary even on the same body of water. The fact that snowmobile tracks or footprints are seen, is not evidence that ice is safe. Even devoted hard water fishermen, like Andy Junior and Lou Orehek, have not ventured out yet this winter.

Ross ends chairmanship of Herrick Twp. Supervisors; Brian Zembrzycki elected

by Theresa Opeka

The Reorganization meeting of the Herrick Township Supervisors took place Monday, January 7.

Supervisor Elliot Ross made a motion to nominate Supervisor Brian Zembrzycki as Chairman of the Board. Both Ross and Supervisor/Secretary Nancy Harvatine voted in favor. Motion passed. Harvatine made a motion to nominate Ross as Vice Chair. Zembrzycki and Harvatine voted in favor. Ross made a motion to keep Harvatine as Secretary-Treasurer. Zembrzycki and Ross voted in favor. Motion passed. Zembrzycki remained road master.

The following were reappointed to the road crew: Joseph Tedesco, David Svecz, Anthony Harvatine, B.J. Zembrzycki and Brian Zembrzycki. Tedesco and Svecz's salaries stayed the same at \$17/hr while Tony and B.J.'s remained at \$15/hr.

Attorney Marissa McAndrew was retained as solicitor. Joe Rossi remained as EMA Coordinator and John Reeder Jr. as Deputy Coordinator. Chairman of the Vacancy Board is Paul Harvatine.

Depositories of township funds: The Honesdale National Bank, FNB and PS Bank. The treasurer's bond remains at \$1.5 million.

The meetings will continue to be held on the first Monday of the month at 7pm wherever it is adequate to hold the meetings unless it is a legal holiday or the meeting is cancelled due to the weather. Then, the meeting will be held on the following day.

There will be seven paid holidays for Joseph Tedesco and Brian Zembrzycki. Voting delegate at the state convention will be Brian Zembrzycki. Road workers will get time and a half for emergency road work and comp time on holidays.

REGULAR MEETING

At the regular meeting, Nancy Harvatine read an email dated January 2 from Kurt Schultz that was sent to Solicitor Marissa McAndrew. He said he was submitting his application for the planning commission position left vacant by Tony

Ezman. Harvatine said in reference to the email, "I will not support his application. The first reason is because he threatened me and the township on May 9 (2018) and the second reason is that he wouldn't be impartial." She also referenced his 'outbursts' at several meetings. Ross abstained. Zembrzycki said, "I have to agree with Nancy with his outbursts. I don't think he is suitable at the time. Maybe after this but not at the moment."

BUILDING PERMIT

Permit officer John Watts received a permit for a new house along Route 374 near the Candlelight Inn & Restaurant. A man in the audience questioned the application because it was going to be three stories and didn't think three stories were allowed. Ross said it can be 35 feet depending on the style of the roof.

OLD BUSINESS

In old business, Harvatine said Ed Sandy had marked his application as a conditional use application. Sandy apologized saying he made a mistake.

HANDICAP RAMP

Harvatine said it would cost \$1,800 to install a handicap ramp at the trailer on the township site, \$1500 for removal and \$400/month for rent. Ross said they should just stay with the steps for now. Zembrzycki and Harvatine agreed.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Harvatine said, as a point of reference, May 5, 1997, the current zoning ordinance was adopted; February 18, 1988, the first zoning ordinance was adopted and April 6, 1981, the planning commission was established.

OPEN OFFICES

The Susquehanna County Board of Elections sent the township a letter addressing two open offices on the ballot for May: Supervisor with a 6 year term and Auditor with a 6 year term.

2018 EMS REPORT

Pleasant Mount Emergency Services sent the township a call report for 2018. There were a total of 111 calls, including 58 for Pleasant Mount; 5 for Lebanon Township, and Herrick, 22.

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Johnson quits as police chief Foley is new fulltime officer

Jim Johnson resigned as Forest City Police Chief on Dec. 17 and his resignation was accepted by Council on Jan. 7th. Chief Johnson had been suspended by Mayor Chris Grinton at an earlier date and subsequently submitted his resignation.

The resignation was approved on motion of Council members Chris DeGonzague and Amy Bean. It was approved by a 5-2 vote with Council members Joann Matarese and Bob Lesjack voting "no" on the resignation.

Mr. Johnson's letter of resignation expressed his thanks to the police officers who worked with him, indicating that police work is about teamwork and they performed above and beyond expectations. He said he was resigning effective immediately (Dec. 17) to pursue other career goals.

Council then hired one of its part time officers, John Foley, as a full-time officer, effective immediately, at \$16.00/hr., with a 40 hour week, full benefits, and a one year probationary period. They also elevated him to Sergeant.

The naming of a new police chief was somewhat murky. Councilman Bob Lesjack said he was told by Mayor Grinton there would be no police chief but Grinton said he did not say that, and then said he was leaving it the way it is.

However, Council members Chris DeGonzague and Tracey Lazier proposed a motion to advertise for a new Police Chief. The motion passed 6-1.

Near the end of the meeting Ken West, who said he represented the local Fraternal Order of Police Lodge, stated that Council did not have to advertise for a new police chief. He claimed that the Mayor has to indicate the need for a police chief and if there is a qualified person, Council can vote to approve the candidate. Mr. West said that the Borough has such a qualified person in Lee Rowan who is presently the assistant chief.

Mr. West disputed a claim by Council member Joann Matarese that Council cannot just vote on making Asst. Chief Rowan the new chief because Rowan has a five year contract with the Borough and is a member of the police union. Mr. West said Rowan's existing contract will become null and void if Rowan is named chief.

Council President Nick Cost said the job of Chief will be advertised and candidates will be interviewed by the Personnel Committee consisting of Joann Matarese, Bernie Scalzo and Amy Bean. They will then make their recommendation to Council and Council will vote to accept or reject their recommendation.



Officials of Johnson College met with representatives of Forest City Regional School, business owners, and state representatives to discuss the future of Johnson College in Forest City. Pictured seated left to right are Forest City Mayor Chris Grinton, Johnson College President Katie Leonard and FCR Superintendent Dr. Jessica Aquilina. Back row left to right are: Fred Cicilioni, Senator Lisa Baker, School Board member Steve Ursich, Assistant Police Chief Lee Rowan, Paul Daugevelo, Bill Burke and Kellyn Nolan, Johnson College, and State Representative Jon Fritz.

Johnson College President is confident after third meeting with local representatives

Representatives from Johnson College met at the Forest City Regional School on Wednesday, January 9 to continue the discussion of having Johnson College offer classes in Forest City.

In attendance were Katie Leonard, President of Johnson College; Mayor Chris Grinton; FCR Superintendent Dr. Jessica Aquilina; State Representative Jon Fritz; Senator Lisa Baker; School Board member Steve Ursich; Paul Daugevelo, Fred Cicilioni, Officer Lee Rowan; Kellyn Nolan and Bill Burke, Johnson College.

The short term goal is to start offering classes of interest to students at the Forest City School.

Superintendent Aquilina sees many positives if Johnson College comes to Forest City including economic growth and development. She wants to move slowly with the process so it is done right.

President Leonard said how impressed she was with the community meeting held a few months ago. She said she saw those in attendance had this partnership as a priority for the community.

Senator Lisa Baker stated that Johnson College is a world class facility and she sees this as an exciting opportunity for the school and students. She would be happy to discuss funding and grants available. She said there are opportunities to secure funding and seed money.

Rep. Fritz explained that state revenues are up and it should be easier to attend to and a punch list to attend to and

what the break even point is for enrollment.

President Leonard said they haven't looked at it yet. She said they would like to start small and have a class or two at the school first and then expand. They need to gauge interest in what classes would be the most popular. She knows the interest will be there but they need to figure out how to start and keep it going.

Dr. Aquilina said that Forest City School has the highest per centage of students attending the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County.

Leonard said a good start would be to do a survey of Forest City students and the community to gauge interest.

Forest City News Publisher Patricia Striefsky said they would be happy to put a survey in the paper when it is ready to print. She suggested also putting it on the school's website.

Currently students at Forest City Regional can take credits from Lackawanna College and obtain an Associate's Degree right out of high school.

Leonard said Johnson has a huge transfer student population whereby older people are taking classes to re-tool their job.

School Board member Steve Ursich, Business Finance Manager at the NEPA Alliance, said that with Forest City Regional in Susquehanna County they would be able to apply for ARC grants through the Northern Tier Regional Planning Commission. He said there is less demand and competition in the rural areas.

Leonard stated that current

enrollment at Johnson College is 440 and she hopes to have 500 by 2020. She said Johnson can not produce graduates fast enough for the jobs. They expose them to the world of work by taking classes on site at various businesses and said it is a great learning experience.

Senator Baker asked if they were planning on opening this up to other schools. Dr. Aquilina said absolutely. Her goal is to bring a satellite campus to Forest City to service Wayne, Lackawanna and Susquehanna Schools.

Mayor Chris Grinton said how happy he was to be a part of this. He has wanted a college in Forest City since he moved to this area many years ago. He said that Forest City is known as "A Mile of Hospitality." He would like to change it to "Where the Three Counties Meet."

He acknowledged Fred Cicilioni who recently purchased the Spano building on Main Street. He said Fred is willing to work with Johnson College and offer space to them in the building if they need it.

President Leonard said after this meeting she has the makings of a one page plan with short and long term goals and will get them to Rep. Fritz and Senator Baker.

Main Street Coordinator Is sought

Forest City Council is looking to hire a Main Street Coordinator at a salary of \$400 per month. The new hire will replace Art McLain who served last year at a salary of \$200/mo.

The new hire will act as a liaison between business owners and property owners to promote and encourage new and existing businesses in the Borough.

The person will be expected to attend meetings of local organizations and to plan and coordinate Borough events.

Candidates are asked to submit a Letter of Intent with qualifications and resume to Tracey Lazier, Chair of the Community & Economic Committee, 535 Main St., Forest City PA 18421 by January 31st.

A full description of the coordinator duties is available at the Borough office.

Fishing derby At KP Feb. 23

The Forest City Parks and Recreation Board, in conjunction with a Forest City Regional School Senior Project, and the Forest City Police Dept. will hold a Fishing Derby Saturday, Feb. 23 from 11AM to 2PM. Ice conditions will dictate the extent of the event.

Asst. Police Chief Lee Rowan said it will be a Senior Project of two FCR high school students, and will include ice fishing, Corn Hole Tourny, Soup Cook-Off, and other events. There will be hot dogs and hot chocolate among the refreshments. The Senior Project students will be in charge of the fundraising for the event.

Pay hikes for FC Borough workers

The new year saw pay increases for all Forest City Borough employees. The hikes went to the street department, office staff, full and part time police officers and the permit officer.

The action took place at the Jan. 7th meeting and was preceded by the withdrawal of the resignation of Council member Joann Matarese. Matarese submitted her resignation to Council President Nick Cost on Dec. 10. The letter said she was resigning due to "personal, political, and mostly health reasons." She said "Due to the dissension and bitterness in the current Council it is becoming more than I need in my life at this time."

In her retraction letter she said she was rescinding the resignation and will complete her term ending December 2019, and would decide at that time whether or not to seek another term.

She noted that Mr. Lawrence Caffery had sent in a letter of interest in seeking to replace her. She thanked him but noted there was no vacancy on Council at this time.

The pay hikes were as follows:

Office staff

Sharon Vannan \$16.60 to \$17.40/hr.

Cindy Stone \$16.43 to \$17.00/hr.

Street Dept.

Bob Tedesco \$20.35 to \$20.90/hr.

Wally Miller \$16.10 to \$17.10/hr.

Police Officers

Lee Rowan \$23.47 to \$24.06

John Foley \$15.50 to \$16.00/hr.

David Clark \$14.00 to \$14.50/hr.

Michael Ceccato \$15.00 to \$15.50/hr.

Raymond Gabikian \$14.25 to \$14.75/hr.

Richard Paulin \$14.25 to \$14.75/hr.

Code Enforcement

Stephanie Reisch \$12.00 to \$14.00/hr.

(Maximum 10 hrs/wk.)

Council also approved a \$50 holiday bonus pay to police officers who work shifts on Christmas, New Years, Easter and Thanksgiving.

Part time officer John Foley was also elevated to a fulltime position at \$16.00/hr. for a 40 hr. wk., full benefits and a one year probationary period. He was also named as a sergeant.

Council also approved advertising to hire a Main Street Coordinator at a monthly salary of \$400. Details in another article on this page.

