



**CHANGING
TIMES
1995 - 2020**



KRON

125

YEARS

A few words from the Mayor...

During the past 25 years, one of the big stories in Akron has once again been volunteerism. Whether it's through an organized group such as the fire company or a church, government, or even neighbor helping neighbor, we are very fortunate for all who volunteer to pitch in and help wherever needed.

Our town has continued to develop as mainly a residential community. We are fortunate to have added two parks, Colonial Park, and our section of the WERT Rail Trail. Akron's list of community activities continues to grow, and you will read about some of them throughout this book.

The past year has certainly been the most challenging for our town as we had to deal with the COVID-19 virus. Our sincere thanks to all medical and essential workers for risking their own lives and helping us through this critical crisis.

As we enter the next 25 years, we have no idea what challenges will be ahead for our town. I am confident that, as in the past, we will continue to meet the challenges and become an even better community.

Mayor John H. McBeth

A few words about this book...

In February of 2020, a committee of Akronites held a few meetings to discuss a book about Akron's 125th year as an incorporated borough. The committee consisted of Mike Boyer, Nettie Drennen, Darryl Witmer and myself. Mayor John McBeth had suggested this project as a follow up to the centennial history published in 1995. Darryl was the committee's designated borough council member, Mike Boyer and Nettie Drennen just wanted to help, and I was appointed editor because I had played a similar role in the creation of the centennial product. Nobody seemed to care that I had forgotten everything that went into the 1995 effort, but we decided to soldier on.

Our first meeting was in February at borough hall. Our second meeting was at the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley, where we were able to use the Society's microfilm library to mine the past quarter-century of Ephrata Review files. Our April meeting never happened. COVID stopped us the way it stopped the country. We couldn't meet. We couldn't use the Society microfilm. We were dead in the water and I just figured it was a lost cause. And frankly, I was busier than I wanted to be with my reporting job with Lancaster Farming. I was ready to call it quits.

But....people had sent us money for copies of the book and to be on patron list. We had even sold a few ads. Then in March of 2020, I retired, and suddenly I found myself with some free time, maybe even enough time to have the book for sale at the 2021 Lions Club Akron Day in the Park.

I needed material. The Historical Society had locked its doors. The Review staff was tasked with not only putting out their weekly products – which they heroically did – but also with packing up and carting everything out of 1 East Main to a new office a few doors down the street.

I discovered Newspapers.com, a paid website that is a treasure trove of newspaper files from all around the country. I searched the site for Akron references in the Intelligencer Journal and New Era (and later LNP Media). There was plenty of material for 1995 to 2020. Too much to provide a comprehensive, scholarly overview of those years. So I went with things that just caught my eye. Some big things, some small things. Random things.

From my experience with the centennial book, I know people will say, "Why did he put that in the book? Why didn't he include this? Whatever was he thinking?"

And that's okay. I think of these bits of our shared history as pieces of a mosaic depicting a quarter century in the life of Akron Borough. It's all stuff I found interesting, and I think you will too.

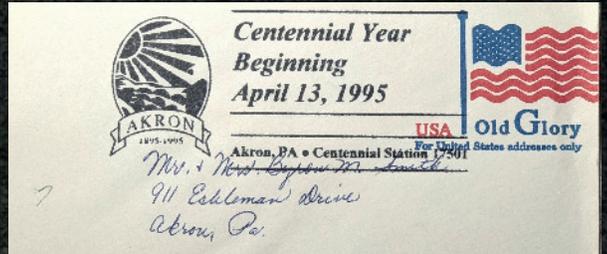
Dick Wanner,



Welcoming people to Akron for the borough's 100th birthday are Mayor Hank Summers (left), councilmen Nevin Myer and Wayne Haber Jr., and Rhoda Smith head of the centennial committee.



Centennial Birthday Bash
 Images for this page are courtesy of Byron Smith, whose late wife, Rhoda (dark glasses in the newspaper photo) was the committee chair and the driving force behind Akron's celebration of its first century as a borough.



Ewe Shoulda' Been There

Jay, Jennifer and Jimmy Zimmerman, children of Jay and Joann Zimmerman were getting their flock of Southdown sheep ready for the 79th annual Pennsylvania Farm Show. The sibling shepherds live in "downtown Akron" according to a report in the Intell's 6 edition. The Zimmerman sheep live on a nearby aunt's farm, where they are being working into shape by their owners. The work, the Ivory soap baths and the training in show ring behavior paid off for Jennifer, who captured ribbons for the 9th place yearling ewe and the 13th place pair of ewe lambs. *(New Era, January 12)*

County Firemen Convene in Akron

A parade of old and new fire engines along with some showy antique cars helped Akronites celebrate the borough's centennial year on June 2-3 during the annual Lancaster County Firemen's convention.

Two Akron residents joined the parade. George Wolf drove a 1928 Oldsmobile coupe. George Weaver brought his 1928 Oakland. *(New Era, June 28)*

Roland Park Gets a \$45,000 Boost

At their July meeting, Lancaster County commissioners announced \$899,590 in grants for the acquisition or development of local parks and open spaces by 10 municipalities and three non-profit organizations. A \$45,000 grant went to Akron for three mostly wooded, steeply sloped parcels adjacent to the park. Nature trails and picnic areas are planned for the added land. *(New Era, July 15)*

Miscellaneous Happenings Around Town

At its regular November meeting Akron borough council agreed to drop the property tax rate from seven mills to five for the 1996 tax year. The rate had been increased for 1995 to pay for sidewalk and curb cut construction at intersections throughout the borough.

Officer Dale Putt was recognized for his quick thinking when he stopped a "suspicious looking" car on Oak Street. Turns out the armed occupants were planning to rob the Turkey Hill store. They were later linked to a number of county robberies.

J. E. Millen's offer of \$200,000 for the old borough hall was accepted. *(New Era, November 22)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: J. Harold Summers
Borough Manager: Reed Imhoff
Council President: Wayne Reber, Jr.
Police Chief: Herbert Beard
Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

1995

Officer Zell Rounds 'Em Up

Three 'huge' mules took a midnight stroll through Brownstown and wandered onto a dark stretch of Route 222 at about 1 a.m. today, police said.

Fortunately, police found the mules before an oncoming car or tractor-trailer did. The mules, each weighing close to 1,000 pounds, had broken through the fence of a pasture in the 200 block of Metzler Road, police said.

"They were loose for at least two hours. They went into Brownstown and were on School Lane and Church Street," said Akron police Officer Tom Zell.

"They were huge," the officer added.

Police got word that the mules were standing under the Route 222 overpass at Route 772, near Schaum's Corner. When officers got there, the mules already had ambled up onto the four-lane highway.

They were going south in the northbound lanes, about one-quarter mile north of Route 772, where there were no lights, Zell said. "It was a little scary."

Zell, Ephrata Township police Officer Dianne Stuber, and Ephrata state police Trooper Michael Witmer immediately got the mules off the highway and herded them back down the ramp to Route 772.

A nearby farmer was called. Watched closely by police, the mules trotted along the berm of Route 772 until they got to the farm. They spent the rest of the night in the barn, police said. *(New Era, Oct. 16)*

Moving On

To move or not to move was the question Akron Borough Council voted on at the June 12 meeting. May's council meeting had been packed with residents demanding to know why the borough needed a new building.

At June's meeting architect David Drasha presented revised cost estimates for renovating both the present site on 10th and the R.G. Groff building on Route 272 at New Street. Estimates tallied \$225,000 for the old building's remodeling, compared to \$290,000 for changes at the Groff building. In addition, the purchase price was set at \$420,000. The 12,000-square-foot building would house borough offices, the police department and borough vehicles and equipment.

Akron's CPA, Randy Sensenig, said the borough had surpluses in the general, water and sewer accounts. "According to these figures the borough can afford either renovation plan without an increase in any rate structure," Sensenig said.

A council majority voted to go ahead with the Groff purchase, with council members Thomas Murray, Sr., and John McBeth opposed. *(New Era, June 21)*



MCC wants 2.5 tons of soap for Bosnia

The Akron-based Mennonite Central Committee wants to include 2 1/2 tons of bar soap in its mid-April shipment of supplies to Bosnia to help alleviate the severe shortage there

"They urgently need it," says the MCC's Kevin King. "We have sent canned meat and clothing, but we're scraping the barrel for soap - something we take for granted."

"Last year," King said, "we sent 100,000 pounds of soap to various countries overseas. That has left us high and dry." The shipments are a "sign of hope that someone cares," King said.

Anyone wishing to help may purchase family-sized bars of soap and donate them to the MCC or make a monetary donation. (*New Era, March 29*)

Menu Caper Nets Diner a Deal

Akron printer John McBeth brought a 25-year-old menu to the Akron Restaurant the other day and "convinced" the manager, Jim Lewis, that he should pay the 1971 price for his meal. It was, after all, the iconic eatery's 25th year at its Route 272 location, and what better way to celebrate than to give McBeth — a rising star in Akron politics — an anniversary price.

McBeth's gambit elicited chuckles from customers and employees, and Lewis wrote the 1971 menu price of \$1.85 on the check instead of the 1996 price of \$8.95 for a roast beef dinner and three vegetables.

Said Lewis, "He went to a lot of trouble. What else could I do?" (*New Era, May 22*)

Local Government Notes

Borough council named Matthew E. Lucky of Hummelstown as a new police officer at an annual salary of \$24,000. (*January*)

♦Borough manager Reed Imhoff announced that Good's Disposal Service will begin leaf collection in October.

♦After a year's work, Akron's planning commission has finished updating the borough's zoning ordinances. (*December*)

♦Renovations continue at the new borough office building at 7th and New streets. Borough manager Reed Imhoff estimated that 75% of the heating system is completed, with work still needed on the ceiling, painting and electrical system. (*January*)

♦Tempers flared when road crews mistakenly plowed snow onto sidewalks and driveways that had already been cleared in one neighborhood. Residents piled out of their homes to object. (*January*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: J. Harold Summers
Borough Manager: Reed Imhoff
Council President: Wayne Reber, Jr.
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1996

Blizzard summons snow angels

The Blizzard of '96 presented Akron with its share of treacherous streets and sidewalks, but borough employees and residents met the challenge.

Kenneth Zell, borough Parks and Streets chairman, reported at a rescheduled borough council meeting Jan. 15, "Street personnel did a fine job and put in a lot of time clearing the roads. Even considering the amount of snow and the borough's limited equipment and personnel, the roads are in good shape."

Reed Imhoff, borough manager, manned equipment and directed the snow removal effort. Imhoff commended residents for handling the blizzard and its aftermath. "The people were great. They worked and worked at shoveling. One boy handed me a bag of cookies for the crew and said, "Have fun, man."

Imhoff and three road crew members worked around the clock to clear borough streets.

"We really did have a lot of cooperation," said Imhoff.

Residents helped by moving cars, the fire company ladies auxiliary fed the road crew, and volunteers staffed the fire department in case of an emergency.

Their was one emergency that sent the fire department to a trailer park to clear snow from heating vents, averting carbon monoxide poisoning.

"Otherwise, it was very quiet, thank goodness," said Imhoff. (*New Era, January 24*)

Pines Playground Plan Proceeds

Lynn and Sandi Crills like to take their three children to the nearby Roland park. Unfortunately, their children often ask to go to other parks to play on "better" equipment.

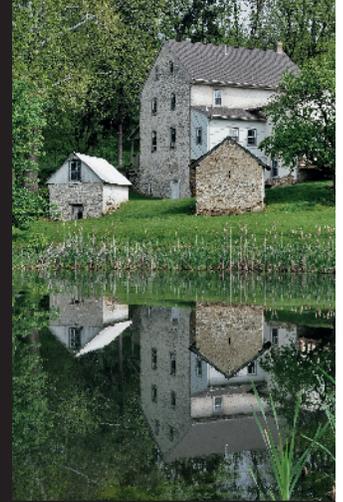
"The park is beautiful," said Mrs. Crills. "It's just that the equipment is outdated."

That will change if the Crills team can muster enough community support for the construction of a modern playground, like those in Manheim, Terre Hill and Reamstown. They have a plan.

Borough council has given their blessing for the Akron Pines Playground. A playground planning committee has scheduled a community meeting for Sept. 23 to accomplish several things, to wit: getting organized; getting more people involved; forming a steering committee, and developing fund-raising ideas.

The project will be financed entirely by donations and fund-raisers according to Mrs. Crills. Plans are for Leathers and Associates of Ithaca, New York, to design and build the park. The firm has designed a number of Lancaster County parks.

Estimated cost will be between \$75,000 and \$100,000. Mrs. Crills said. One fund-raising idea is to sell pickets for a fence around the playground Each picket would cost \$25 and would be engraved with the name of the donor. (*New Era, September 18*)



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Formerly the Akron Public School

Taking a Bite out of Pension Puzzle

Akron entrepreneur Dave Austin was featured in an Intell business section about a new development in employee pension plans for small businesses. Reporter Paul Bomberger focused on Austin Dental Ceramics to help explain a new provision written into law when Congress raised the federal minimum wage to \$4.75 an hour. The provision was called the Simple Individual Retirement Account, but today we just call it an IRA. (*Intell, February 3*)

Abandoned Vehicles Must Go

Unregistered and non-inspected vehicles are creating an eyesore on several streets in Akron, and borough council is planning to take action. Council during its June meeting was addressed by Sean Molchany of Meadow View Street who spoke on behalf of Brian Boyer, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Molchany told council the vehicles, many of which are abandoned, are parked on Main, Eleventh and Fulton streets. Borough rules prohibit residents from parking on private property vehicles that lack current registration and inspection. Several residents will receive letters regarding the violations. (*Intell, June 24*)

What Country Was This? What Planet? Universe?

U.S. Rep. Joseph R. Pitts, who took office just two weeks ago as the Republican congressman for most of Lancaster County, attended his first presidential inauguration Monday. In an interview afterward, he praised Democratic President Clinton's speech as inspiring in its call for bipartisan cooperation.

"As the president said, it is wrong to waste our gift of time in acrimony and division," Pitts said. "Let us be repairers of the breach. I share President Clinton's pledge to work against the small, partisan rancor, which the people of this country so plainly deplore." (*Intell, January 21*)

Sign Him (Her?) Up!

The Weidas from Akron watched the Hershey Bears best Springfield by a 4-3 overtime score in a Wednesday night home game, but the victory was far from the night's sweetest moments. In one of the Bears promotions between the second and third periods, Fran Weida shot a puck from the far blue line through a small hole in a board covering the net and won a \$2,000 diamond ring from Mountz Jewelers. (*Intell, Feb. 6*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: J. Harold Summers

Borough Manager: Reed Imhoff

Council President: Nevin Myers

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$1,721,488

General: \$735,865 Water: \$327,600
Sewer: \$603,500 Highway Aid: \$54,523

1997

Borough Files for Beacon House Grant

Akron Borough, on behalf of the United Veterans Beacon House, has applied for \$56,506 from the Pennsylvania Emergency Shelter Grant program. United Veterans Beacon House opened its doors on Ninth Street in Akron in June, 1996.

Beacon House is sponsored by Post 30, Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc., and serves as a transitional group home for up to eight homeless veterans who have completed drug and alcohol recovery programs at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Lebanon. An organization can't apply for the grant on its own, but must have a municipal sponsor, explained Amy Tyson of the Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority.

Tyson said the authority isn't applying for the grant for Beacon House, but is offering technical assistance for the application. Bob Snyder, president of Beacon House, said the majority of the money will be used for rehabilitation projects, such as insulating, energy-saving items and remodeling. These projects represent costs above Beacon House normal income. The facility carries a \$90,000 mortgage on its property.

Tyson said about \$9,000 of the grant would be used to cover the cost of utilities for a year. The group should learn of its grant status sometime this summer. Both Tyson and Snyder have nothing but praise for the borough's support of the Beacon House project.

"We're proud of Akron Borough. We can't say enough about them," said Tyson, adding it is rare for a government entity other than the city or county to apply for such a grant. Snyder said five men currently are residents of Beacon House. Since opening last summer, two veterans have successfully completed the program and two more are likely to graduate by the end of the summer.

"We are helping," Snyder said. (*Intell, April 21*)

Mayor Chips in for Pines Playground

Akron Mayor Harold Summers donated his annual mayoral salary - \$750 - to the Akron Pines Playground project, a state-of-the-art playground planned for the Lloyd Roland Memorial Park. Summers has made a tradition of donating his salary to local worthy causes. Adrienne Zell, a member of the Pines Playground committee, said she was "stunned" when Summers called her to announce the gift. The committee has a goal of \$75,000, and has so far raised \$11,000 towards that goal. (*Intell, January 8*)

Bob Wenger to Meet With Pines Committee

The Pines Playground will meet with Bob Wenger at their January 31 meeting. Wenger will share his experiences and the knowledge he gained as a member of the Terre Hill Timbers Project. The public is invited to attend his presentation, which begins at 7 p.m. (*New Era, January 8*)

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All Trick and No Treat

Hoping to blend in with the Halloween crowd, A masked man dressed in black huddled in the darkness Saturday night and watched as a resident drove away from his Akron home, ready for burgling. It was a perfect plan. It was Halloween, after all, and you're supposed to be wearing a mask. Except that Akron's little ghouls had Halloweened the night before, and that guy in the mask, black pants, shiny black boots and even a black cape.

So he kind of did stand out, according to Akron Police Sargeant Thomas Zell, and several people noticed him. Also noticing him was the person who wasn't in the car when it left because she was in the house, watching TV. She walked into a bedroom where the guy was trying to get in through a window.

She screamed, spooking the intruder, who ran into Roland Park where he ditched his mask and dropped his Camels. Police are looking for leads. (*Intell, November 2*)



Dealing with Nitrates in the Water

After a hiatus of more than a year, the borough again is again mixing water from its wells with water from Ephrata's system in an attempt to combat high nitrate levels. Borough Manager told borough council that an exceptionally wet summer and fall in 1997 increased the seepage of fertilizers into the borough's water table, causing nitrate levels to rise.

In an effort to keep the levels safe and legal, Akron has been mixing Ephrata water with its own for the last six months. Of the 400,000 gallons the borough processes daily, 20 to 30 percent comes from Ephrata.

Water Superintendent Dave Rice, who checks the nitrate level daily, said the strategy is working. "I think we've got very good quality water here," Rice said. State law mandates that nitrate levels be less than 10 parts per million. Five wells and a natural spring supply the borough's water. Recent nitrate levels at the wells have been 8.2 ppm according to laboratory analysis, and 6.2 ppm at the spring. Diluting Akron water with Ephrata's reduces nitrate levels, but at a cost of about \$28,000 per year for the Ephrata's water.

Guers said fertilizer applications to farm field close to the borough's wells may also contribute to high nitrate levels. He said he would investigate that issue. (*New Era, February 11*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: John McBeth

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$1,740,944

General: \$793,771 Water: \$295,062
Sewer: \$591,500 Highway Aid: \$60,611

1998

Fire Engine Celebration

Fire Chief Larry Hawk told borough council's August 10 meeting that welcoming ceremony is planned for the new fire engine that went into service on August 1. The open house and dedication are set for September 12, and will feature a 911 simulator, the county's smoke house training trailer, a clown and other attractions.

In another matter, Hawk questioned council's July decision to remove a leaky fire hydrant on North Eleventh Street. It should be replaced and not removed, he said. Council Member Ann Nolt pointed out that there are other fire hydrants very close to the leaky one, and questioned whether the replacement cost was justified.

Hawk noted that homeowners insurance policies typically require hydrants within a specified number of yards to qualify a structure for coverage. Nolt said she would check figures with a number of insurers and reopen the issue if necessary.

Council dealt with a number of personnel matters, to wit: accepted the resignation of borough employee Greg Leisey, hired Annita Renninger as a school crossing guard and appointed Tom Bender to council to fill the unexpired term of Deb Hall. (*Intell, August 19*)

Weiser is New Owner for ShopRite

Tim Weiser is the new owner of the ShopRite grocery store. Weiser, of Reamstown, previously worked as a store counselor for Associated Wholesalers. He also managed the Carlisle Giant and three different Redner's stores. (*Intell, Sept. 11*)

USPS Wants Stamp of Approval for Move

Akron's borough manager said Monday council likely will approve a 1.5-acre slice of Akron Nursery as the new home for the municipality's post office. The real estate department of the U.S. Postal Service chose the site at the corner of Fulton Street and Route 272 as one of two possible locations for the new office.

"It's probably the best site for the residents of Akron," Dan Guers said. Also considered was a property on Ninth Street. Guers felt that location was less appropriate because of its proximity to residential areas. A lack of space is prompting the Postal Service to move the office. (*Intell, February 11*)

Talk is Cheap...er

The D&E Telephone company recently received approval to expand its local toll-free service that's previously been available only to Akron and Ephrata subscribers. Customers in Denver and other nearby towns have been paying a toll charge to call Lancaster, which was kind of annoying.

Beginning April 11, Denver customers can call Lancaster for free, but their monthly service charge will go up 95 cents a month. (*Intell March 11*)

I love this town.



Thanks, AKRON.

I love being here to help in a community where people are making a difference every day. Thank you for all you do.

C. Flomerfelt Insurance Agency INC
Christine Flomerfelt, Agent
113 S 7th Street
Akron, PA 17501
Bus: 717-859-3440



Y2K Task Force Meets in Akron

Nobody knows exactly what's going to happen at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2000, but Akron is planning ahead just in case the world's computers confuse the year 2000 with the year 1900. Serious people are convinced this could happen. Akronites want be ready.

Akron's Y2K committee, formed in 1998 and chaired by Borough Secretary Sue Davidson, held a meeting to lay plans for something that they hope won't even happen. Nearby police and fire departments attended, as did D&E, Blue Ridge Cable Ephrata Community Hospital and Maple Farm Nursing Center.

Randy Gockley, Lancaster County emergency management coordinator, said his task force had determined there might be periodic power outages but didn't foresee months without electricity. Gockley said the county's banks and other financial institutions were prepared to not lose track of their customers' money. The county's 911 call center will be beefed up by New Year's Eve.

But just in case, Gockley said, the American Red Cross emergency guidelines call for households to have a three-to-five-day supply of food, water and prescription drugs.

Gary Oliphant, Ephrata Community Hospital director of information, said dealing with Y2K was a matter of preparation, not panic.

Jack Roth, maintenance director at Maple Farm said they expected to have 23 vacant beds as the new year dawns, plus they have extra mattresses and space to put them.

But if all goes well, the most exciting things to happen on New Year's Eve hootin', hollerin' and corks a poppin.' (New Era, July 28)

Akron Riddler

Dear Editor: I ran across this recently and thought I would share it with the New Era readers:

If con is the opposite of pro, then what is the opposite of progress?

Sandy Turner, Akron (April 6 letter to the editor)

ENB Opens Akron office

Ephrata National Bank opened its newest office at 351 South Seventh Street, next to the Akron Restaurant. Customers opening two deposit accounts totalling a minimum of \$1,000 will receive a hometown collectible, while supplies last. (New Era, January 27)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: John McBeth

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$1,932,787

General: \$905,103 Water: \$304,600

Sewer: \$660,189 Highway Aid: \$62,895

1999

Brown-haired Couple Rob Man at Gunpoint

According to New Era police reporter John Hooper, a recent crime on North 11th Street was "...most uncommon in the tidy hilltop town of 4,000."

Seems a man was walking when a car with three occupants pulled up next to him and asked for directions to the Ephrata Diamond Spring Water plant. As he was speaking to the driver, a passenger got out of the car, walked up behind the pedestrian and took his wallet from his back pocket. When the citizen demanded his wallet back, the robber said he had a gun, which ended the argument.

The trio drove away with the wallet and the victim's \$150. Akron Police Officer Dale Putt interviewed the victim, and asked for a description. The flummoxed Akronite said the robber wore jeans and had dark brown hair. The woman had light brown hair. Anyone seeing a couple matching that description was asked to call police. (New Era, April 7)

But They did Spell Akron Right

A story on Akron's new town clock in some editions of Wednesdays New Era contained several errors. A 1957 painting of the Broad Street playground was done by Vernon Wingenroth. A sidewalk at the playground's entrance was built by borough employees, who donated their labor. Richard Goshert was not part of the clock project. In all, about \$13,500 left over from the town's centennial celebration three years ago was used for the clock and at Akron Pines Playground. The New Era regrets the errors. In addition, R. Clinton Buch was co-chairman of the clock project. Dale Putt told the committee where to get the clock. He picked it up and brought it to Akron, then he delivered it to its current spot. (Correction notice, New Era, January 1)

Crestview Chronicles

Responding to complaints from Crestview Drive residents John Stark and others who complained to council that the Ralumac surfacing material applied to protect their street wasn't doing a very good job.

Stewart and Tate, the York County paving contractor that did the work, and had already redone Fifth Street in response to similar complaints, said they didn't think Crestview looked so bad, and they suggested waiting six months to see if it wears down.

That didn't fly with council members, who insisted it be redone as soon as possible.

On the other side of the street, a few houses down, and at a later council meeting Terry Kinka said a manhole repair had left huge gouges in the street, and she's worried that a snowplow will dig up the street with the white stuff. Council member and streets chair Lynn Crills said it would cost \$13,000 to overlay the street, and he'd like to wait a year to see if the gouges wear down. He promised to check the street at least once a month to see if it gets better. Council agreed with Crills' approach. (New Era, July 21)

Congratulations to Akron Borough for

125 years



MCC office, 1978



MCC office, 2020



*Congratulations from
Mennonite Central
Committee to our
wonderful neighbors and
friends in Akron as you
celebrate 125 years.*



Akronites Asked to Conserve Water

It was a plea several boroughs and townships posted on their message boards during last summer's historic drought. But Akron has the sign up right now. "We haven't had rain the last month," borough manager Dan Guers said Friday. "Were just reminding people to conserve and use water wisely, especially when everyone is home for the holiday season and home from school."

For the year, Akron and the rest of Lancaster County are nearly nine inches below the average rainfall amount of 39.17 inches through Nov. 25.

Last year the borough used 375,000 gallons of water per day, which has increased to 450,00 gallons per day this year.

At this point the shortage isn't a major threat, Guers said, and a few good rains or significant snowfall should replenish the town's four wells and a spring that supply the town's water. *(New Era, November 25)*

16 year-old Bowls Third 300 Game

Akronite David Woffington Jr., just 16, rolled the third perfect game of his young bowling career this fall. Never think you cant, always think you can, said Woffington, an Ephrata High School junior. The third perfect game was rolled at Blue Ball Lanes on Oct. 8 and was better than the first two, according to his father, David.

Woffingtons 72-year-old grandmother, Jean Gazonas, a 52-year veteran of the game, was there to cheer him on to his perfect game. Woffington said his grandmother, a left-handed bowler who has participated in the game for 52 years, has always been an inspiration for him. Woffington, averages seven strikes per game and has a 220 average.

He bowls in the Saturday Morning Senior Baseball League at 222 Dutch Lanes and the Red Rose Jr. Travel League. He also competes in state junior tournaments. *(New Era, May 17)*



No Go for Backyard Bows

Ordinance and safety committee chairman Thomas Bender said his committee had entertained a request from a 9th Street resident who wanted to shoot with target tips in his backyard. The committee decided there were too many houses nearby and too much potential for an accident. *(New Era, May 17)*

Boro Reps at Regional Policing meeting

Four northern Lancaster County municipalities are pondering whether a regional police force might be in their future. At a May 15 meeting called by the supervisors of Ephrata Township, representatives of Clay Township and Ephrata and Akron boroughs met to discuss the possibility of forming a regional police department.

This is all very tentative, said Ephrata Borough Mayor Ralph Mowen, who attended the meeting. The initiative was begun by Ephrata Township supervisor Clark R. Stauffer who feels regionalization may get the township the best coverage for our residents for the least amount of cost. Supervisor chairman Dan Fox agreed. He said Ephrata Township, which has nine officers and a chief, has a high level of calls per officer, and that regionalization might give the officers more backup support.

Regionalization does not have a good track record in the county. On April 1, 1994, Brecknock and Caernarvon townships pooled their forces to form the Northern Lancaster County Regional Police Department. Never popular, the NLCRPD caused heated arguments at township and police commission meetings, and proved expensive. The NLCRPD disbanded June 15, 1995. *(New Era, May 24)*

MCC Looks for Early Approval For Wecoming Place Project

The Mennonite Central Committee hopes to welcome guests to its Welcoming Place by early next year. With that schedule in mind, MCC presented Akron Borough officials with plans this month for four new residential buildings and a training center. Collectively, they will be known as The Welcoming Place. The world relief and development organization will use the facilities to house volunteers, workers and overseas guests who come to MCC to visit or train. The \$4 million project, to be built on eight acres behind MCC headquarters at 21 S. 12th St., will replace several outdated buildings where 1,500 visitors stayed last year.

MCC is hoping to speed up the planning process so it can break ground by April, with construction taking about eight months.

Its plans, however, hit a speed bump at the January borough planning commission meeting. MCC asked the planning commission to allow it to present one combined preliminary final plan for approval, instead of two separate plans. The borough likes multiple plans and multiple stages to the approval process, according to borough manager Dan Guers. Also, the borough has to agree to abandon sections of 12th and Broad streets, which are shown on maps, but which have never been built. *(New Era, January 26)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

- Mayor:** Kirby Smith
- Borough Manager:** Dan Guers
- Council President:** John McBeth
- Police Chief:** Herbert Beard
- Fire Chief:** Larry Hawk
- Annual Budget:** \$1,971,756
- General:** \$985,950 **Water:** \$343,900
- Sewer:** \$660,387 **Highway Aid:** \$61,511

Akron's First 100 Years - A History by Wilmer Hall

One of the earliest buildings in our area was a log cabin built in 1724, eight years before George Washington was born. It was located at the foot of North Eleventh Street on land which is now the Loyd Roland Memorial Park. The cabin was built by Philadelphia fur traders who met Indians each spring as they came to drink the medicinal waters and trade their furs. The building had wooden shutters on the north and east sides. The shutters had holes five inches in diameter, which are thought to have been used to look out for unfriendly Indians who were living in the area at the time.

A farmhouse and barn were added later. In modern times, the farm was owned by Clayton Wenger, Sr., who operated a bottled water business which was famous for its spring water.

Clayton Wenger, Jr., sold the farm to the Borough in 1951. The log cabin burned down in the early 1940s, and the Borough dismantled the barn after purchasing the property, but the original farmhouse still stands and is being lived in today.

Early records do not state from whom the original land grants were made in the Borough, or what year, but there are early land grants recorded in Harrisburg from Thomas, John and Richard Penn, all sons of William Penn. There was a grant dated December 7, 1739, to Henry Miler, another dated November 30, 1748, to Mathias Beckley, and another dated June 13, 1749 to William Shearer. The new owners paid the Penns 19 cents an acre.



A petition was prepared for the court in November, 1894, and the grand jury certified the incorporation of Akron as a borough in 1895.

During this period the chief industry was the manufacture of handmade cigars. At one time, more than 50 cigar "factories" were located in Akron. Many of these factories consisted of back rooms in private residences, but several were quite large and employed many people.

Early in the 20th century, the Miller Hess Shoe Company became the dominant factor in the Borough's economy, a role it maintained until it closed in 1985.

The former Usner House, a landmark from that era, still stands on the southeast corner of the square. In front of the building on there was a sign marked "LAW" on which borough ordinances were posted.

The Village Band Hall, a two-story building next to the Usner House, was the borough's social center. Here the community band practiced, boys and girls played basketball and the community held fairs and carnivals.

Early Akron churches held Sunday worship services there until their churches were built.

In the early 1900s, North and South Ninth Streets were rebuilt with large stones, which were laid by hand. A water department was created in 1911, and an electric light company in 1912. In 1939, the state built Route 222, now Route 272, through town on Seventh Street. The route had formerly followed Ninth Street.

Akron residents served their country in all the wars of the 20th Century. Celebrations were held to honor servicemen returning from World Wars I and II

About 1946 a full time police department was established. A new water plant and reservoir were built in 1962. Borough council adopted zoning and subdivision ordinances in 1964. In 1969 construction started on a sewerage system, which was completed and put into service the following year. A project was begun in 1972 to rebuild all the streets in the borough. That project was completed 15 years later. The Loyd Roland Memorial Park was also dedicated in 1972. The park would eventually have baseball and soccer fields, lighted tennis courts, a pavilion, a meeting house and a paved bicycle path. In April of 1981, an arsonist set fire to the Borough Hall. A few months before the fire, then borough manager Wilmer Hall had removed and stored in his home decades of Akron memorabilia that had been in a closet above where the fire was set.

A longstanding drought took the borough to the brink of a water crisis in May of 1981. Fire hose was laid from a hydrant in Ephrata to the borough standpipe and water was brought in from our neighbor's system. When water began to flow, the standpipe held less than a six-hour supply. The 4,400 feet of fire hose was purchased at a cost of more than \$11,000. The water did not need to be pumped, because Ephrata's Spring Garden Street reservoir is on a level with the stand pipe, and the water flowed through gravity alone. A permanent hookup was installed by the end of the summer, and in 1983 the two boroughs formed a joint water authority.

After construction was finished, 42 sugar maples were bought and planted along Main Street. In 1985, the Borough celebrated its 90th anniversary with a celebration and the town's first official fireworks display. With the closing of the Miller Hess Shoe Company in 1985, all the factories and mills, as well as the railroad, that had formed the economic base for Akron's first century were gone. As the town entered its second century in 1995, it found itself in a state of transition, but firmly rooted in the values and in the traditions of neighborliness that had served it so well through its first hundred years.

This history was written by the late Wilmer Hall, a former councilman and borough manager who devoted many years to the service of the Akron community. This is from the 1895-1995 Centennial booklet.

Boro Drops Out of Regional Police Force Discussion

A proposed regional police force for four Ephrata-area municipalities may be dead. Akron Borough Council voted Monday night to remove itself from current discussions on a regional police force.

Council vice president John McBeth said Clay and Ephrata townships had already decided to abandon the regional study. Ephrata Borough, which had originally proposed the regional department, was the fourth member of the group.

McBeth said cost was the major factor in Akron's decision. McBeth said the projected cost to field a police officer in the regional force would rise to more than \$90,000. Under the proposal, all of the area's 41 officers would keep their jobs and be paid in line with Ephrata Borough's pay scale. The current average cost in the four municipalities is \$84,000. Ephrata Borough's current cost per officer is \$102,000. (*Intell, Sept. 12*)

Rail-trail Gains a Booster

Ephrata resident Richard Moyer used to walk to his job in Akron along an old rail bed. A few places on the former Reading Railroad line were overgrown, but most of the trip was a pleasant alternative to fighting the traffic on Route 272. Moyer remembered that trip when he heard about the opposition to Ephrata Borough's proposed walking trail along Cocalico Creek.

Last month 85 Ephrata Borough residents carried "No Trail!" protest signs and T-shirts to a public meeting and told borough officials they thought the proposed route was intrusive. Moyer told borough council last week that rather build a new trail, he'd like to use what's already there.

The railroad tracks that used to service the feed mills from Reading through Lititz were torn up several years ago, and the graded rail bed sits mostly unused. Ephrata Borough has maintained a portion of the bed as far south as Sycamore Road and zoned it as a linear park. It's an idyllic spot and walkers and bicyclists have worn a path there, but south of Sycamore it's overgrown.

Moyer is proposing to extend the linear park trail to Colonial Drive in Akron, where the borough wants to build a tot lot. Owners of two Akron properties near the rail bed listened to Moyer's proposal. After the meeting they told Moyer they were more worried about current shenanigans on the abandoned land than they were about a rail trail. (*Intell, Dec. 19*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$2,016,672

General: \$1,000,151 **Water:** \$354,500

Sewer: \$599,910 **Highway Aid:** \$62,111

2001

No Anthrax in MCC Letter

The white powder found in a threatening letter sent to the Mennonite Central Committee did not contain anthrax, according to tests performed by the state Department of Health.

MCC officials announced the test results Monday afternoon to about 70 MCC workers during a brief meeting at their office at 21 S. 12th St. in Akron. The test results were highly anticipated by MCC workers, Akron Borough police, United States Postal Service officials and the FBI.

Agatha Redekop, an MCC volunteer from Manitoba, Canada, opened a letter last Wednesday that contained a white powder and a letter with a Virginia postmark. The letter was addressed to the MCC and said, "Have you taken your penicillin lately? Death to America. Israel is death."

The letter writer claimed to be a woman with AIDS who hated America, and wished immediate death on whoever opened the letter. When Redekop realized her hands were covered with white powder, she told a coworker, who ushered her to a sink to wash her hands.

About 70 MCC workers were evacuated from the building after the discovery, and the room where the envelope was opened was sealed. MCC reopened Thursday, but the room remained sealed.

"The fear I may get anthrax didn't hit me until I tried to go to sleep Wednesday night," Redekop said. "I thought about the Hazmat workers wearing masks, gloves and protective suits when they went into the mail room, and the fact that I breathed that same air."

The letter was another instance of a spate of nationwide hoaxes bedeviling the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. (*Intell, Dec. 4*)

Boro and Piero's Still at Odds

A 3-year-old disagreement between Pieros Restaurant owner Piero Dinnocenzo and Akron Borough is finally winding to a close. Dinnocenzo and Akron settled their court case over Akron's requirements for handicap-accessible sidewalks two years ago. The borough had asked the restaurant to put in a sidewalk along Seventh Street and a wheelchair ramp at the restaurant entrance.

During a phone interview last week Dinnocenzo said the ramp was OK, but there wasn't room for all of the sidewalk, and claimed the borough's stance was selective enforcement. Borough Manager Dan Guers said the borough has been consistent in its policy of requiring sidewalks when there is new development in an area. As examples, he pointed to High Street property owners, the U.S. post office on 7th Street and Dinnocenzo's neighbors from the Easy Service gas station south to the borough line. All paid for sidewalks after new development went up in their area. The borough took Dinnocenzo to court, and he was fined for noncompliance. (*Intell, December 19*)



Akron Lions Timeline 1995-2020

1995: The Club approved \$15,000 for the bathroom in the park, which the Club and the borough will build together. The borough will match the funds to complete the project. In a "First Hundred Years" celebration, the Akron Lions had a food stand and sponsored fireworks.

1997: Toasted cheeseburgers at the Ephrata Fair went for \$2.50 each, fries for \$1.25.

1998: Met a challenge to build a pavilion-clubhouse and band shelter from the Akron Centennial Committee, which donated \$5,000. Construction was under the direction of Lion President Kay McEllenney. Members finished the project.

1999: First Akron Day in the Park.

2000: New Food Trailer built by Kay McEllenney, Jim Philips and Roland Myers at a cost of \$25,000.

2001: Welcomed the first woman, Harriet Fasnacht, into the Club.

2002: New supply trailer for the Fair was divided into three compartments. Christmas lights were installed on the gazebo in the park.

2004: A new picnic pavilion was built and funded by Akron Lions at Broad Street Park.

2005: Akron Lions built new restrooms at Broad Street Park at a cost of \$11,000.

2007: \$10,000 donated to Akron Borough for playground equipment, which members and borough employees will install.

2008: Toasted cheeseburgers priced at \$4.00

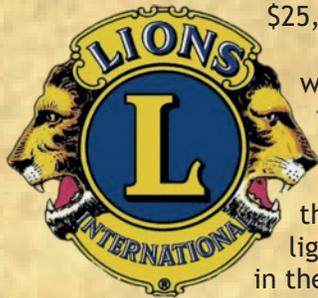
2010: Akron Lions bought a large shed to store hospital supplies in Roland Park behind the Scout lodge.

2011: New walkway in front of the Roland Park gazebo was dedicated.

2014: Toasted cheeseburgers still a must-have bargain at \$5.00

2015: Toasted cheeseburgers get bigger at a quarter-pound.

2017-2018: 14,000 toasted cheeseburgers served as Akron Lions celebrate 80 years of service.



Feral Felines Foment Fuss

Resident Donald W. Ziegler told Akron council last week that roaming cats have made life on High Street miserable. Ziegler said the five cats that roam his neighborhood are a source of disease. He read a long list of ailments his Internet research revealed are carried by cats.

Lloyd Chapman of nearby Eshleman Drive agreed. The roaming cats are smelly, he said, and they disturb the local wildlife. Police Chief Herbert Beard noted there is a cat problem in the borough, and mentioned a resident near High Street who trapped 10 cats and took them to the humane society.

One council member pointed out that if you feed a feral cat it becomes *your* cat.

Council member Ron Boltz said the borough would notify residents of the High Street neighborhood that cats are being trapped, whether they have a home or not, and taken away. (*New Era, April 17*)

Akron Historians Will Meet

The Akron Historical Preservation Group will hold its annual meeting Monday, April 29, at 7 p.m. at the United Zion Fellowship Hall, 29 S. 10th St., Akron. The meeting will focus on the doctors, dentists, pharmacists and printers who served the area in the 1800s and early 1900s. Wilmer Hall will show slides of Akron's 75th anniversary. (*New Era, April 25*)

Akron Man Pledges to Pledge

Dan Giacoletto values America's freedoms, including the First Amendment right for individuals to say – or not say – whatever they want. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in Sacramento, California, recently upheld the right of a Californian to not have his daughter say the words "under God" when she was reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Giacoletto said he respects Michael Newdows' right to not use the two words. But Giacoletto also insists on his right to say "under God" when he is reciting the pledge. Newdows is the Californian whose arguments convinced two of the three ninth circuit judges to agree that the inclusion of "under God" was tantamount to a government endorsement of religion.

Giacoletto will lead his family in the pledge at noon, and he's invited 250 Internet friends to join him from wherever they are. Akron Mayor Kirby Smith said he'll be at a family picnic in the Fourth. Smith said he believes in Giacoletto mission and plans to join him at noon. (*New Ear, July 3*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murraray, Sr.

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$1,963,636

General: \$963,650 **Water:** \$354,250

Sewer: \$599,000 **Highway Aid:** \$67,736

2002

Park Task Force Proposes Ambitious Goals for Borough

On Monday evening, the Akron Park Task Force presented a long-range plan for parkland in the community to borough council. The groups vision for Akron parks, according to task force chairman John Williamson, is "...to preserve this open space and provide safe, well maintained and user-friendly facilities for residents of all ages and interests."

The 22-page proposal was compiled from questionnaires sent to Akron residents, interviews with representatives of organizations who use the parks, Akron Elementary school teachers and students, and visitors to neighboring parks. It includes a profile of the borough, explanation of existing parks and recreation, community assessment of the parks, detailed survey results, along with the task force's vision, guiding principles and recommendations.

Dan Guers, borough manager and adviser for the task force, said one significant finding was that the majority of Akron residents are very satisfied with its parks, especially Roland Park. One surprise was that the borough owns an additional two-acre piece of farmland that can be utilized by Roland Park.

The task force recommendations include:

- Seek assistance from Lancaster County for planning, funding and further design.
- Develop and maintain a schedule (with a budget) for replacing park equipment for each of the parks.
- Expand reservation system to include use of playing fields.
- Broad Street: Replace tennis courts with street hockey rink; replace playground equipment and slide; build rink for street hockey; build an open pavilion with six to eight picnic tables; upgrade the baseball field.
- Roland Park: Develop the entire stream into an attractive park with wild flower gardens, small footbridge and a few picnic tables; regrade the area around the band shell to provide improved seating; develop a dog park, a fenced-in area where dogs can run unleashed; Install a sand volleyball court near the present basketball courts.

The task force had many other suggestions for both parks. Borough Manager Dan Guers said borough council is expected to accept the plan at its February 9 meeting, and that a public hearing would be held in March to present the plan to the community.

Guers said it's a big list for a small borough, but he believes most of the plan can be implemented. He added that the borough currently has some \$40,000 available for improvements.

The task force was formed in November 2000 and spent over a year of in-depth research before compiling the plan. Members include: Williamson, Pam Cochran, Ken Zell, Ron Boltz, Dave Chalfant, Dorothy Hollinger and Frank Wolf. (*New Era, January 16*)

PATRONS

DAVID AUSTIN

WARREN BURKHART

RONALD CAMMAUF

DONALD D. DEHART

STEVE DELLINGER

DAVID AND DARLENE FASSNACHT

ED AND SANDY FAUSNACHT

G. CRAIG FORNEY

RUSSELL AND PEGGY HAY

SCOTT AND KAREN JACKSON

CHARLES KOPP, JR.

BRIAN AND KITTY KURTZ

CLYDE, SHARON AND DAVID MARTIN

STEPHEN AND TRACEE MONTPETIT

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

LORNA RAVEGUM

LARRY AND DIANNA ROSS

LAWRENCE AND MELODY RUPLEY

PAUL SWANGREN, JR.

Thank you for your support of the 125th Anniversary Book

!!! ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE PLANS ACTUAL MEETING WITH VOTERS !!!

Newly-elected state Rep. Scott Boyd of the 43rd Legislative District will be a featured guest today at a Meet Your Legislator event hosted by the Ephrata Area Chamber of Commerce. The event will be held from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Akron Borough Fire Hall. Boyd will discuss local and district concerns, summarize his constituent services and provide insight into priority legislative issues in Harrisburg. Other members of the county legislative delegation have also been invited. (*New Era, February 13*)

Akron Airman Honored

Air Force Airman 1st Class Jason D. Ostrich, Main St., Akron, was honored for distinguished academic achievement in the Department of Defense's Defense Information School Public Affairs Specialist-Writers Course. At 32, he was the oldest member of his technical school class and the oldest male graduate of his basic military training.

He has been nominated for a Pennsylvania State Accommodation Medal for his academic efforts. A cum laude graduate of the University of Arizona, Ostrich chose to enlist in the Air Force after the attacks of Sept. 11. From graduation, he moved on to active duty with the 193rd Special Operations Wing, Middletown, where he is the noncommissioned officer in charge of public affairs. (*New Era, August 4*)

Rail-Trail Gets a Boost

On Tuesday, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources awarded \$1.6 million in grants for rail-trail projects in 13 counties. Akron Borough will use its \$40,000 grant for a feasibility study for turning seven miles of the former Reading and Columbia Railroad corridor into a rail-trail. It is working with Ephrata Borough, Ephrata Township and Warwick Township. The line along Cocalico Creek also includes extensions that would link Akron's Roland Park and Ephrata's Tom Grater Park.

Rail-trails are vital components in a state initiative, unveiled in 2001, to put in place a statewide framework of connecting green-ways and recreational sites within and among communities. Pennsylvania is tops in the nation for the number of public rail-trails, with 116 so far. (*New Era, April 2*)

2003

Borough, EAJA in Legal Dispute

Akron Borough's legal fight with Ephrata Area Joint Authority continues this week while, despite recent wet weather, the borough remains dependent on the authority's water to dilute high nitrate levels in its own wells. Nearly two months after the authority filed a lawsuit to curb Akron's water usage, another round of letters seeking a negotiated settlement passed between the municipal neighbors.

Yet this round of talks appears likely to go the way of previous failed consultations as Akron and the authority bicker over who should even attend a settlement meeting.

In February, the authority initiated the legal action against Akron Borough in an attempt to limit to 30,000 gallons per day the amount of water Akron Borough can buy from the regional water authority. Akron Borough seeks to set the supplemental amount of water at 200,000 gallons per day.

The dispute hinges on the interpretation of the word "supplemental" in a 12-year-old agreement wherein the authority agreed to provide supplemental water to Akron. The authority is a regional water supplier comprising Ephrata and Clay townships and Ephrata Borough. Last month, before sending its legal reply to the authority's suit, Akron council forwarded a letter to the authority requesting an informal meeting, without staff or attorneys, between Akron Borough Council and at least three members of the authority's board to resolve the water issue.

In its April 2 written response, the authority said its delegation to any meeting with Akron would consist of authority chairman William Hecker, authority secretary Gary Nace and the authority's attorney, Gary Krafft, exactly the limited slate of negotiators Akron borough council members were hoping to avoid. Despite this rebuff, Akron solicitor Kenelm Shirk expressed optimism about the chance for successful negotiations.

During Akron council's Monday meeting, council member Ann Nolt again reported that the borough was forced to buy water from the authority in order to dilute high nitrate concentrations in borough water, even though recent rains have replenished the borough's wells. In high concentrations, nitrates can have serious health impacts on infants as well as long-term adverse affects for lifelong exposure. Nitrates are most often found in sewage and livestock manure. Nitrate levels in Akrons water will naturally fall in the next couple months as newly planted spring crops utilize nitrates in the soil and reduce their concentration in the borough's watershed. Yet Akron's current suit with the authority only increases the pressure on council members to find ways to continuously provide its own clean water to the borough's water customers. (*New Era, May 13*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$2,052,583

General: \$1,014,992 Water: \$369,276.00

Sewer: \$603,400 Highway Aid: \$64,915



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Timber-r-r-r! in the Park

The borough may remove some trees to save the woods of Roland Park. At its March 8 meeting, council welcomed Paul N. Shaffer of Antietam Forestry Consultants. Shaffer said he walked the woods with borough manager Daniel Guers and found very old timber with little regeneration. Shaffer said many large trees, including oak, chestnut oak and poplar, are in decline. Many are dead or partly dead, he said, with defects that are slowly hollowing them.

He said trees have fallen, and more will follow if no action is taken. Shaffer offered Antietam's services to manage a selective harvest. The company would identify the boundaries of the area to be cut; select, grade and mark trees to be removed; solicit bids from timber companies and monitor their activities; secure needed permits; and collect and distribute revenues.

Shaffer estimated the borough could realize \$30,000 to \$40,000 by selling 15 to 20 percent of the largest trees on about 24 acres without paying "out of pocket," as Antietam would retain a percentage of the timber income.

Shaffer warned that when an area is timbered, it doesn't look good for quite a while, and council should expect criticism. Council member Ronald Boltz agreed. "Its not pretty and a hard idea to sell," Boltz said. "But its good for the forest in the long run."

Council took no action but kept Shaffer's information packets and references. (*Intell, March 24*)

Council Member Wants Hookup Parity

Borough council member John McBeth wants Ephrata Township to do more in his continuing quest to bring parity to sewer hookup fees. McBeth has pointed out repeatedly that borough residents pay \$5,000 to tap into Akron's system, while Ephrata Township residents pay just \$500, the charge included in an old agreement.

"I'm very upset," McBeth said at council's June 14 meeting. "Its not fair to Akron residents." Borough solicitor Jennifer Mejia presented a resolution, passed by council in 2002 but never acted upon, raising the out-of-borough rate to \$5,000. Mejia and council president Thomas Murray cautioned that Akron cannot unilaterally increase fees without input from the township, and possibly the state Public Utility Commission. Unsatisfied, McBeth accused Township officials of dragging their feet. (*Intell, June 23*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Larry Hawk

Annual Budget: \$2,077,795

General: \$1,027,299 **Water:** \$365,575

Sewer: \$619,389 **Highway Aid:** \$65,822

2004

\$600,000 Nitrate Plant Eyed

Akron Borough's Christmas gift to its water customers this year may be a new \$600,000 system to help clean up their water. Borough council voted Dec. 13 to advertise for bids for a plant that would remove nitrates from the borough's water and give it a slightly different taste. The bid period for the plant will close Feb. 18, with construction to begin next summer and possibly wrapping up by the end of 2005.

To pay for the nitrate stripper, the borough will take out a \$600,000 15-year loan at 2 percent interest from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority. Nitrates, which are often found in sewage and livestock manure, have been a recurrent problem in Akron's water. In high concentrations, they can have serious health impacts on infants, as well as long-term adverse affects on adults.

The nitrate facility would be constructed as an addition to the existing water plant in Akron park. The nitrate stripper would reduce overall nitrate levels by pumping water from two of the borough's highest-nitrate wells into the plant, treating it, then mixing it back with water coming from the borough's other wells.

The borough now reduces nitrates in its water by mixing it with low-nitrate water purchased from Ephrata Area Joint Authority. However, this long-standing sharing agreement for supplemental water was threatened in February 2003 when the authority sued the borough to limit the amount of water it can purchase. The suit, which is ongoing, prompted council to seek its own remedy. (*Intell, December 22*)

eBay Essay Pays off for Akronite

An eBay enthusiast from Akron on Thursday found himself \$2,500 richer while on a free four-day vacation thanks to the Internet auction site. Mark Bos, the maintenance manager of the National Bearings Co., 1596 Manheim Pike, earned the money at a national convention for eBay's heavy users.

Bos and four others were flown to New Orleans as finalists in an eBay essay contest, where the top five winners received eBay gift certificates ranging from \$2,500 to \$50,000. Bos finished fifth in the contest in a field of 16,000 entrants. "I was a little disappointed. I hoped to win the \$50,000 grand prize," Bos said by phone from his hotel suite. "But I'm having a wonderful vacation; Im standing here on the 28th floor of the Sheraton staring at a view of the Mississippi River."

Bos entered the small-business category. His 250-word essay told how he saved his employer \$18,000 by purchasing metal tool storage cabinets on eBay. He also had a successful bid of \$200 for a hoist with a regular market value of \$2,000. (*Intell, June 25*)







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\$95,000 DCNR Grant Will Fund Colonial Drive Rail-trail Section

From helping a rail-trail become reality in Akron to building an in-line skating park for youths in Quarryville, a new round of state grants will benefit a variety of recreation projects in Lancaster County. The nearly \$800,000 in grants will help fund eight projects in involving parks, trails, recreation and open space. The local grants, announced Wednesday by the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, were among \$23 million handed out for park, recreation and conservation projects in 57 Pennsylvania counties.

The borough was granted \$95,000 to buy 1.4 acres along Colonial Drive in the borough and Ephrata Township. The proposed nine-mile rail-trail from Ephrata to Lititz runs through the property. Recreation facilities also are planned for the park.
(New Era, April 14)

Warwick Twp. Eyes 7-Mile Rail-trail Extension to Akron Borough

Warwick Township is looking to extend the rails-to-trails path to connect Akron and Lititz boroughs, a distance of more than seven miles. A study is being planned to consider the obstacles, environmental concerns, safety and costs relating to the proposed trail, township manager Daniel Zimmerman reported Oct. 19 to supervisors.

Concerns include a pedestrian crossing on Rothsville Road and a bridge that will require a structural study for safety. *(New Era, October 26)*

Subdivision/Development Ordinance Okayed

Akron Borough Council has passed a subdivision and land development ordinance that completes the process of putting together the framework for how planning is done in the borough.

At the July 11 meeting, council vice president John McBeth said the municipal planning process is like a three-legged stool. Those legs are (1) a comprehensive long-range plan that addresses the issue of what kind of town we want Akron to be, (2) a zoning ordinance that regulates what buildings can go where in the borough and (3) a subdivision and land development plan (how land is subdivided and used). "If you have all three legs in place, then you have a good planning process," McBeth said. The borough's comprehensive plan was completed approximately 12 years ago. *(New Era, July 20)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: Kirby Smith

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Herbert Beard

Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler

Annual Budget: \$2,210,337

General: \$1,132,997 **Water:** \$369,775

Sewer: \$621,100 **Highway Aid:** \$86,465

2005

Entrepreneur Touts Savings on Nitrate Plant

A Lancaster businessman says he can save Akron Borough Council members up to 10 percent on a nitrate-removal facility they plan build this year. Benjamin Cope of Cope Co. Salt Lancaster told borough council members during their Monday meeting he could knock \$60,000 off the \$600,000 price tag for the water treatment facility.

Cope said his company would reduce the borough's cost by building a smaller holding tank and making the tank out of fiberglass instead of concrete. "It is a very simple and very easy installation, and it will cost a lot less than what you have drawn up," Cope said.

Cope said the advertised bid specifications for the plant describe a plant that is larger and more expensive than the borough needs. The borough has opened bidding on the facility, which will remove nitrates from the borough's water system.

The bid contract will be awarded Feb. 18, with construction scheduled to begin this summer and possibly finishing by the end of the year. Although township engineer Jacob Rainwater defended the plant's design specifications, he said alternate designs could be considered after the bid is awarded.

Several borough council members expressed interest in Cope's alternate plan. *(New Era, January 12)*

Borough Buys Colonial Park Property

Akron Borough Council Monday agreed to purchase a 1.4-acre tract in the northwestern section of the borough to be used as a park. Settlement for the property occurred Tuesday. The property is on Colonial Drive, adjacent to the BCM International office building. BCM sold the property to the borough for \$180,000. The borough will leave the space open.

Council vice president John McBeth said the property has served the community well over the years as a great place for pickup games of all kinds.

"I would estimate that 20 to 30 percent of the borough's population is within three blocks of the projected park property," McBeth said.

"We have approximately 300 dwelling units within that three-block area. A lot of those dwelling units are apartment buildings or duplexes with limited recreation space. This park provides open space for those residents."

In addition, McBeth said he envisions minor improvements to the projected park including a tot-lot, children's playground and picnic area. Just behind the park property is an abandoned railroad which eventually may be part of a rail trail joining Lititz to Ephrata, McBeth said. He sees a natural connection between the projected park and the potential rail trail. The \$180,000 cost for the park initially will come from Akron's financial reserves. *(New Era, July 27)*



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No increase in 2007 Taxes, But Water Rates See 12% Hike

Akron Borough Council approved a preliminary 2007 budget Monday that includes a 12-percent water rate increase. If finalized in December, the new rate would mean an increase of \$21.60 a year for a typical homeowner using 12,000 gallons of water each quarter.

The budget includes no increases in the sewer rate or local taxes. The general fund increased about 5.2 percent over the 2006 budget to reach \$1.25 million, and the preliminary water budget climbed to \$387,390.

Finance Committee chair Terry Reber told council the higher water rate was necessary to pay for the borough's new nitrate filtration system, which went online this year. The water rate hike was in February, 2003, so the proposed 12 per cent increase equals a change of 3 percent per year. "For the cost of living, the cost of inflation, you're getting a treatment facility," Reber said. "I think its a good deal for our water customers." (*New Era, November 15*)

Kickstart for New Soccer Club

Its been almost 20 years since Akron had its own soccer club. But now, thanks to a group of dedicated parents, Akron once again is home to youth soccer. Recently, a group headed by residents Ken Rummel and Dave Witwer had a vision of what they'd like their soccer club to be. They believe strongly that the children and parents are the most vital part of any soccer organization, and that every aspect and decision made within the organization be done with the parents' and children's best interests at heart.

With the Ephrata Youth Soccer Club already established here, why did they feel a need to start another club in the area? "We think we offer something that's unique," Rummel said. "Basically what our vision entails is that since the parents supply the child and fund the entire organization, we feel the parents should have a direct involvement and direct say in how the organization is guided and run."

One goal for the club, Rummel said, is to make soccer affordable for the players. And that includes making soccer affordable for its parents. Rummel said that when you take into account the costs of cleats, shin pads, referee fees, etc., most parents shell out well over \$100 for their kids to play. "Affordability was a big thing to us," Rummel said. (*New Era, February 26*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler

Annual Budget: \$2,328,973

General: \$1,190,876 **Water:** \$355,136

Sewer: \$665,052 **Highway Aid:** \$117,909

2006

All Signs Point to a Christmas Craft Show for Grace Evangelical

Every year, Akron's Grace Evangelical Congregational Church has a Christmas craft show, and the members do what they can to promote it.

Like four yard signs placed on church members' properties around town. Unfortunately yard signs were outlawed 16 years ago, when borough council adopted an ordinance to prohibit temporary signs in borough rights of way or on any property not physically hosting an event like a church-sponsored craft show.

So borough police, alerted to the law, removed the signs and put them into the truck of the church's pastor, Ed Vidzicki. It must be noted here that Akron Police Chief Thomas Zell is a member of the Grace Evangelical congregation.

Pastor Vidzicki appeared before council to ask for an exception to the zoning policy, pointing out that proceeds from the craft show support the church's missionary work and other charity efforts. But the zoning ordinance allows only for-sale and auction signs on private property.

"I'm not sure not-for-profit churches and other organizations that help the community are who you intended to target," Vidzicki said. "All we're requesting is that we can put the signs back up."

Council has rejected similar requests in the past, including one from a Lutheran church that wanted to hang a banner across a borough road. In September, police also removed several directional signs pointing guests toward a wedding because they violated the ordinance.

Solicitor Ken Shirk said the ordinance, which technically even prohibits yard signs backing the Ephrata Mounts football team, was meant to cut down on real estate and similar signs cluttering grassy areas and street comers. Police started enforcing the ordinance more strictly within the last year, noted Chief Zell. A recent effort to codify ordinances also brought the strict rules to borough officials' attention.

Its a good project and worthwhile, Mayor John McBeth said of the craft show. But to be uniform and consistent, we had to address it.

Shirk advised council that members could not grant an exception to the church, but the mayor could decide not to prosecute the church if it reposted the signs on private property. McBeth decided to do exactly that, and Vidzicki agreed he would make sure the signs would not block sidewalks once they went up again.

Several council members suggested modifying the zoning ordinance to provide more flexibility in the future, but they agreed to look at it only after the borough finishes the codification process.

(*New Era, October 11*)



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Akron Singer Tops AMT Competition

Akron's Naomi Gillies made a return trip to the Lancaster Headliners competition Sunday at the American Music Theater. She finished second last year in the American Idol-style competition at the American Music Theater. This year the three-judge panel of music professionals picked her as the top singer in the field of 12 contestants.



"Last year I chose songs that were really similar, and that hurt me," she told Intell reporter Pat Burns. "So I just really tried to go from places across the spectrum."

Burns reported that the judges were also impressed with Gillies' wardrobe choices

for her four competition songs, ranging from evening gown to barefoot-and-jeans for her rendition of "A New Life" from the Broadway musical "Jeckyll & Hyde." (Intell, September 17)

Borough Negotiates With EAJA

At a meeting Jan. 31, negotiators from the borough and Ephrata Area Joint Authority worked to resolve a five-year legal battle regarding Akron's right to buy supplemental water from the authority.

Both sides agreed authority water should be available to Akron but in limited quantities and at a fair rate. Akron council member John Williamson described the borough's written offer as reciprocal, meaning the standards apply to both the borough and the authority. Under the borough's plan, each side would reserve 50,000 gallons of water for the other, and no matter which side purchases water, each would pay 65 percent of the rate charged to customers in single-family homes.

Although Akron once relied on the authority for large amounts of water, particularly during droughts, the borough now has improved treatment facilities and can cover its own customers.

The authority plans to meet Feb. 15 to decide how to proceed. (Intell, February 7)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler

Annual Budget: \$2,338,722

General: \$1,252,599 **Water:** \$387,390

Sewer: \$606,896 **Highway Aid:** \$91,837

2007

Vietnam Adoptees Meet Their Rescuer

For some former Vietnamese orphans who gathered for a reunion at Akron Mennonite Church on Sunday, it was the first time they'd seen Betty Tisdale since 1975 when she spearheaded an airlift that saved them from the advancing communist regime just before the fall of Saigon.

An hour or so before Tisdale took to the stage to speak about her experiences at the An lac orphanage, now-adult former orphans and their adoptive parents gathered around her to thank her for what she'd done.

The airlift saved 219 orphans and brought them to the United States, where they were adopted. Sunday's program included Elisa Esh, director of recruitment and family services for Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries. Diakon's predecessor, Tressler Lutheran Services, facilitated the adoptions in Pennsylvania.

About 10 percent of the orphans airlifted from Vietnam as Saigon fell were from An Lac, Esh said. One of those orphans, Michael Babikow, now 36, of Manheim Township, said he was 5 years old when he boarded a plane to leave his war-ravaged homeland. "It felt like it was a long ride," he said. "I didn't know where I was going. Babikow, who has since visited Vietnam three times, is one of 201 children whose Vietnamese names appear on a 15-page "Final Report of Benning Babies."

The Benning reference on the military report is to Fort Benning, Ga., where the An lac survivors landed when they arrived in the United States.

Of the 201 names on the Fort Banning report, 24 were adopted by parents who lived in Lancaster County.

Tisdale, now in her 80s, used a more complete manifest to help those who greeted her Sunday learn a bit about their history. (Intell, February 12)

Sewage Treatment Costs Going Up

Akron Borough could face an extra \$87,000 in annual sewage-treatment costs by the year 2010, an engineer told council members Monday. Upgrades to the Ephrata wastewater treatment system are needed to meet mandates limiting nitrogen and phosphorous levels in discharged water.

Farley F. Fry of Hanover Engineering said changes in Ephrata are expected to cost \$10.7 million. Designs for changes at the two plants that make up the Ephrata-area system should be completed by January, with construction set to begin in June, 2008. By the time the upgraded facilities are fully operational, Akron would be paying an estimated \$311,595 annually for operating costs and debt service. The borough is expected to pay \$224,283 this year.

Ephrata's system needs to be upgraded to meet more stringent state and regional requirements for treatment standards. (Intell, March 14)

2008

That is So Embaassing...

Akron Borough manager Dan Guers was taking a pleasant drive down Main Street last week when he spotted a really big typo. "I was talking to my wife on the cell, passing the new stoplight (at Main and Seventh streets) and that's when I saw it," he said. After a double-take, Guers realized the new sign read Main Steet instead of Main Street.

"I said, Awwww, I can't believe it. Steet? I had to explain to my wife what I was going on about," he said.

Akron resident Elizabeth Williams said she was riding in a carpool July 14 when she noticed the misspelled sign which she referred to as a slight quality control problem.

Jeff Thompson, also an Akron resident, said he noticed the mistake only after staring at the sign for a minute or two. "Its weird," he said. "I know its supposed to say s-t-r-e-e-t. I expect that spelling like everyone else, so, for a few seconds that's what I thought I saw. Then I realized it was a misspelling."



Guers he spoke with the contractors who made the sign, CM High of Myerstown, who normally does out-standing work, Guers said, chalking up the misspelling as a simple mistake. Guers received at least four phone calls about the sign since it was installed Monday. It was removed by Wednesday and a rush order placed for a new sign. (*Intell, July 22*)

Take a Walk

Penn Dutch Pacers Volksmarch Club is holding a walk from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. today in Akron Borough. There will be a 10K trail and a shorter trail, both of which are suitable for strollers but not wheelchairs. The start and finish point is the Lions Club Lodge at Lloyd Roland Memorial Park on North 11th Street. Cost is \$2. (*Intell, April 12*)

Pros to Audit Borough Books

At a recent council meeting, members decided to consider professional auditors to examine the borough's books. The citizen auditors who now do the job, and who are elected, do not plan to run for reelection.

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler

Annual Budget: \$2,438,787

General: \$1,303,912 **Water:** \$350,925

Sewer: \$596,200 **Highway Aid:** \$187,750

Council Approves Warehouse

Construction Without Sidewalks

An Akron couple may move forward with plans to build a warehouse at their home in Akron, now that borough council has approved a final land development plan. Members voted Jan. 14 to greenlight the project in the 100 block of South Seventh Street.

Samuel O. Swartz, III, and his wife intend to build a warehouse for a medical supply business on their mixed-use property. Council approved the couple's plans, despite an unresolved issue concerning adding sidewalks in the neighborhood.

In the case of most new construction, the borough requires builders to add sidewalks and curbing along with their improvements. The Swartz property backs up to Oak Street, which borders Ephrata Township and does not have sidewalks on either side. Council member Joyce Moyer wanted to table a vote on the couple's plan until the borough's street committee develops a uniform sidewalk and curbing policy for similar cases.

But the Swartzes said they have been struggling for months with local and county zoning and planning board hearings. Council agreed to defer a requirement for sidewalks indefinitely. The Swartzes agreed to install sidewalks and to absorb the cost if Oak Street is improved in the future.

Also: Police Chief Tom Zell announced at the council meeting that Akron officers will soon begin Taser training. A state grant funded the purchase of two Tasers, cartridges and holsters and the equipment has been ordered. Zell said it would still be at least several weeks before Tasers could be used in the borough. (*Intell, January 23*)

Akron Elementary Scraps Patrols

Akron Elementary has ended its safety patrol program rather than allow fourth-grade students to control crosswalks. There was a lot of concern about allowing new fourth-graders, just out of third grade, to direct other students at intersections, Police Chief Thomas Zell told borough council at their July 14 meeting.

"Its not going to happen," he said. "Were not going to have any safety patrols. Fifth-grade students have served as patrols at intersections close to the school in the past, but starting this fall, they will join sixth-graders at the new intermediate school."

Zell said Akron principal Enrica Gerhart told him she was discontinuing the patrol program. Zell and Gerhart are working together to determine if more adult crossing guards will be needed. Council approved hiring two additional substitute crossing guards at \$11.50 an hour, and Zell told members that one of the two women is willing to work full time.

Crossing guards will be posted along Main Street at 7th, 9th and 11th streets, as well as at New and 10th streets, and maybe one other crossing. (*Intell, July 25*)

Wash Your Face, Live to 100

Washing his face with cold water every morning is the only thing Arthur Art Z. Wolf, who turns 100 today, could think of that may have contributed to his longevity. That, and maybe his genes. His older sister is Miriam Kachel, who lives in Ephrata Manor and who will turn 103 in December.

Akron's one-time mayor has been passionate about politics for many, many years. "I was school director, for Ephrata Township," he told New Era reporter Lori Van Ingen. "I was the mayor. I was on borough council.

"I also issued building permits for the Akron borough. I was very, very busy with politics. Until one day my wife said, 'You give that up or you lose me.' And I was ready to give it up."

Wolf met his wife, Leona Brown, at the 5 and 10 store. He recalled a song that was popular at the time, "I Met a Million Dollar Baby at the 5 and 10 cent store." Wolf and his million dollar baby were married in 1929 when he was 19 and she was 18. She died in 1997. Wolf moved to Landis Homes the following year.

(New Era, November 16)

New Hires for Police Force

Borough council voted to hire two new police officers at its February 9 meeting. The force has been down two officers since last fall, and Chief Thomas Zell had warned council a month ago that a lack of policing would have impacts on traffic safety and the ability of the other officers to participate in necessary training.

Council members voted 6-0 to hire Lisa Darlington and Jonathan Welsh.

Darlington, a U.S. Navy veteran is a sergeant with The Franklin and Marshall College department of public safety. She lives in Millersville. Welsh is a corporal with the Millersville University police department. He lives in Lancaster. *(New Era, Feb. 18)*

Council Eyes 90 Parking Spaces for Roland

Akron borough council is considering adding 90 parking spaces to Roland Park, but members voiced concern last week about the exact location and the cost of making the park more accessible to cars.

Borough Manager Dan Guers presented council with a plan Aug. 10 that would add 90 spaces near one of the picnic pavilions. The estimated \$50,000 project calls for paving over a central area already used for overflow parking during summer concerts and other large park events. But council members and residents expressed concern that parking might be more appropriate in other areas.

Council President Tom Murray said he prefers to keep parking on the park's periphery, and suggested adding spots near entrances on 11th and Main streets. "I think we should consider alternatives," Murray said. "I don't like to see the middle of our park become a lot for cars." Police Chief Tom Zell suggested council opt for two lots, so people who drive to the park can access more of its 70 acres of features. *(New Era, August 19)*

2009

Akron's Own Music Man

Odds are, if you were a music student in Lancaster County in the last 40 years, you've crossed paths with Akron's David Leithmann. Not only did Leithmann teach music at Hempfield High School for 30 years, but since his retirement in 1997 he's worked with kids throughout the county in a number of music programs, including Lancaster County Youth Symphony and Lancaster County Music Camp at Elizabethtown College.

And for the past 11 years, Leithmann has been visiting schools throughout the county with Music in the Schools, a program that introduces the orchestra to elementary students. It was founded 40 years ago and is sponsored by Greater Federation of Musicians, Local 294. When Leithmann retired, he was approached by the local's president, Marlin Houck, and asked if he wanted to take over the venerable program.

"It was like the best of all possible worlds," Leithmann said. "I get to work with all these out-

standing musicians, take music into the schools, inspiring and motivating the students and getting them involved in music."

Each year, a different section of the orchestra is highlighted. Leithmann serves as the host and conductor, and five or six musicians come along to play. Each school year, the program goes to about 80 schools in Lancaster as well as to nearby counties.

This year, the brass and percussion section is being featured in a program titled "A Musical Celebration of America," featuring songs by American composers. "I want students to be inspired by hearing outstanding musicians, I want them to hear great composers, I want to entertain them by making it fun and enjoyable and I want to educate them."

He knows just how important music can be to a child. "If you are looking to educate the total person, music reaches the soul," Leithmann said. "It's one of the few things that still teaches to strive for perfection. Music enhances all the other areas in a person's life." *(New Era, May 2)*



MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth
Borough Manager: Dan Guers
Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.
Police Chief: Thomas Zell
Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler
Annual Budget: \$2,385,635
General: \$1,345,127 **Water:** \$336,470
Sewer: \$596,200 **Highway Aid:** \$107,838

2010

Colonial Park Closer to Reality

A new and improved Colonial Park is one step closer to reality. After several meetings with residents this winter, borough council on Monday approved a plan that includes a playground, a soccer field and a passive area with open space, shade trees, grills and picnic benches.

"We looked at two different plans, Plan A and Plan B and we came up with a third plan, Plan C," council member John Williamson explained at the beginning of the meeting. "I don't know if compromise is the right word, but we're taking the best parts of both plans."

That said, after a short discussion, council adopted a slightly tweaked Plan D.

The final design calls for a smaller soccer field than the original concept, and council member Ron Boltz suggested moving it slightly to keep it further from the road. Residents agreed with his idea, and also asked that a proposed gazebo be moved into the passive area of the park. The park is bordered by Colonial Drive on one side and a proposed rail trail on the other.

The playground, an additional picnic area and half-court basketball facility will line the trail. The final plan also calls for a line of trees separating the park from nearby homes. An earlier version with more trees had concerned some residents. Residents also asked for bike racks and other small items. (*Intell/New Era*, March 10)

Water Protection Plan Raises Red Flag

Borough solicitor Kenelm Shirk expressed concerns about a new water protection plan developed by Land Studies, an environmental engineering firm from Lititz. Land Studies representative Kelly Gutshall presented the firm's 60-page report to council. The report, financed with a state grant, examined threats to the six wells supplying the borough's municipal water system.

Included in the report are state-mandated information, along with recommendations of measures the borough could take to protect the town water supply. Shirk's concern was that the state Department of Environmental Protection could use the recommendations as a "back-door" way to require the borough to implement more-than-necessary – and very costly – remedial measures. (*Intell/New Era*, March 10)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler

Annual Budget: \$2,269,753

General: \$1,272,090 **Water:** \$345,600

Sewer: \$552,250 **Highway Aid:** \$99,813

Smell the Flowers, Watch the Falcons

Lancaster County's Conestoga Trail and York County's Mason Dixon Trail offer exceptional passages through the Lower Susquehanna River Hills. Together, they are perfect for a leisurely day in the woods.

But next Saturday, 400 men, women and kids will be traveling the 28.4 miles on the paths at anything but a leisurely pace as part of the annual Super Hike and Ultra Trail Run organized by the Keystone Trails Association. For most of the runners/hikers, the scenery will be just a blur.

But not for Akron's 57-year-old Fred Habegger, who participated in last year's tough hike, finishing 147th out of 182 participants. Habegger is a bird-watcher, butterfly photographer, mushroom observer and general admirer of the outdoors. He says it doesn't make sense to go fast through all that nice terrain. So he took his time, and: he saw a peregrine falcon as he crossed the Norman Wood Bridge; he took some nice mushroom shots with his digital camera; and guided by his GPS device, he found two geocaches along the Conestoga Trail.

He was passed by a lot of participants, but, he said, "I just like to get out." (*Intell/New Era*, September 7)

History Group Focuses on Mt. Zion

Akron's annual celebration of its history this year will focus on the Mt. Zion Methodist Church on North 11th Street. The Akron Historic Preservation Group will host the event on Saturday, April 17. Visitors can learn about church lore dating to 1876. They can tour the cemetery and hear interesting stories about some of the headstones.

In previous years, the group's annual historical event honed in on a particular block of the town on the hill. The church was chosen for its rich history, which will be recounted by Akron historians Mary Saylor, Rhoda Smith and Mary Martin.

Construction of the present-day church began in 1961. Visitors will also be able to see the footprint of the original 1876 structure, which underwent a major renovation in 1898.

Rick Cammauf and Wilmer Hall will display their collection of items from Akron's past in the church's fellowship hall. The church social committee will provide a family-style spaghetti dinner from 4 to 7 p.m. Tickets are \$7 per person, except for children 6 and under who will pay \$4. (*Intell/New Era* April, 2010)

2011 Taxes Steady, Water Rate Up 10.6%

The borough's budget for next year holds the line on taxes, but increases the cost of 1,000 gallons of municipal water from \$4.70 to \$5.20. Council passed the final 2011 budget with a unanimous vote on December 13. A typical family of four using 12,000 gallons of water per quarter will pay an additional \$24 per year. Akron's revenue got a boost this year from a 2.5 percent increase in the earned income tax, which comes from the county. (*Intell/New Era*, December 22)

Questions About Mr. Rehab's No-bid Sewer Repairs

Akron Borough is embarking on sewer repair work totaling as much as \$100,000 this year, all of it with one company and without seeking competitive bids. Mayor John McBeth voiced his concerns about awarding that work to Mr. Rehab without seeking bids from other sewer repair companies.

At a meeting on Monday, McBeth suggested that the borough consider getting recommendations from the borough engineer, Hanover Engineering, for other companies who do similar work. Borough Manager Dan Guers said he had contacted Mr. Rehab on the advice on Hanover Engineering.

Mr. Rehab is a Mechanicsburg-based sewer system evaluation and rehabilitation company. Guers said various patch-and-repair projects already approved could total about \$50,000.

"I certainly have a concern if we're giving out \$50,000 of no-bid work," said McBeth. While his objections were noted, McBeth has no voting power under the boroughs weak mayor system.

Borough solicitor Kenelm Shirk said bids are not required for repair work, even if the total cost hits the \$100,000 mark.

According to its website, the company's focus is on trenchless and no-dig technology. Guers said Mr. Rehab would be installing liners and using stainless steel products to repair aging sewer lines. The current work does not include repairs to laterals, which could cost an additional \$50,000.

Council member John Taylor, chair of the water and sewer committee, suggested Mr. Rehab could provide the quality and technology needed to address long-standing problems. Council did not stop the work from proceeding. *(Intell/NewEra, July 13)*

\$140,000 Loan for Street Repairs

The borough plans to borrow about \$140,000 to cover costs associated with a major 2011 road project and other major street improvements over the next five years.

Streets committee chair Perry Lorah explained at a council meeting April 11 that the borough will borrow more than half the cost of the 11th Street repairs from its own sewer fund. Another \$104,000 will be funded by the states liquid fuels tax. After the project is complete, the borough will take out a private loan to repay the difference. Without a loan, the borough would have to borrow against future state contributions, cutting into plans for other street repairs.

"Our five-year plan would be pushed back two to three years, Lorah said.

The 11th Street reconstruction project, involving road work and paving, is set to begin in late June and wrap up before school resumes. As part of the project, residents whose properties do not have sidewalks are being required to install them. *(Intell/New Era, April 25)*

2011

Blue Ridge Exclusive Deal Extended

Borough council voted Monday to extend the borough's current service agreement with Blue Ridge Communications through the end of the year. The contract gives the cable provider exclusive rights to provide cable service in Akron. In exchange, Blue Ridge will continue to pay a franchise fee of 5 percent of its revenues to the borough. The 5 percent figure is the maximum allowed under state law.

The extension means that Akron's agreement will expire at the same time as Blue Ridge's agreements with Ephrata borough and Ephrata and Clay townships. Borough Manager Dan Guers said the move will allow the four municipalities to negotiate as a group when their agreements expire at the end of 2011.

Satellite service will remain the only other pay-television option for borough residents. The borough receives no income from users who use DIRECTV or DISH Network. Guers said the state has no plans to change its rules on exclusive franchise rights in the coming year, despite a recent push by Verizon to deregulate the cable market. He signaled that the borough intends to stay with Palmerton-based Blue Ridge rather than working with Verizon, Comcast or other companies in the region. *(Intell/New Era, January 25)*

Fire Company Budget Cuts "...Not Gonna Happen"

In preliminary talks about the borough's 2012 budget, one item stood out to council president Tom Murray. It was the complete elimination of contributions to the Akron Fire Company. The borough had been giving the department an annual donation of \$10,000 to cover operations and a new truck.

One justification for leaving the volunteers out of the new budget is that state contributions to the department's fire relief are expected to rise by nearly \$14,000 in 2012. Murray pointed out that the state money could be used only for equipment, not for daily operational expenses.

Murray said he would be willing to consider reducing the contribution. "But to simply cut to zero support for our fire company...not gonna happen," he said. "They've got be able to put their trucks on the road." Murray said he would meet with the fire department to see what cuts it could handle. *(Intell/NewEra, Octobr 26)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth
Borough Manager: Dan Guers
Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.
Police Chief: Thomas Zell
Fire Chief: Lyn Beiler
Annual Budget: \$2,340,459
General: \$1,303,348 **Water:** \$382,350
Sewer: \$542,625 **Highway Aid:** \$112,132



Cracks in the Sidewalk Plan

New guidelines for sidewalk replacement could leave many Akron residents facing repair bills. At a meeting Monday, Mayor John McBeth cautioned that changing a 1998 resolution that governs the construction and replacement of sidewalks throughout the borough might be costly.

Among updates council members are considering is a requirement to replace any sidewalk with half-inch gaps; the standard is currently one inch. Council also likely would require all sidewalks to provide a 48-inch clear pathway between utility poles or other obstacles. Officials said both changes would bring the borough into compliance with the latest updates to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But McBeth said he worried about the financial effect on homeowners, who are required by ordinance to pay for sidewalk improvements on their properties. "I think about half the sidewalks in Akron are going to have to be replaced," McBeth said. "I want to make sure were hanging our hat on something that's definite."

Solicitor Kenelm Shirk said he would present council with specific ADA regulations at a future meeting. The changes are part of a larger plan to speed sidewalk improvements and additions throughout the borough. (*Intell/NewEra, May 16*)

Scouting Volunteer Recognized

Pam Wolf, an active volunteer with Akron's Boy Scout Troop 57, received the the district award of merit on May 12 from the Horseshoe Trail District of the Boy Scouts of America. Candidates for the award are nominated by their peers. The award was made during ceremonies in Lebanon

Wolf serves the Horseshoe Trail District as a committee member for Troop 57, which is chartered by Akron Lions Club. In 2007, she received her 15-year Scouting Veteran Award and has served in various roles during her tenure, including cub master, tiger coach and committee member.

In addition to her unit-level positions, Wolf, who is a licensed practical nurse, was health officer for a variety of district and council events, including the NYLT program. She is a graduate of the Wood Badge program, Scouting's highest level of leadership training, and was initiated into the Order of the Arrow in 2006. (*Intell/NewEra, May 23*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$2,505,819

General: \$1,422,645 Water: \$415,650
Sewer: \$576,075 Highway Aid: \$91,449

2012

A Mowing Dilemma

Rather than place a lien on an abandoned Akron property, borough council on Monday decided it would make more sense for a volunteer to mow the lawn. There are knee-high weeds shooting out of the Main Street property and neighbors are upset.

If the borough knew where the property owner is, they could contact that person and notify them that if the issue isn't addressed, then a lien could be placed against the property to pay for the cost of mowing.

Borough Manager Dan Guers said he knows who the owner is, and that the house has been put up for sheriff's sale. He doesn't know where the owner is, and he doesn't know if the property has been sold. And even if someone had agreed to buy the property, borough solicitor Kenelm Shirk said, it usually takes a couple of months before it would officially belong to the new owner, who could then be billed for mowing.

Council members said it would be more expensive and time-consuming to file a lien than to go down and whack it and be done with it. Shirk questioned the idea of setting a precedent by mowing an overgrown abandoned property.

Council member Terry Reber suggested that a volunteer, rather than a borough employee or a paid contractor, could mow the property, and thought that the volunteer would probably be a member of council. (*Intell/New Era, June 13*)

Path of Honor for Akron Lions

Borough council recently voted to approve a Recognition Walkway, a paved path that will honor longtime members of the Akron Lions Club. The approval was a slight change of course for council members, some of whom previously had been opposed to memorials on borough-owned land.

After the Lions first presented the idea of the walkway at a November meeting, council president Thomas Murray said that the borough would work something out with the Lions to create a compromise.

Lions Club member Kay Mac McEllhenney said the path will pay tribute to members with 15 years or more of service with the Lions, as well as those who have won the Lion of the Year award or the international organization's Melvin Jones Fellowship.

The Lions long have championed the park, devoting money to projects as diverse as building bathrooms and a gazebo, to recently blacktopping hiking paths at a cost of \$25,000. "

The path will be designed to accent the gazebo overlooking the pond, one of the park's most picturesque settings. Pavers will be embedded in the ground, along with an in-ground sign noting that park-goers are on Recognition Walkway. The stone pavers will be personalized, and McEllhenney said the majority of the cost will be covered by members' donations. (*Intell/NewEra, February 8*)



County Commissioners Meet in Akron

Lancaster County commissioners met here on Tuesday of this week for one of their regular meetings. It was part of their outreach effort to hold meetings in various municipalities several times a year.

Mayor John McBeth presented each commissioner with a package of Martin's Pretzels, which were made in the company's Main Street factory. He also presented a capsule history of the borough.

He urged the commissioners to continue their farmland preservation efforts. While the borough, with a population of 4,000, can't physically grow beyond its present boundaries, development pressure from outside the town's borders definitely has an impact.

(Intell/NewEra, September 25)

Delivering a Pitch for Slo-Pitch

Representatives from the Akron Girls Slo-Pitch Softball league appeared before borough council to ask for the borough's support. The teams had been playing in a Manheim league, but broke away from that group after all league games were moved to Cumberland County.

"Its really a lot to ask the parents of 8-year-old girls to drive that far," said Brody Simmons, community liaison for the association. "We have a very rewarding program. Its not just a mom-and-pop type of thing." After striking out on their own, the Akron league had just five teams this year, but next year they expect to have at least 10. Each player pays \$50 to join the league. However, league president Ken Lamoreaux said it costs about \$65 per player to run the organization.

Lamoreaux said they could use some financial support from the borough. Finance chair Terry Reber asked Lamoreaux to come up with a realistic request, in writing, so the borough could consider making a contribution from their 2014 budget.

(Intell/NewEra, September 18)

Making Borough Hall Safer

Council voted recently to install safety glass in the reception area of borough hall. The need to increase security was discussed as part of the borough's development of a disaster recovery plan. The new glass will cost \$732. *(Intell/New Era, _*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$2,544,781

General: \$1,424,600 Water: \$425,710

Sewer: \$569,872 Highway Aid: \$124,939

2013

Court Grants MCC Tax Relief Request

The Akron-based Mennonite Central Committee could see its local tax bills drop by \$55,000, following a controversial decision by county officials. A decision issued by the Board of Assessment Appeals on Jan. 15 partially or fully exempts five parcels owned by the international service organization.

While reducing MCC's tax burden, the decision could mean \$37,000 less in revenue for the Ephrata Area School District and \$5,500 less for Akron Borough. MCC's county tax bill also would be lower. The MCC buildings involved in the decision include the agency's headquarters at 21 S. 12th St., and four nearby residential facilities used largely to house the organization's volunteers.

Tina Mast Burnett, MCC's director of administrative services, presented the request for tax relief to the appeals board in November. She estimated the ruling could save her organization about \$55,000 annually. Though she did not ask for specific tax-exemption percentages for each building, she said she expected some would be partial based on the uses.

Mast Burnett said MCC decided to ask for the relief to reduce administrative costs and redirect contributions as much as possible to carry out the ministries of disaster relief, sustainable community development, and justice and peace-building.

Both the borough and the school district are considering a challenge to the MCC request.

(Intell/NewEra, February 6)

Council Resolution Okays Police Arrests Without Warrants

If you are drunk and disorderly on the streets of Akron, police can arrest you without needing a warrant to do so. Borough council members voted unanimously Monday to authorize arrests without warrant, even though it was already standard police procedure.

The resolution spells out the right of officers to arrest on probable cause and without a warrant anyone who is behaving in a way that imperils any person's security or endangers property.

Offenses covered in the resolution include public drunkenness, blocking highways or other public passages and offenses related to underage drinking.

Akron Police Chief Thomas Zell said borough police have always made arrests without warrant for such summary offenses. "We had it in our police department policy for years," he said.

Council's move came after the borough received a notice the county district attorney advising Akron and other municipalities to get a resolution on their books. Council used a copy of a Lancaster city resolution as a model for the one they approved.

(Intell/New Era, February 13)



Rail-trail Tunnel Gets a Go-ahead

The rail-trail slated to extend through Akron later this year will pass underneath Main Street via a tunnel, not across the road surface as had been proposed by some borough council members.

Mayor John McBeth cast the tiebreaking vote at a council meeting Monday, to the applause of a majority of about 80 residents packed into the borough hall. During a two-hour discussion prior to the vote, council president Thomas Murray gave each resident at the meeting a chance to express an opinion. Of those who spoke, about 50 favored a tunnel and 10 preferred an at-grade crossing.

A handful were undecided. Even though total cost estimates for a tunnel run from about \$80,000 to \$145,000 more than for an at-grade crossing, safety and privacy issues trumped the money for those in favor of a tunnel. Residents whose properties border the trail who said raising the railroad bed to the level of Main Street would rob them of their privacy by allowing hikers and bicyclists on the trail to pass within feet of their properties.

However, proponents of a Main Street crossing said it would be an effective way to slow down the traffic there. (*Intell/NewEra, June 14*)

On the Other Hand...

After hearing the opinions of more than 60 residents, Akron Borough Council on Monday night postponed moving ahead on part of the Warwick-Ephrata rail trail slated to pass through town. Council decided to reconsider its January decision, which had approved a tunnel rather than an at-grade crossing where the trail is to cross Main Street just north of Front Street.

After a hard-fought decision in January for the tunnel, the borough in April received higher-than-expected bids on the box culvert underpass and related construction. The lowest of the bids, came in at \$557,306 about 56 percent higher than the earlier estimate of \$313,100.

Borough manager Dan Guers said that cost would incur an annual payment of \$74,000 per year over 10 years, resulting in the need to raise property taxes by 14 percent. The rough estimate for an at-grade crossing came in at about \$244,000, which would require a 6 percent tax increase, Guers said.

Guers also showed slides of rail trail crossings in Warwick Township and safety measures put in place there, including flashing lights and caution signs. Council President president Thomas Murray called for a vote from the residents at the meeting. There were 40 hands raised in favor of a tunnel, and 22 in favor of an at-grade crossing. A similar vote in January saw 50 votes for a tunnel and 10 for an at-grade crossing, with 40 raising their hands in favor of staying with the tunnel option, and 22 in favor of the at-grade crossing. At the January meeting, residents had voted about 50-10 in favor of the tunnel. (*Intell/NewEra, May 14*)

2014

And the Final Word is ..."No Tunnel"

Construction is set to begin in early September on the section of the Warwick-Ephrata rail-trail that will pass through the borough, but residents who fought to have the trail pass under Main Street through a tunnel have lost their battle.

At the Aug. 11 borough council meeting, council voted 6-1 for an at-grade crossing, reversing a January vote in favor of a tunnel. Since January, learning of the relatively high cost for a tunnel caused council to reconsider. The issue has been a contentious one, holding up progress on the project since last year. A majority of residents who have expressed their views at public meetings have been in favor of a tunnel, citing safety for trail users and motorists as well as privacy for homes bordering the trail.

But a majority of council members argued that the cost difference between the two options makes the at-grade crossing the best choice. Recent bids came in at \$355,459 for construction of that part of that trail with an at-grade crossing, versus \$704,813 for the same section with a tunnel.

"The numbers are so far apart, I feel I'd be doing the citizens of Akron a disservice by voting for the tunnel," said council member Earl Shirk.

Glen Beiler, Akron resident and chairman of the Ephrata Area Republican Committee, brought a petition signed by 114 residents in favor of a tunnel. "You have an overwhelming mandate from the citizens of Akron to build a tunnel," Beiler said.

John Williamson, a member of the borough's rail-trail committee, suggested letting Akron residents who favor a tunnel raise funds for it, adding that he would be willing to contribute \$1,000. Council member Dan McCormac cast the only vote against the at-grade crossing. Council member Jeff Shirk said the at-grade crossing will include pedestrian-activated flashing lights on the street and a traffic table on the roadway.

And if adjacent property owners are in favor of it, privacy screens in the form of trees and shrubs will be planted along the trail. Those added accessories will bring the total cost for that section of the trail known as Phase 2 to about \$395,000. A state grant of \$102,000 will reduce the final cost to the borough. Council voted 6-1 in favor of an at-grade crossing, with Dan McCormack casting the only nay. (*Intell/NeEra, August 24*)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth
Borough Manager: Dan Guers
Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.
Police Chief: Thomas Zell
Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman
Annual Budget: \$2,748,785
General: \$1,520,002 **Water:** \$530,797
Sewer: \$614,877 **Highway Aid:** \$83,109

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Akronite Don Ziegler Likes to Bee Busy

Don Ziegler may have moved to Landis Homes, but he has taken his love of bees along with him those few miles down the road.

For the past 25 years, Ziegler has bee-friended nonaggressive native bee species. Unlike their honeybee cousins, natives don't sting. But like honeybees, they crawl in and out of flowers, feeding on nectar. A byproduct of their feeding is the fact that pollen from one flower sticks to a bee's body and is deposited on another flower when it moves on to another nectar source.

Pollination is what makes the world of flowering plants go 'round. Honeybees, which were introduced to North America from Europe in the 1700s, are great at pollinating some plants, especially fruit trees. Native bees have many centuries more experience with the plants that were here before Europeans. Ziegler points out that native bees are therefore much more efficient at pollinating native plants.

He has joined with other residents, including two retired biology teachers and several woodworkers, to build and place bee boxes on campus. With some 114 acres of woods, fields, a restored floodplain, ponds and many flower and vegetable gardens, the new pollinator colonies are doing their part to keep Landis Homes blooming. *(LNP, May 19)*

Akron Mennonites Prep for World Conference

When a crowd of 100-plus gathered at Akron Mennonite Church one recent evening, they opened festivities with the song "Dame la manos" Spanish for "Give me your hands." The tune may not be well-known in Lancaster County, but it is in Latin America where Anabaptist churches have been planted and are flourishing.

The Akron gathering, which was sponsored by the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, is one of several that are planned in this area in advance of the Mennonite World Conference, which will be held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg July 21-26.

It will be the first time the world conference has been held in this country. The idea behind the pre-assembly gatherings, said Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator for Mennonite Church USA and a faculty member at Lancaster Theological Seminary "is to get ready to welcome the global summit." *(LNP, March 7)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$2,966,171

General: \$1,588,309 Water: \$519,160
Sewer: \$617,809 Highway Aid: \$240,893

2015

Happy Trails for Many...

Edward Miller has lived in Akron for nearly 70 years, but until a few weeks ago he had never walked to Ephrata. Now Miller, his wife and friends like to hike the 2.5 miles of rail trail to Ephrata on weekends for a meal out.

Akron Borough Manager Dan Guers has friends who recently began riding their bikes from the borough to Ephrata for work. This considerable change in the habits of residents is now possible thanks to the recent opening of a key 1.2-mile-long section of the long-planned Warwick to Ephrata Rail Trail that will eventually be 7 miles long, connecting Lititz, Akron and Ephrata. The new paved and lighted section on the former Reading Railroad runs from Fulton Street in Akron to Parkview Heights Road in Ephrata Borough.

It connects the 4,000 residents of Akron with Ephrata's 13,000 people, giving them, for the first time, a safe and easy transportation corridor to move back and forth. By so doing, the trail becomes unique among other rail trails in Lancaster County. While other former railroad corridors have been converted to public use for their recreational value and outstanding scenery, this trail links communities and has considerable transportation value, according to Guers.

"With the connection with the three boroughs and growth areas, you can just see this being used pretty heavily as a transportation corridor for work, shopping and other uses," says Mike Domin, a principal planner with the county Planning Commission. Guers, who walks the trail to Ephrata and back three to four times a week, said, "I think, generally, the trail has been very, very well received. With all the controversy that went into this, I think I have yet to hear anything but high compliments on what has transpired so far." *(LNP, January 11)*

...but for Some, Not So Much

Trees, property rights and Akron officials' lack of communication about the under-construction rail trail running through the borough drew a standing room only crowd to a special borough council meeting April 27. It was contentious at times. The majority of the people at the meeting have back yards that adjoin the trail, either on Crest View Drive or Bomberger Road. There seemed to be a consensus that the trail was a good thing or at least an accepted presence in the neighborhood. But there was also consensus on how the borough had bungled communications with its citizens, particularly those neighbors to the trail.

Council President Tom Murray took many notes, and he and other council members asked questions and made comments from time to time. At the end of the meeting, Murray held up the notes he took. He said, "Our communication was less than sufficient, if not downright poor. We need to do better." *(LNP, May 6)*

Eroding Streambank is a Costly Headache

Borough Manager Dan Guers told council on April 11 that an engineering estimate for a streambank restoration project on a small stream between the rail trail and the backyards of six Bomberger Road homes would total \$450,000, a cost he called staggering.

It's an issue because rail trail construction has increased the rate of erosion in residents' backyards. The stream is an unnamed tributary of the Cocalico Creek. Guers said he would apply for an environmental grant from energy giant Exelon to specifically address the Bomberger Road issue. *(LNP, May 4)*

Borough Public Works Employees Save \$29,000 in Water Main Installation Cost

Borough employees recently installed a new water main along Front Street to connect to mains on Main and Fulton streets. The in-house work shaved off about two-thirds of the cost of having it done by an outside vendor, Borough Manager Dan Guers told council Aug. 8.

The borough spent about \$16,000 instead of the estimated \$45,000 for contracted labor, Guers said. The project was necessary to eliminate dead-end water flow. The Pennsylvania state Department of Environmental Protection urges municipalities to get rid of dead ends, because where the water stops, there's a danger of stagnation. With the newly installed main, Front Street water now flows in a loop with the rest of the borough's water system. Guers said there are about nine more dead ends in the system. *(LNP, August 24)*

Davidson Named Borough Manager

Borough council voted last week to appoint Sue Davidson to the post of borough manager/secretary, with a start date of Oct. 1. She succeeds Dan Guers who retired after 19 years. Guers was recognized for his service at the meeting, which was his last official meeting.

In her new role, Davidson will oversee a staff of five full-time and two or three part-time employees, depending on the season, and an annual budget of about \$2.8 million. In nominating Davidson for the position, Councilman Earl Shirk said that by combining the two jobs into one and outsourcing some administrative functions, like payroll, the borough should see a significant cost saving. *(LNP, September 21)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Dan Guers

Council President: John Williamson

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$2,916,185

General: \$1,1665,886 Water: \$519,160

Sewer: \$618,791 Highway Aid: \$112,348

HandiVangelism Moves to Buy

West View Golf Course

Plans are in the works to change Akrons' 18-hole West View Golf Course into the headquarters and campus of a faith-based organization. At an Akron borough council meeting Feb. 8, HandiVangelism Ministries International presented a proposal to develop a facility that would consolidate its ministry for people with special needs and disabilities from two locations into one.

The Ephrata-based nonprofit was founded in 1973 by Tim Sheetz, who serves today as its executive director. His wife, Kathy, is executive secretary. The couple live in a home on Heritage Road, adjoining the golf course at 3662 Rothsville Road. The ministry's attorney, Robert Weaver, of Lancaster, told council and about 30 residents what the organization would like to do with the 15-acre golf course.

Plans call for a one- or two-story headquarters building, a cabin for overnight campers, a multipurpose building, a pavilion and two or three houses for the permanent staff of counselors and workers who would maintain the property.

Every summer, the ministry hosts camps for children with special needs. Each camp runs for five days and four nights and includes from 20 to 35 children. The children receive one-on-one counseling while they are at the camp. Although summer is the busiest time for the ministry, there are programs throughout the year. "In addition to the summer camps," Sheetz told council, "we have weekend retreats for the summer campers. We also want to have a getaway area for parents who have lost a child. This is a no-cost getaway for people who need help, solace, comfort. Thafs part of our ministry."

Weaver, the group's attorney, said leaving most of the property in green space would be an advantage for the borough's stormwater and runoff issues. And he frequently stressed that the sketch plan presented to council was preliminary.

Weaver contrasted the ministries proposal to developing the tract as a residential development. The property is probably not realistic for residential, he said. A substantial portion of the property is now on floodplain. And the property drops off substantially toward the Cocalico Creek.

Golf course owner, Robert Seidel, is looking to sell the property because he wants to retire, Weaver said. Par-three golf courses aren't as profitable today as when West View opened in 1965, so selling the property would require a change in use.

Weaver addressed the tax-exempt status of the ministry by saying that very often nonprofits make payments in lieu of taxes to the municipalities in which they are located.

The borough's planning commission will review the proposal and will make its recommendation to council at their March 10 meeting. *(LNP, February 17)*

Hearing Set for HandiVangelism Proposal

HandiVangelism Ministries plans for a new home in Akron took a giant step forward at the January 9 council meeting. After 45 minutes of discussing the project, council voted to advertise notice of a public hearing to discuss the required change in the borough's zoning ordinance language.

The hearing will be held during council's next regular meeting on February 13. Council members will take public comments into consideration, and will then vote on an R1 zoning amendment at its regular meeting on March 13.

HandiVangelism has an agreement to buy the West View Golf Course then convert the property into a headquarters facility for its ministry to the disabled, the addicted, the bereaved, and those with mental health issues. It also counsels with its clients' families and conducts summer camps in rented facilities near Valley Forge and in New Jersey. Previously HandiVangelism said plans for the West View site include camping facilities for clients, meeting rooms, a headquarters building and possibly three residences for permanent year-round staff. *(LNP, January 22)*

Borough Agrees to Payments in Lieu of Taxes from HandiVangelism

Borough Council voted July 17 to accept payment in lieu of taxes from HandiVangelism Ministries, an Ephrata-based Christian ministry that plans to operate a camp for disabled individuals at the former West View Golf Course on Rothsville Road.

The vote was 5-0 in favor of accepting the payment with two council members absent.

When the ministry first proposed buying the golf course the potential loss of property tax revenue was an issue with local government boards. The golf course generated \$11,232 in revenue with \$8,487 payable to the Ephrata Area School District \$1,264 to Akron borough and \$1,581 to Lancaster County.

HandiVangelism is established as a church under the federal tax code which means it is exempt from paying federal income tax. The ministry is also exempt from paying state income tax because of its nonprofit status. Many charitable organizations also do not pay property taxes levied by school districts, municipalities and counties.

Since the recent recession there has been pressure from local governments to request voluntary payments in lieu of taxes. The school district took the lead in negotiating with HandiVangelism to make payments in lieu of property taxes, while the borough agreed to accept the results of the negotiation. The county has yet to agree to the arrangement.

The ministry's plan calls for construction of three homes for full-time and transient staff. Under the agreement accepted by the school district and borough, these houses and the land they occupy will be fully taxable. *(LNP, July 27)*

Mayor, Chief Address Drug Issue

Police Chief Tom Zell and Mayor John McBeth both spoke at length about the town's drug problem at the August 14 council meeting.

McBeth said the Lancaster County Drug Task Force has ongoing investigations in 17 municipalities one of which is Akron.

Zell said Akron officers are aggressive with traffic stops and noted that a broken headlight a few nights prior had led to an arrest for possession of methamphetamine and heroin. On a recent weekend there were two overdoses in the borough one at Roland Park and one on South Ninth. Both victims were revived with Narcan a drug that blocks the effects of opioids.

Zell said he is frustrated that his officers cannot arrest users simply for possessing drugs and drug paraphernalia. He added, "If police could prosecute these people and get them into an accelerated rehabilitation program where, if they successfully complete it, they have their charges dropped, then I think we could make some progress."

He expressed hope the state Legislature would enact a law allowing police to arrest drug users.

McBeth said the mayors who meet regularly launched an anti-drug initiative which they hoped would lead to a larger effort in which the mayors would play a supporting role. That effort has led to the formation of the Lancaster County Joining Forces Coalition which includes as members the Lancaster Chamber, the district attorney's office, the mayors and several other groups. *(LNP, September 5)*

Nonprofits Give Back

Borough Manager Sue Davidson told a recent council meeting that she had sent a letter to the 30 or so nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations in the borough. The letter was an appeal for the organizations to contribute payments in lieu of taxes, which HandiVangelism Ministries has agreed to do.

Nonprofits benefit from services provided by the borough, which is why the appeal was made.

The Mennonite Central Committee, contributed \$7,200 to the borough, and Akron Mennonite Church has contributed \$500. United Veterans Beacon House, which contributed \$250, was the only other nonprofit to respond. *(LNP, December 8)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth
Borough Manager: Susan Davidson
Council President: John Williamson
Police Chief: Thomas Zell
Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman
Annual Budget: \$2,894,047
 General: \$1,603,346 Water: \$481,450
 Sewer: \$691,160 Highway Aid: \$117,641



Things that make Akron work...

- The Standpipe
- The Reservoir
- The Waterworks
- Borough Hall and the people who work in an out the building at Seventh and New Streets

Comprehensive Plan Unveiled

A steering committee made up of borough residents introduced a new comprehensive plan to guide the future of the town at borough council's September 10 meeting

The committee dealt with issues like: Where do we want to be in 20 years? What is Akron's identity? What kinds of services do we need and how will we pay for them? How do we relate with our neighboring municipalities? What quality of life do we want? What do we need to do about our aging infrastructure?

Council President John Williamson, a member of the committee, said they identified a number of priorities: traffic and transportation; public health and safety; infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, parks); economic development; and quality of life issues, including public health and safety.

The previous comprehensive plan was drawn up in 1991 by an outside consulting firm, which charged professional fees for its work.

The plan that emerged from the local steering committee relied entirely on input from Akron residents, with guidance from Lancaster County Planning Commission, which did not charge for its assistance.

"Akron's plan was completely driven by the committee, to the point of having the committee members themselves write all the chapters. This has been a good process," said Dean Severson, principal planner with the county Planning Commission.

The plan must be formally submitted to the borough and county planning commissions. Those entities have 90 days to comment on the proposed plan, Severson said. After planners' comments are received and incorporated into the plan, the borough must advertise and hold a public hearing, after which Borough Council can vote for or against the plan. *(LNP, September 28)*

Airbnb Style Rentals Scrutinized

The growth of Airbnb-style rentals in the borough sparked council's concerns within the past year about parking, noise and numbers of paying guests that might be staying in private homes.

The Planning Commission has been looking into zoning ordinance changes affecting Airbnb-style rentals. *(LNP, August 27)*

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Susan Davidson

Council President: John Williamson.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$3,215,399

General: \$1,791,790 Water: \$508,754
Sewer: \$691,610 Highway Aid: \$223,325

2018

Sparks Fly Over Summer Mowing

Borough Council had a heated discussion over hiring summer help at its May 14 meeting. When Borough Manager Sue Davidson requested \$7,000 for summer maintenance, Mayor John McBeth reminded council that when the town hired a fourth full-time public works employee last year, it was with the understanding that the fourth employee would eliminate the need for summer help.

Council member Monica Hersh agreed with the mayor and noted the recent purchase of a tractor was predicated in part on the promise that it would cut summer mowing time from a full week to two or maybe three days a week.

Council's Keith Landis said he wanted more exactitude on this expenditure when the annual budget is being drafted. Council member Darryl Witmer said if the skilled public works staff is busy 12 months of the year working to improve the borough, then it makes sense to hire unskilled labor at \$11 an hour to assist over summer.

Council President John Williamson voiced his agreement with Witmer, and reminded all that summertime is when the grass needs to be cut.

Council approved the expenditure for summertime help, with Williamson, Landis and Witmer for and Hersh against. Council members Justin Gehman, Thomas Murray and Nathan Imhoff were absent. *(LNP, May 23)*

"This Evil Thing" to Debut in Akron

When he was a 15-year-old student in North London, Michael Mears wrote "War is illogical" on his pencil case. "I got quite a bit of stick at school for having these pacifist sentiments," the veteran British stage, film and TV actor recalls. "They mocked me gently, and sometimes not so gently, about it."

Though Mears' father and grandfather had fought in World War II and World War I, respectively, Mears had an innate sense, even as a teenager, that he was anti-war – almost as if he carried "a pacifist gene," he says. A few years ago, when Mears learned how badly some fellow pacifists – the early conscientious objectors to the British draft – were treated during World War I, he decided to turn that discovery into art.

His research on the topic became his one-man play, "This Evil Thing," which he wrote and has been performing around Britain. He will soon take the play on tour in the United States. The first stop on the tour will be Akron Mennonite Church on March 13.

Speaking by phone from his home in London, Mears says that in 2014, with the 100-year anniversary of the beginning of World War I approaching, "I wanted to write something, to contribute something toward the commemoration. "But I'm a pacifist," he says, "so I knew I didn't want to write about the trenches and the battlefields." *(LNP, March 2)*

2019

Pool Tells Council It's Treading Water

Hillcrest Swim Club leaders told borough council the outdoor pool will open for the 2019 swimming season, but said the organization faces financial challenges.

The 88-member private club has operated a pool in the borough since 1960. Jerry Lile, Hillcrest's current president, and Josh Dube, treasurer, attended the meeting to gauge council's interest in taking over the pool.

That was a nonstarter. While council showed sincere interest in the club's plight, it did not express interest in taking ownership of the pool property.

Lile said the club has no financial resources besides members' dues, and declining membership over the years has not helped in paying off a \$35,000 mortgage remaining on the property.

The club's 2018 expenses of about \$40,000 outpaced income of \$36,000. Lile said board members' contributions made up the difference and revenue from private parties and guest fees help offset the deficit.

Dube, the treasurer, said a family of four pays \$390 for the annual dues and is required to make a one-time \$175 purchase of a certificate of ownership.

By comparison, Ephrata Community Pool last year charged \$270 for a family, with no buy-in requirement. Ephrata Rec Center owns and operates the pool with financial support from the borough. (LNP, January 27)

Chief Has Make-a-Wish Concerns

Police Chief Tom Zell said he plans to discuss safety concerns with the organizers of the Make-A-Wish foundation's truck convoy that rolls through Akron every Mother's Day.

On May 12, about 650 trucks and drivers participated, while spectators lined the 26-mile route – all with the goal of funding the wishes of children with critical illness.

"They go too fast through our traffic lights. And I don't like toddlers sitting in the laps of drivers," Zell said, while also acknowledging the greater good that comes from the event.

Zell said some trucks hit 30 miles per hour through the borough. He said seat belts were generally not used by convoy participants. (LNP, May 27)

Walnut Street Woes Continue to Vex

Homeowners and Borough Officials

Walnut Street residents who attended the July 8 borough council meeting wanted to know why their sidewalk work wasn't being done and why some of the work that was done wasn't done to specifications.

The issue has been boiling since last year, when the borough notified 19 homeowners whose properties border Walnut Street that the street would be repaved sometime this summer and that curbs and sidewalks needed to be installed at the homeowners' expenses prior to repaving.

They were given a May 31 deadline. A contractor who installs curbs and sidewalks is responsible for doing so according to the specifications he receives from the homeowner, while the borough engineer is responsible for checking the installation.

Sidewalks on the north side of the street have been done. But much of that work has to be redone. Work on the south side of the street has not been completed. Yards have been dug up since early June. Some curbs have been installed but no sidewalks. And some of the newly installed curbing has to be redone to meet borough, state and Americans With Disabilities Act specifications.

Rainy weather played a role in the delay, borough officials said, though resident Jason Whitcraft said homeowners were not notified by the borough that an extension had been granted. He expressed concern over the expense of the rework that needs to be done.

The borough's new engineer, Hanover Engineering Associates Inc, has examined all 19 properties on Walnut Street and prepared a seven-page report listing all the corrections needed to bring the various installations into code.

Some of the deviations are minor and should remain in place, according to the report. Questions of liability, responsibility, cost and a completion schedule will be addressed at the July 22 meeting.

Meanwhile, council voted to have Borough Manager Sue Davidson direct the borough solicitor to draft a letter to the borough's former engineer, Arro Consulting Inc., concerning its role in the Walnut Street issue. (LNP, July 21)

MUNICIPAL MATTERS – 2019

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Susan Davidson

Council President: John Williamson

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$3,388,506

General: \$1,588,309 Water: \$514,468

Sewer: \$786,553 Highway Aid: \$134,002

MUNICIPAL MATTERS – 2020

Mayor: John McBeth

Borough Manager: Susan Davidson

Council President: Thomas J. Murray, Sr.

Police Chief: Thomas Zell

Fire Chief: Tim Hoffman

Annual Budget: \$3,640,881

General: \$1,994,062 Water: \$464,832

Sewer: \$928,319 Highway Aid: \$253,668

2020 – A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

When the shoe dropped in Broad Street Park at midnight on Dec. 31, 2019, Akron residents had no idea that 2020 would be unlike any other in their experience. Even as they sat down to their traditional pork and sauerkraut dinners at home, or at the Akron United Zion Church, elsewhere in America health authorities were getting their first briefings on a new virus about to rampage the world. By the end of February, America would have seven confirmed cases of COVID-19, and by April 3 health officials stressed the importance of wearing face masks and social distancing at least six feet from others.

On April 3 the playgrounds at Roland, Broad Street and Colonial Park were closed. In the weeks and months that followed one familiar Akron event after another was cancelled by the spreading pandemic. Akron Day in the Park fell, as did Akron Night At the Barnstormers. Cancelled were a combined celebration of the borough's 125th anniversary and the 100th birthday of the Mennonite Central Committee. The annual Halloween Parade was not to be and, finally, there was no Shoe-In to usher out the traumatic year.

The Akron Lions Club took a double hit. Not only could they not hold their Easter Egg Hunt in Roland Park, so popular with the kids, but with the cancellation of the Ephrata Fair in September, the club lost their biggest annual fund raiser.

Indeed, publication of this 125th annual commemorative book had to be put on hold.

Throughout the pandemic, Akron Borough Council continued to meet monthly, but with only council members, the mayor and staff attending. Residents attended virtually. The municipal building was closed between March 17 and June 29, then closed again in November when the disease became resurgent.

To keep up spirits in this dispiriting year, on April 20 Mayor John McBeth issued a Proclamation of Thanks to recognize Akron individuals and organizations who did whatever they needed to do – and more – to keep themselves, their families and their town safe. The Mayor also asked Akron churches to ring their bells every Sunday evening “to remind us of the brave and caring essential workers who risked their lives during the virus.”

The biggest change in Akron for the year 2020 is one that will impact the community for decades to come. On December 14 borough council voted to end the long, proud history of the borough police department, contracting coverage from neighboring West Earl Township. It was a move that council had been mulling over since Chief Tom Zell had announced in late 2019 that he would retire in November, 2020.

Requests for proposals from other police departments began in February, but the COVID pandemic caused delays. As November's deadline closed in, the need for a decision loomed large. On August 17, there was a well-attended public meeting at the fire hall. Those present were masked and socially distanced. The meeting was also Zoomed through the Internet to citizens who stayed home.

Representatives from the West Earl and Ephrata police departments presented their proposals for policing the borough. A number of residents spoke passionately against dissolving the force. However council, facing the escalating costs necessary to sustain a well-trained department, plus a dwindling force that by September counted only Zell and two officers, had to make a decision.

After hearing the presentations, council looked at the services provided by each department and weighed them against what Akron residents wanted. Over the next two months council engaged in an intense round of meetings before making their choice in December. The vote was unanimous.

So on Dec. 31 at midnight, as the year 2020 departed, Akron said good-bye to its police department.

“I think that the services we're going to be able to provide, between the two municipalities, is going to be second to none,” West Earl Police Chief Eric Higgins pledged to council and the residents. “I really firmly believe that and I thank you for the opportunity.”

So far, Mayor McBeth feels the promise has been kept.

“It's been working out quite well,” McBeth said. “The Chief attends every council meeting, and has been at the elementary school several times. Residents seem content with coverage and the way calls are handled.”

As 2020 came to a close, one bright ray of hope emerged. On November 27, Akron held its first tree lighting celebration in recent memory. More than a hundred people braved the cold to gather at 7th and Main streets around the tree set up in the parking lot of Weiser's Market. There they enjoyed donuts donated by the market, sipped hot chocolate and cheered Santa's who arrived atop a fire truck. A new Akron tradition was born.

In his year-end newsletter to the residents, Mayor McBeth acknowledged the difficult year gone by, and focused on the end of the police force. He thanked officers current, past and present “for their many years of service to the citizens of Akron.” He said he and the residents are looking forward to working with West Earl and thanked Chief Tom Zell “for over 30 years of service to the Akron Police Department and the citizens of Akron.”

He concluded with “best wishes to all for a better year in 2021.”

Thanks to:

The original committee:

Mike Boyer, Nettie Drennan, Darryl Witmer and myself

Borough Staff:

Susan Davidson and Faye Martin for statistics, fielding phone calls and occasional words of encouragement

The Mayor:

For starting this project (I think that's a thank you)

Borough Council:

For their support

Akron Lions:

For more than eight decades of dedicated community service, and to Lion Dave Austion for compiling a record of the last 25 years

Don Reese:

For his willingness to share his extraordinary photos with us

Larry Alexander:

For his essay on 2020, the year like no other

Erik Lagaza:

The printing world's most patient professional

The people of Akron:

For welcoming this Ephrata transplant and family nearly half a century ago and making this project into a labor of love

Dick Wanner, Proud Akronite



