

The Intelligencer



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Quakertown approves \$3.6M in field upgrades

By GARY WECKSELBLATT  
STAFF WRITER

A \$3.6 million fix to the Quakertown Community School District's flood-prone athletic complex led to verbal clashes between board members and candidates seeking their seats while the head of the facilities committee, ousted in the recent primary, voted against the project.

"I'm tired of losing neighbors because they have to move out. They can't afford the taxes anymore," Stephen Ripper, chairman of the facilities committee, said, adding that he hadn't seen the

final sketch plans until Thursday night's meeting. "I'm not going to put a debt on the taxpayer. The new people coming in want to raise taxes. Well, 75 percent of the people living in the district don't have children. We've got too much in this country, that's the problem."

Following the 6-2 vote for the project, which includes the installation of an artificial turf field, Keith Micucci, a write-in candidate for a seat on the board who will be on the November ballot, criticized directors for supporting

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upgrades to the fields behind the high school while planning to close Milford Middle School at a special board meeting on July 18.

"You have disrupted the culture of the community by closing a school," he said. By approving the sports complex and possibly closing Milford, "it has me concerned that this ship doesn't know which way it's going."

Micucci had a back-and-forth with Ripper, Ronald Jackson and board President Paul Stepanoff

over class size, spending and taxes, and said with the financial "doom and gloom" the board has expressed, they should have tabled the vote.

When asked by Stepanoff if he would commit to not raising taxes above the limit set by Act 1, the state's property tax law, as the board had done, Kaylan Mitchell, who defeated Ripper in the primary, said the question was "not appropriate."

Micucci responded: "No, I'm not going to commit. I may. You're absolutely right."

The nearly four-hour meeting Thursday night began with close to 90 minutes of public comment mostly in favor of the fields' plan.

Several students in the marching band spoke on behalf of the need for fields to practice and perform on. District coaches and athletic directors also favored the project, saying it would help establish a culture and pride in the athletic program. Some said it would help Quakertown become a tournament destination because of its improved facilities, which could

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Ride for vets



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM THOMAS CAIN / FOR THE INTELLIGENCER

Roughly 450 motorcyclists participate in the Ride for the Heroes on Sunday.

The Central Bucks Rotary Club's eighth annual motorcycle

Ride for the Heroes and Picnic was held Sunday. The event included a police-escorted ride that began at the Garden of Reflection in Lower Makefield and ended at the Fraternal Order of Police Picnic Grove in Bedminster. The event raised funds to support veterans and families of fallen heroes. Last year, 530 riders took part. To date, more than \$200,000 has been raised. For information how to register or honor a service member, visit ridefortheheroes.com



Video online  
Riders wave from the road as they participate in the honorable event



A biker rides a motorcycle during the annual event.

Municipalities to consider fire volunteer tax credits

Several Bucks towns are waiting on reviews from county and state groups before implementing a law aimed to spur volunteer growth.

By CHRISTOPHER ULLERY  
STAFF WRITER

Fire and ambulance companies trying to attract unpaid volunteers might have a new carrot of compensation to offer: tax credits.

Several municipalities in Bucks County are waiting to review draft ordinances from county and state organizations before considering implementing a state law, Act 172, aimed at spurring growth for emergency volunteers by offering local tax breaks.

Act 172 of 2016 was signed by Gov. Tom Wolf in November, and allows municipalities to offer an exemption of up to 20 percent of municipal real estate taxes and up to 100 percent of the municipal portion of earned income taxes to emergency volunteers. While municipalities can impose an EIT rate of up to 1 percent, only half of that rate is typically collected by the municipality while the other half is collected by the local school district. The state law exempts school districts from participating in any Act 172 tax credit offered by a township or borough.

The Bucks County Tax Collection Committee is developing one such ordinance for the county's municipalities and Eileen Bradley, committee treasurer, said the group expects a draft to be available soon, recommending interested municipalities pass an ordinance by August.

Officials from Doylestown Township and Telford said they are waiting on the committee's draft before presenting an ordinance to governing boards.

Doylestown Borough Manager John Davis and Hilltown Manager Lorraine Leslie both said their respective administrations are also waiting on "sample ordinances" before further pursuing the topic.

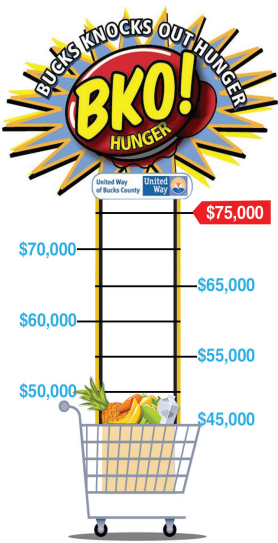
Bradley said the state law requires the local fire and emergency medical service organizations supply the list of eligible volunteers to the governing agency, and preparing that information by the end of 2017 could be difficult if local governments

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73° Shower and  
56° thunderstorms.A9

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The United Way of Bucks County continues to accept donations towards BKO Hunger's unmet fundraising goal. Canisters will remain in place through Friday, June 27. Donations may also be made online at uwbucks.org/bkohunger or by check to United Way of Bucks County (Bucks Knocks Out Hunger in subject line) and mailed to UW Bucks, 413 Hood Blvd., Fairless Hills, PA 19030.

Pa. Senate advances pension overhaul

By MARC LEVY  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania state Senate began advancing legislation Sunday night in the latest Republican effort to overhaul retirement benefits in Pennsylvania's two big debt-saddled public pension systems.

The bill passed a committee vote on a near-party line basis in the Republican-controlled Senate, hours after a draft of the legislation became public. Senate officials hope that months of closed-door negotiations will result in speedy approval by the GOP-controlled House and Senate later this week, and a signature by Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf.

Wolf's office said he supports the bill and

its goals of continuing to pay down the pension debt on the current schedule, reduce pension fund investment fees and shift investment risk away from taxpayers. A full Senate vote was expected Monday.

Senate Republicans have tried unsuccessfully for four years to end or reduce the traditional pension benefit for future state government and public school employees in favor of a 401(k)-style benefit. The bill would create a hybrid plan, and give future hires a choice of either that or a plan made up entirely of a 401(k)-style benefit.

The bill would produce no short-term savings for the state or school districts, both which are straining under a sharp increase in pension obligation payments in recent years,

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