

THE FOREST CITY NEWS



This caught my eye in an email from a friend which certainly is appropriate for this time: In these trying times it's always important to remember this message—Lord, keep your arm around my shoulder and your hand over my mouth.

The new owners of Cable's Deli still can boast great hoagies like the ones crafted by former owners Judy and Sharon. They provided us with lunch at the News Office on Aug. 19. You can place orders at 679-2151.

The price of silver and gold has gone thru the roof in the past 6 months. That includes silver coins. If you are interested, you can talk to Paul Ferraro, at White Deer Coins and Stamps. See his ad on pg. 4.

Our best to Lynn, the faithful longtime waitress at Elegante, who is taking some time off for a hospitalization. We wish her a speedy recovery and a quick return to the restaurant.

A whole bunch of teams are contesting for the eight-team playoffs in Wivey's Golf League. Half a dozen teams have a chance to move up into the 8th and final spot in the playoffs. We thank Dave Shollock, who took over from longtime League secretary Joe Machek, for giving editorial flavor to the weekly standings. We'll be looking forward to following his commentary through the playoffs.

Ascension Parish, Forest City, graciously allows the Forest City Salvation Army Service Center to use the Sacred Heart Church Hall for its now-monthly food pantries. Large amounts of food have been stored in the hall. Since March, the food pantries have been drive-thru only with all pre-boxed or bagged food placed into cars by the volunteers. Trudy Butcher is director of the Forest City Center. They serve from 125 to 200 families at each food pantry.

If you read Coal Pail, written weekly by former Forest Cityan Bob Cole, you know his Railroad St. gang had a habit of "obtaining" lumber to build shacks, from Bloxham's Lumber Yard down by the railroad tracks. Bob said a friend of his recently was talking to Janet Bloxham O'Dell, daughter of the late Ed and Dorothea Bloxham, and she commented that she didn't know Bob Cole, but reads about his adventures in her father's lumber yard. Bob said he knew Janet's late sister, Judy, but Janet was younger. Someday we'll get the two of them together so she can meet the pilferer of her father's lumber.

We hear that the house being remodeled on the corner of Delaware and Dundaff Sts. will be an Air BnB, first one in town.

Authority to Erect modular On Susq. St.

Susquehanna County Housing/Redevelopment Authority is planning to erect a modular home at 417 Susquehanna St., Forest City.

Bids for the manufacture, delivery and setting of the newly constructed turn key modular home will be received at the Authority's Montrose office on September 2nd.

School opening is Delayed to Sept. 14

A telephone call to Forest City Regional School Superintendent Dr. Jessica Aquilina at 2:22pm on Monday, Aug. 17, put an end to the school's anticipated opening on Aug. 31st. In order to comply with a new masking rule, which may change the attendance plans for parents of FCR students, Dr. Aquilina and Board approved the re-opening until Monday, Sept. 14. The first day of school for teachers, however, will be Monday August 31st.

The masking rule of the PA

Dept. of Health will require a cloth facial covering, AT ALL TIMES, while a student is in the school building, regardless of social distancing. The only exceptions would be while eating or drinking, while operating equipment or for a scheduled 10 minute mask breaks. Dr. Aquilina said this rule may require some parents to change their minds about sending their child to school. She said the administration needs to re-examine the hybrid plan for re-opening.

Bureaucratic snafu endangered Superintendent Aquilina's job

FCR School Superintendent Dr. Jessica Aquilina didn't have enough to worry about last week due to rapidly changing health department rules, until she ran into a bureaucratic snafu which threatened her job.

She was advised by the PA Dept. of Registration that her five year contract with FCRS District was not valid and that her commission as a superintendent had expired.

The contract matter was resolved quickly at the August 17 Board meeting with the passage of a new contract. The commissioning issue was also to be addressed within days of the Board meeting.

Superintendent Aquilina admitted to the News that she had some very concerned moments when she found out about the problem.

The issue revolves around the fact that in 2015, when she joined FCRS, she was given a two year contract. At the end of that contract period, July 1, 2017, she was given a five year contract which was to end June 30, 2022. Apparent-

ly if your first contract is for two years the second must be for the same period.

Due to that PDE rule she was only allowed to have a two year contract but the awarding of a five year contract was never found by PDE or by the School's solicitor. The superintendent's commission apparently expired last year.

On Monday, August 17, in the midst of trying to get school re-opened, the School Board unanimously approved a five year contract which extended her present contract for an additional three years at the salary and conditions under which she was presently working.

Based on the terms of the contract, at the July 1, 2020 inception of the new contract, the Superintendent's salary is \$131,963 per year, plus benefits as in the teacher's contract. The Board agreed to continue the old contract's annual pay increases of 3.5% for two years, but would then determine if there would be pay increases the final three years of the contract.

Susq. County Awarded over 1.6 Million in PHARE Funds

Seeking to aid those affected by COVID-19, Rep. Jonathan Fritz (R-Susquehanna/Wayne) announced that multiple housing authorities and programs were awarded \$1,620,000 through the PA Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) funding program.

"So many people in our communities have really fallen on hard times due to the pandemic, especially low-income families," said Fritz. "I am happy to see that several of our local housing authorities and programs were awarded these funds to help lessen the financial burdens residents are currently facing, as it give them access to

affordable housing and utility payment assistance."

Those receiving funds were:

Susquehanna County Neighborhood Stabilization, which received \$500,000 to continue their Neighborhood Stabilization Program by acquiring and renovating vacant and blighted homes for resale or rent to lower income families to provide affordable housing units.

Hallstead Affordable Housing, which received \$995,000 to construct Phase 2 of Hallstead Affordable Housing Project on the site of the former blighted Hallstead School. Phase 2 will include the site work and construction of two additional buildings of duplex style housing for a total of four rentals units for those over age 55.

Susquehanna County Rental and Utility Assistance Program, which received \$125,000 to provide rental and utility assistance to low income residents of Susquehanna County, to promote stable housing and forestall eviction or utility termination.

Funding for the PHARE program comes from three main sources: Marcellus Shale Impact Fees, Realty Transfer Taxes, and the National Housing Trust Fund.

Polling for Sons of the American Legion

The American Legion Post 524 is polling local residents for interest in starting a "Sons of the American Legion" Squadron. To become a member, you must be a male descendant (son, adopted son or step-son) of someone who served in the U.S. Armed Forces and is now deceased, OR someone who is a current Legionnaire. This is an interest poll only, if there is sufficient interest the Legion Post will take up the idea at their next meeting.

Squadron members assist the Legion during events such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day and across other veteran-focused events. There is no age restriction to join and it is a great way to show community involvement for young men to show support for the military that can lead to scholarship opportunities, and for older men to mentor the younger generation's view of the Legion's founding principles of Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty.

If anyone is interested, our POC is Mr. Paul Kalasinski and he can be reached at 570-785-5678.

Pennsylvania Write in ballots

Eligible voters may apply for their mail-in or absentee ballot either online (votespa.com), or in person at their county election offices, or by paper forms submitted by mail. Once the county determines the voter is eligible, the counties will send a postage-paid ballot with a postage-paid return envelope to the voter to complete and return.

Editors Note: Paper forms are available at the News Office

Heated exchanges at Vandling Council meeting over bidding, speed bump, and other issues

One of the longest council meetings in quite some time in Vandling on Monday, August 17 became heated at times with several council members and the Mayor exchanging words over policies, ordinances, and other matters.

Vice President Bill Boyle conducted the meeting in the absence of President Fran Pantzar.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter was received from Honesdale National Bank with an application for a credit card for the borough. The credit limit will be \$1,000 and must be paid in full each month. Treasurer Jennifer Slick will have her name on the card.

In addition, HNB said the CD was renewed.

MAYOR REPORT

Mayor Joe Brady had a meeting with Forest City Police Chief Lee Rowan regarding stop sign violations and speeding in the borough. Brady asked that people stop completely at stop signs, especially in the development. He said the police will be out in force. Brady said that quads are also an issue but it is hard to catch them and stop them.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman John Mayers had a number of items to discuss during his report. He asked that changes be made to the junk car and weed ordinances. He said if the violator has a previous violation then instead of another letter being sent to them, the case should go directly to the magistrate.

Regarding the weed and grass ordinance, he asked that it be changed to include extension to the curb and the road for clean up.

If the borough has to come and cut the grass, Mayers would like the borough to charge \$50 per hour per person. He would also like to charge a fine of \$250 to \$500 if the property is not cleaned up within seven days of the notice of violation. In October 2018, Council agreed to charge a fine of \$100 to \$300 for failure to maintain the grass within seven days after notification of violation.

Property owners should not have to take care grass to the curb that they don't own, said Boyle. Mayor Brady said you can't make people take care of borough property.

Councilman John Carachilo asked if Solicitor Jeff Levine could look into it. With regard to the violator having a previous violation, Atty. Levine said, "You can't just go to the magistrate. Everyone needs to be notified first. It is a due

process issue no matter what."

Councilman Mayers would also like to exempt four or five undeveloped wood lots in the development from the ordinance. This caused a firestorm discussion among council members and the Mayor.

Councilman Matos asked what constituted an undeveloped lot. He said if there was a home on the property that was taken down 50 years ago, would that be an undeveloped lot? Atty. Levine said it would depend on how the lot is assessed.

Council went back and forth on properties that need to be cleaned up and it was decided that they need a clear definition of a wooded lot vs. a vacant lot. Councilman Mayers and Atty. Levine will handle the issue.

Mayers said there is a blocked storm drain on Main and Pine Streets and the catch basin was cleaned out by PennDot but there is still a problem. He said he is getting an estimate and will have it for next month's meeting.

According to Councilman Mayers, one of the speed bumps on Hillside Street was damaged in the winter by the plow and needs to be replaced.

Mayor Brady asked if it can be done right this time. He said it needs to be a hump rather than a bump and the contractor should replace it free of charge because it was not built correctly. "It would not have fallen apart if it was built right," said Brady.

BID REQUIREMENTS

Councilman Boyle questioned the procedures for bid requirements citing the sewer drain issue and the tree problems in the park. He said there needs to be a specific procedure in place for bidding and not everyone just going out getting bids. "A number of parties should be asked for bids, not asking bidders for quotes and not just one person being called," stated Boyle.

Councilman Carachilo asked how many written bids were received for tree removal in the park. Secretary Nancy Perry said only one bid was received.

Atty. Levine said they should obtain at least three bids for a project and everything should be documented and the same specs must be given to each person.

According to Councilman Mayers, the trees fall under the building and grounds committee. Councilman Matos said he is on that committee and will take charge of the tree bids.

Later on in the meeting, Councilmen Mayers and Carachilo got into a heated discussion again about the tree bids and how the specs changed when Carachilo obtained another bid.

Councilman Matos insisted that the property that Mayers wants to dump the trees on is not even borough property. Mayers said he was not aware of that.

Mayor Brady stated, "From this day forward, all bids must be written down and consistent."

INSPECTION

Councilman Carachilo then asked about the Peterlin Drive project. He questioned who will be inspecting the project. John Mayers said that the borough engineer, KBA Engineering, will be inspecting the project.

Mayor Joe Brady told Councilman Mayers that he spoke with KBA and they said that they would charge \$45 per hour to inspect the project.

Council budgeted \$16,000 for engineering fees to KBA for the project and according to Secretary Perry they have only spent around \$5,000.

Mayor Brady said the only way to see what the contractor is doing would be to have someone there from nine to three everyday. Brady said they need to hire someone to oversee the project other than the contractor or borough council.

Audience member Dan Kresock, a Vandling resident and former construction worker, said they do not need an engineer to oversee the project. The borough's maintenance man is all that is needed. He said the company has to follow the specs and the borough just needs an overseer.

Councilman Boyle questioned what KBA is providing for \$16,000. Secretary Perry said she would get a clarification for the \$16,000. Councilman Matos said he would not get KBA to oversee the project.

ZONING VIOLATION

Councilman Mayers handed out copies of photos he took on August 14 of two properties, one on Hillside St. and one on Clinton St., owned by Steve Mikloiche. The photos showed a wood chipper and several trucks on the property. He said it is a violation of the zoning ordinance and shows commercial activity in a residential area. He would like the code enforcement officer to investigate and see if it is a violation.

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\$3,000 donation from former resident for Hist. Soc. stained glass window repairs

A \$3,000 donation to the Forest City Area Historical Society Stained Glass Window fund was announced at the Aug. 9 meeting of the Society. The donation was made by JoAnn Fink, Glendale, NY, in memory of her mother and father, Martin and Mary Fink. Mrs. Fink passed away in October 2019 at age 103. She was the daughter of Frank J. and Antonia Petrochic Rupnik, Forest City. Her parents had six children, Thomas, William, Frank, Jennie, Angeline and Mary. The last of the siblings, Angeline (Angie) Rupnik Kersavage, passed away at the Forest City Nursing Center in April 2020.

The restoration of the three large stained glass windows, dating back to 1886, began in the Spring but was interrupted by the pandemic. Bennington & Son, contractors, notified the Society that it would begin again on August 12.

The cost is approximately \$10,000 per window and more than \$20,000 had already been raised prior to the recent donation. More donations will be needed and can be made to Forest City Area Historical Society, c/o 636 Main St., Forest City PA 18421

CHANGE BY-LAWS

The Society voted at two

consecutive meetings to change the by-laws to state that officers will serve until they are replaced. The by laws previously placed a two year limit on terms of office. The Society also will change the by laws to add "and Surrounding Areas" to the list of areas served.

OTHER BUSINESS

A recent problem with a ceiling block in the Museum will be repaired. It was first thought the insulation which came down might contain asbestos but Museum Curator Barb Klobucar had the samples laboratory tested and were found to be only cellulose.

The repairs to the rear area damaged in April by a car is still awaiting completion by Liberty Builders due to a shortage of material.

The Society will purchase two large round foldable tables for the basement to replace the present long tables. Some more will be purchased in the future as funds become available.

Due to the pandemic rules it has been necessary to cancel and postpone all Society events for the year. Museum Booking agent Paul Ferraro said he has cancelled two music events due to limitations on attendance.

Due to the need for income,

the Society will conduct a Christmas Club lottery beginning in the near future. Tammy O'Reilly and Bob Wirts are in charge. Roseann Swegel brought more information about sale of strombolis. Katie and Fred Cicilioni continue to work on other fundraisers.

Member Dale Keklock has secured information from the Society to prepare a mine site overlay for Forest City which will mark all the locations of mining in the Forest City area. Some concrete evidence of these sites still exist.

Roseann Swegel said Hist. Soc. Photos on Facebook continue to draw attention. Anyone with photos of the past can email them to her at btritt@nep.net

The Society rejoined the GFCBA for the new membership year, which this year is no cost, and named Secretary Juliann Doyle as its community representative.

Dino Magistro, new resident of Lackawanna St., was greeted as a new member at the meeting.

VP Dave Homisak reported purchasing an 1800's history of Susquehanna County at an estate sale.

A donation of books was received from the family of the late Adam Wojcik.

