



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

Sean Barton, 7, of Ross gets his first haircut of 2001 from Jimmy Martin last week.

WEST VIEW

Get a haircut and make a friend

By Matt De Reno

So far, the new millennium has been typical for Jimmy Martin. He cuts hair, nurtures friendships and enjoys his unique vantage point into the heart and soul of West View.

"Typical" is a reward unto itself.

For almost 17 years, Martin has been clipping away in his one-room Center Avenue barber shop. But he's more than a barber; he's a fixture in the community. A little more than a year ago, he suddenly wasn't there. People were stunned.

"I was shocked. You just expect Jimmy to always be there," said Bellevue resident Brian Hinterleiter. "My family took me there when I was a child, and I still go today."

Martin, then 55, nearly died from a heart attack. The response from the community showed the significance of his place in it.

"The outpouring of support for Jimmy was really incredible," said Blanche Manda, a nurse at Suburban General Hospital in Bellevue who tended to Martin during his recuperation from quadruple-bypass surgery. "Every day, more and more people would be there to visit. He obviously is a lot more than a barber to these people."

His shop stood empty for five weeks. The rumor was that many cus-

tomers simply went without haircuts until he got back.

These days, Martin has slowed a little from his usual frenetic pace. He pays more attention to relaxing.

"I don't worry about the little stuff anymore," he said.

His place in the community would have been hard to fill partly because of the friendships he has made as he moves into his second generation of customers — though he seldom knows his customers' full names.

"I don't go by last names," he said. "I can tell you quite a bit about a lot of people and their kids, their families and their problems or their joys, but not many last names. I go by first names."

Old-time barbers like Martin are a dying breed, slowly being replaced by specialty hair salons.

"The one-man shop is a thing of the past," he said. "Kids just don't want to be barbers like they used to."

His shop is as old-school as they come. Like its owner, it is lean, efficient, well-kept. The chrome on the barber chair is highly polished and its leather upholstery has the look of a well-oiled mitt.

His price list is terse. It doesn't contain "hair consultations," cosmetics or floral shampoo.

It's the kind of straightforward shop a factory foreman might run, which is

just what Martin was in his younger days in central Pennsylvania.

When the factory closed, he chose to pursue his childhood dream of opening a barbershop.

"I always wanted to be a barber, ever since I could remember," Martin said. "There was nobody in my family that was a barber. I just liked the idea of cutting hair for a living when I was 12 years old."

In 1980, after struggling to make it through the since-closed Pittsburgh Barber School on the North Side, he opened his first shop in Homestead. He bought the West View shop in 1986, primarily to move closer to his home there. Married with one son, Martin's biggest hobby is riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

His customer base of 700 to 800 ranges from preschoolers through senior citizens. He also does house calls for hospital patients and shut-ins, a group he also serves by delivering Meals on Wheels.

"A neighbor of mine once called me a true humanitarian," Martin said. "I never looked at myself that way. People that can't get out need haircuts, too. I am just doing what I do for living."

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.

By Lisa Mikolajek

For the first time in years, every pew of the former Christian Science reading room in Avalon was filled.

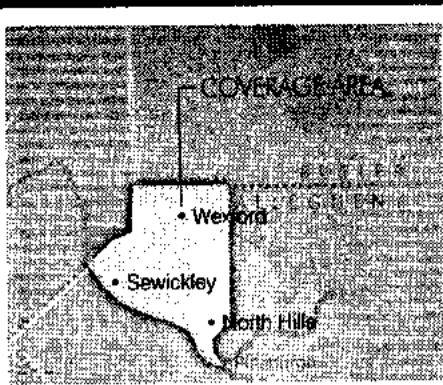
The people had not come to worship, however, but to work. Nearly 20 con-

tractors across the board," borough Manager Harry DiImore said. "I've never seen so many contractors show up just for a pre-bid meeting."

The project will include a glass-enclosed children's area, an adult reading room and a large committee lab

details of the work.

"We have been very specific in the things we expect for this building, from the lighting and the carpets down to the commodes," DiImore said. "It helps contractors get a true idea of what the



NORTH WES

COVERING THE NORTH HILLS, WEXFORD, SEWICKLEY AND THE SURROUN

NORTH HILLS

Community band still making music after nine years

By Matt DeReno

Nine years ago, former North Hills High School music teacher Warren Mercer set out to organize a community band.

He reserved space at a local social hall, but that proved to be a mistake. Eighty musicians showed up on a cold November day, far too many for the small room.

"I was simply trying to think of some way to stay busy after I retired," said Mercer, who taught for 31 years. "I didn't realize so many would be interested."

Not all 80 stuck with it, but the North Suburban Symphonic Band is going strong with about 45 musicians.

The band will usher in its 10th anniversary season with a tribute concert on Sunday — Veterans Day — at Ross Elementary School. The 7:30 p.m. concert will pay homage to those who serve in government and the armed forces.

The anniversary season is a milestone for a community volunteer band, Mercer said.

"Many similar bands start off strong but do not last. That has not happened here," he said. "I expect the band will continue to be viable for years to come."

If so, it will probably be due to the efforts of band members such as Kathy Wikowski. Wikowski, who plays the French horn, started studying under Mercer in fifth grade and continued until she graduated from North Hills in 1972.

She described Mercer as "a very challenging teacher and a great musician."

"He was a reason why I joined the band. ... It allowed me to continue learning the French horn as well. He had a knack for picking challenging music," she said.

Wikowski is one of a handful of members who have been with the band since it began in 1992. Starting out as the band's board secretary, she is now its president.

Wikowski is not one to blow her own horn — unless it's

made of brass, of course — and shares credit for the band's success.

"It takes everyone involved to keep this thing going," she said. "The band is a great secret of the North Hills, and we need to get the word out to continue the good things we have done."

Those things include personally inviting members of local Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion posts to attend the concert on Sunday at a reduced cost.

Those who attend will probably be invited to take part in one of Wikowski's favorite numbers: a sing-along, with veterans of each branch of the armed forces standing to sing as that branch's anthem is played.

Wikowski's ability to evolve has helped the band stay together. With the help of a computer-proficient colleague, she launched a Web site for the band at trfn.clpgh.org/nssb/.

That effort and others, she hopes, will draw in younger members.

"It is very important to keep younger people involved," she said. "To do so, we need to speak their language, and today, that language is the computer."

According to Wikowski, since the Web site started, it has gotten more than 2,000 hits. Several new members discovered the band through the site, she said.

Mercer, who will serve as guest conductor on Sunday, retired as active director in 1995. The position was filled by Edwin P. Arnold, chairman of Grove City College's music department.

When Arnold stepped down, Erich Lascek stepped up. Lascek has been with the band for only a couple of years but expects to direct its members long into the future.

Lascek discovered the band while recruiting musicians for a University of Pittsburgh-sponsored musical he was directing. A friend gave him the names of musicians in the band.

Eventually, he began playing with the band and took the job of music director — the band's only paid position — when it opened. Lascek's regular job is



Above: The North Suburban Symphonic Band rehearses at Ross Elementary School. **Below:** Warren Mercer, the organization's first conductor, will share conducting duties with Erich Lascek at the concert.



as choir director at Gateway High School in Monroeville.

Among many things that drew Lascek to the position was the age range of band members.

"It is interesting to see band members — some as young as 15, others close to 80 — work with each other," he said. "I can't think of any other community activity capable of bridging such wide generation gaps."

A number of members joined in high school and then returned after college.

Mark Shearer, a former North Catholic High School student and saxophone player, is one such member. He played for the community band his last two years of high school, then went to Gannon University in Erie. He's now a student at Pitt.

When he got back to Pittsburgh, he got a letter from the band inviting him back.

"I was glad I did," he said.

"Going back has given me the opportunity to continue to play for people I know. It's a passion on the side. I plan to stay as long as I possibly can."

The significance of the Veterans Day concert in light of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is not lost on Shearer.

"I think it's going to be good for the audience," Shearer said. "I can't do anything for the country, but to be able to provide some kind of entertainment to people that may have lost something is good."

Kelly Roofner, a '97 North Allegheny School District graduate, played in the community band during high school, then left to pursue a music degree at Indiana University.

"I knew since high school I wanted to major in music, but I decided to switch gears in college," said Roofner, now studying video production at the Art

Institu

"I s

for m

place

lets k

gethe

Down

decid

sional

maint

an en

sharp

Me

plans

band

nivers

"O

better

an ir

Every

thrille

or he

are al

Ma

write



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

... at The Fitness Factory in Seven Fields last ... a heart defect.

raise money, art disease

"I am very lucky this
was found and repaired.
Without the advances
in heart research,
I might not be here."

— Margaret Martin,
Cranberry

defibrillator, which can be used to aid heart attack victims. A demonstration of how to use a defibrillator will be given throughout the walk on Saturday. Registration for the walk begins at 9 a.m. in front of the Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania building in Thorn Hill Park. Steve Courson, a former Steeler and heart disease survivor, is honorary chairman, will warm up the walkers with aerobics before the 10:15 a.m. start. St. Francis Hospital will provide heart screenings. The Ambulance

Renovated Martorelli Stadium draws praise

By Matt DeReno

Gone are the rubble-strewn patches of brown clod that characterized the old Martorelli Stadium field. In is the new "FieldTurf," a state-of-the-art playing surface also used at the Steelers' practice facility. Gone are the sewage problems that plagued the visiting team's locker room. Gone is a large section of hill and trees that partially blocked the indulgences of a group known as the Rowdy Rooters, essentially a private party with a great view of the field. Gone is the rubber track that truncated the end zones, making for tricky footwork near the pylons. North Hills School District unveiled its renovated Martorelli Stadium Sept. 21 to thousands of fans. Cost disputes and lawsuits over the artificial surface were forgotten amid the roar of the crowd and thunder of the marching band. Most in attendance praised the renovations.

State Rep. Dave Mayernik, D-Ross, who attended the game with his family, said, "It's a fantastic, first-class facility. It is well deserved for the community. This stadium is a source of community pride ... The new turf will also prevent injuries, which I should know something about as a former player myself."

Art Bernardi, Butler Area football coach for 24 years and athletic director for four more, agreed. "Everybody that has this sort of field loves it," he said. "This facility is a tremendous improvement and is an advantage for North Hills. It is the way of the future."

Joe Halder, better known as "West View Joe," a fan famous for his rule-book zeal, was a bit critical of the Indians' new digs: "There is no easy way for a big crowd to get from one side of the field to the other. Plus, people are still standing on the sidewalk [a path that arcs from the main gate to the home bleachers] watching the game. I thought that was something they wanted to eliminate."

Wayne Seelhorst, a recently retired math teacher who has kept the Indians' football statistics for 29 years, had a different complaint. "The press box is actually smaller," he said. "I don't know if I like there not being a window in the press box. It might be pretty difficult here when it gets cold and the wind starts blowing."

Younger fans were more succinct. "It's awesome," said Chris Ferer, a 2000 district graduate.

"It's just really cool," echoed Eric Norris, who graduated in the spring.

Sophomore Linsey Weir was impressed with the scoreboard, and junior Vicky Kortz appreciated the concession stands.

Chuck Kurbiance, a 2000 graduate, said the seating was the biggest improvement, while sophomore Allan Chapman said the new stadium promoted "a great atmosphere." Sophomore Jess Marson summed it up: "It's a lot bigger and is really pretty."

The "Rowdy Rooters" also were enthusiastic. "Absolutely gorgeous. The way it is chiseled out of the hill..." said Ross resident Ken Zalinsky, a local business owner and board member of the North Hills Quarterback Club. "The only problem from a Rowdy Rooters' standpoint is that we can't see the scoreboard."

Praise also came from coaches as well as former and current players.

"I was always more concerned with how the ambulance could get to the field considering how beat up I got playing on the old surface," said Brian Hinterleiter, a running back for the 1990 Indians. "I don't think you will have that problem here. The lay of the land is much improved."

North Hills coach Eric Kasperowicz, who as quarterback led the Indians to the state championship in 1993, said, "The field is just great. The new surface is not as injury-prone as a regular field would be. The surface gives a little more than regular turf. Our players love playing on it."

Defensive coordinator Pat Carey agreed. "When I used to play, the field was great at the beginning of the season, but it was torn up towards the end," said the member of the 1987 championship squad. "We would get [North Allegheny] in...



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

workout on the stationary bike at The Fitness Factory in Seven Fields last
 very eight years ago to correct a heart defect.

MARSHALL

walk to raise money, cess of heart disease

tional in the Tri-County American 3K
 Heart Walk on Saturday in Thorn Hill
 Industrial Park in Marshall.

Survivors of heart disease and
 stroke from Butler, Beaver and north-
 ern Allegheny counties will wear red
 caps in the walk and form teams from
 businesses and health organizations
 to support the fight against heart dis-
 ease, stroke and other cardiovascular
 diseases that kill about 950,000 Amer-
 icans annually.

"We also need survivors and their
 families to participate in the walk," said
 Betsy Kubacki, director of the walk.

The American Heart Association
 sponsors the annual event, held
 around the country and at several
 sites locally, to raise funds for contin-
 ued research into cardiovascular dis-
 ease and stroke.

The nationwide goal this year is to
 raise \$75 million and have 650,000
 walkers participate.

This year, the walk will become a
 march in honor of the firefighters and
 emergency medical service person-
 nel who died as a result of the terror-
 ist attacks. The American Heart As-
 sociation will contribute \$250,000
 raised from the event to the Sept. 11
 disaster fund, and the American Red
 Cross will be accepting blood dona-
 tions at the walk sites.

Kubacki also emphasized the mis-
 sion of "Operation Heart Beat," a pro-
 gram to educate people on how to re-
 spond when someone has had a heart
 attack to strengthen the "chain of sur-
 vival."

"We want people prepared as first
 responders to help anyone experienc-
 ing an acute event," she said.

Through efforts of the association,
 every commercial airplane has been
 equipped with an automatic external

"I am very lucky this
 was found and repaired.
 Without the advances
 in heart research,
 I might not be here."

— Margaret Martin,
 Cranberry

defibrillator, which can be used to aid
 heart attack victims. A demonstration
 of how to use a defibrillator will be giv-
 en throughout the walk on Saturday.

Registration for the walk begins at
 9 a.m. in front of the Hospital Council
 of Western Pennsylvania building in
 Thorn Hill Park.

Steve Courson, a former Steeler
 and heart disease survivor, is hono-
 rary chairman, will warm up the
 walkers with aerobics before the 10:15
 a.m. start.

St. Francis Hospital will provide
 heart screenings. The Ambridge
 Steel Drum Band will play. WTAE will
 present demonstrations of healthy
 cooking. Lemonade, food and mas-
 sages will await walkers at the finish
 line.

Raffles and prizes for the most
 money raised will be awarded at
 noon. For more information, call
 Kubacki at 724-869-0441.

Mary Kate MacKenzie is a free-
 lance writer.

In is the new "FieldTurf," a state-of-the-art playing
 surface also used at the Steelers' practice facility.

Gone are the sewage problems that plagued the vis-
 iting team's locker room.

Gone is a large section of hill and trees that partially
 blocked the indulgences of a group known as the Rowdy
 Rooters, essentially a private party with a great view of
 the field.

Gone is the rubber track that truncated the end
 zones, making for tricky footwork near the pylons.

North Hills School District unveiled its renovated
 Martorelli Stadium Sept. 21 to thousands of fans. Cost
 disputes and lawsuits over the artificial surface were
 forgotten amid the roar of the crowd and thunder of the
 marching band. Most in attendance praised the renova-
 tions.

State Rep. Dave Mayernik, D-Ross, who attended the
 game with his family, said, "It's a fantastic, first-class
 facility. It is well deserved for the community. This sta-
 dium is a source of community pride. The new turf
 will also prevent injuries, which I should know some-
 thing about as a former player myself."

Art Bernardi, Butler Area football coach for 24 years
 and athletic director for four more, agreed.

"Everybody that has this sort of field loves it," he
 said. "This facility is a tremendous improvement and is
 an advantage for North Hills. It is the way of the future."

Joe Halder, better known as "West View Joe," a fan
 famous for his rule-book zeal, was a bit critical of the In-
 dians' new digs: "There is no easy way for a big crowd
 to get from one side of the field to the other. Plus, people
 are still standing on the sidewalk [a path that arcs from
 the main gate to the home bleachers] watching the
 game. I thought that was something they wanted to
 eliminate."

Wayne Seelhorst, a recently retired math teacher
 who has kept the Indians' football statistics for 29 years,
 had a different complaint. "The press box is actually
 smaller," he said. "I don't know if I like there not being a
 window in the press box. It might be pretty difficult in
 here when it gets cold and the wind starts blowing."

Younger fans were more succinct.

"It's awesome," said Chris Ferer, a 2000 district
 graduate.

"It's just really cool," echoed Eric Norris, who grad-
 uated in the spring.

Sophomore Linsey Weir was impressed with the
 scoreboard, and junior Vicky Kortz appreciated the
 concession stands.

Chuck Kurbiance, a 2000 graduate, said the seating
 was the biggest improvement, while sophomore Allan
 Chapman said the new stadium promoted "a great at-
 mosphere." Sophomore Jess Marson, summed it up:
 "It's a lot bigger and is really pretty."

The "Rowdy Rooters" also were enthusiastic.
 "Absolutely gorgeous. The way it is chiseled out of
 the hill..." said Ross resident Ken Zalinsky, a local busi-
 ness owner and board member of the North Hills Quar-
 terback Club. "The only problem from a Rowdy Root-
 ers' standpoint is that we can't see the scoreboard."

Praise also came from coaches as well as former and
 current players.

"I was always more concerned with how the ambu-
 lance could get to the field considering how beat up I
 got playing on the old surface," said Brian Hinterleiter,
 a running back for the 1990 Indians. "I don't think you
 will have that problem here. The lay of the land is much
 improved."

North Hills coach Eric Kasperowicz, who as quarter-
 back led the Indians to the state championship in 1993,
 said, "The field is just great. The new surface is not as
 injury-prone as a regular field would be. The surface
 gives a little more than regular turf. Our players love
 playing on it."

Defensive coordinator Pat Carey agreed. "When I
 used to play, the field was great at the beginning of the
 season, but it was torn up towards the end," said the
 member of the 1987 championship squad. "We would
 get [North Allegheny] in here on a muddy and wet field
 and it was sort of an advantage."

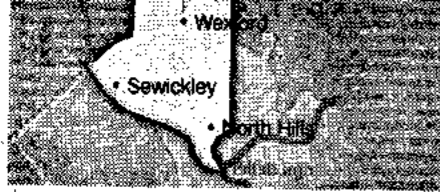
"We might not have that anymore, but our guys just
 love the new field. You can see that after a game nobody
 is banged up."

"The footing is fantastic," said running back Daryl
 Zobb, who scored in the Indians' 28-0 shutout of Butler
 Area. "The field house is state-of-the-art. There will be
 fewer injuries because of the surface. We don't have
 scratches and bruises like we used to."

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.



WHAT DOES SOME BANK FROM SCOTLAND
 KNOW ABOUT YOUR HARD EARNED PENNSYLVANIA



NORTHWEST

COVERING THE NORTH HILLS, WEXFORD, SEWICKLEY AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS

Group formed to coordinate recreation

By Matt DeReno

Big changes in recreation are expected in Avonworth School District and its communities now that the school board has given the go-ahead to a new group.

Residents may see more recreational programs being offered, and they will follow a new procedure for scheduling the use of a field or gymnasium.

The newly created group, Avonworth Shared Recreation Services, is intended to coordinate the use of recreational facilities within the school district and communities, apply for grants and fill gaps in recreational services.

The group will consist of three members: the school district, Ohio Township and ACORD, the Avonworth Committee on Recreational Development, which runs Avonworth Community Park and is made up of representatives from the school district's five communities — Ben Avon, Ben Avon Heights, Emsworth, Kilbuck and Ohio Township. The school board's approval was the final action needed to create the organization.

Details of how the group will operate still have to be worked out, said Richard Manning, a recreation consultant working with the group. Preliminary plans call for each of the three members to have two representatives on the Avonworth Shared Recreation Services board and to contribute to the organization's budget, expected to total \$70,000 annually. The group will advertise for a director, who will be paid a salary and benefits package totaling about \$54,500 annually.

Residents are not expected to see an increase in fees currently charged for recreation programs, but the fees will be collected by the Avonworth Shared Recreation Services, rather than the school district or municipality.

Manning told the school board in April that all money collected by the group will be put back into the organization. Once costs are covered, some money may be used to reduce the contribution made by each of the three members, he said.

AVONWORTH SCHOOLS

Schedules, grants, needs

A major goal of the group is to streamline scheduling of recreational facilities within the school district and its five communities by acting as a clearinghouse for information on what facilities are available, Manning said.

For example, if a softball team in Ben Avon needs a field for a tournament because its field is already in use, then the Avonworth Shared Recreation Services could arrange for the team to play on a field in Emsworth.

School district teams as well as community groups would schedule use of facilities through the new group, Manning said. Part of the director's job would be to prioritize groups' needs, he said, with school teams getting high priority.

The group also is expected to improve the chances of the school district and communities obtaining grants for recreational purposes because the joint effort would demonstrate cooperation among the district and municipalities.

In addition, the group also is expected to identify recreational needs and find ways to meet them. So far, Manning said, the organization has determined that although recreational programs in the area appear to be adequate for children of elementary school age, more services are needed for older youths and senior citizens.

Some opposed

The school board's vote May 1 to go forward with the new group was 5-4, with opponents concerned about allowing a non-public group to handle the use of public facilities.

"I can't emphasize enough the dramatic action this board is proposing," board member Gary Short said at the May 1 meeting.

Short said he was not opposed to the concept of sharing resources or collaborating with other communities, but he

was concerned about the powers of the organization.

In a document he distributed to the board in April, Short stated: "The Pennsylvania school code vests authority, control and management of school district property with the district's elected representatives under the theory that elected directors are accountable to the public which elected them. I am unaware of any provision in the school code which permits a school board to turn over absolute control of all school property to a private organization."

School board member Jack Connors praised the concept of the group, saying the district's financial contribution would get it a full-time programming director, rather than the part-time athletic director it currently uses for scheduling, plus the use of the facilities in the other areas and the additional clout when applying for grants.

"Ohio Township and ACORD are not our competition," Connors said at the May 1 meeting. "We are the same people. We are all the same community."

Short also was concerned about whether residents were adequately informed about the proposal, saying it should have been placed on a ballot or residents should have been surveyed on the idea.

"I don't think there are 20 people in the electorate that really know anything about this proposal. I was not elected on a mandate from the people to turn over district assets for the use of what are essentially private individuals. This is too sweeping," he said.

Board member Eric Templin disagreed with Short at the April board meeting.

"The board is not trying to sneak anything through," he said. "In fact, I am sure the community would applaud our effort here. We have nothing we want to hide. This is something we should be celebrating."

Manning said a similar recreation organization has been successful in Titusville, Crawford County.

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.

Stadium complex moving forward

By Debbie Kopyta

Despite crumbling sewer lines, turf wars, rats and a landslide, construction of the North Hills School District's new Martorelli Stadium and Athletic Complex is moving ahead, Superintendent John Esaias said Monday.

"We are encouraged by the progress," Esaias said. "The construction of the home-side stands and press box as well as the visitor side, which includes restrooms, concession area, storage facility and seating is well under way. We anticipate that construction on the field house will begin soon."

A \$65,000 expenditure to replace the Center Avenue storm sewer is the latest in a series of hurdles encountered by the district. Engineering studies revealed that the bottom of the pipe, which runs under the football field, is beginning to erode. The line is functioning fine for now, but the school board agreed last week to pay for the replacement to protect the district's investment, said district solicitor Mike Witherel.

Changes already had raised the price tag to about \$9.76 million, up from the \$9.5 million originally approved by the school board in January 2000. Dave Hall, director of fiscal services for the district, noted that the project has not exceeded the \$193,000 contingency fund.

"You can't do that big of a project without something coming up, especially with an older property," Hall said. The original stadium was built in 1941 by the Works Progress Administration.

Project architect Chris Haupt of L. D. Astorino & Co. declined to comment about any additional changes that may be made to the project.

AVONWORTH

School board did not violate Sunshine Act, solicitor says

By Matt DeReno

To quell controversy surrounding the exchange of e-mail by school board members that one member claimed violated the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, Avonworth school board Solicitor William C. Andrews has released an eight-page document that says board members did nothing wrong.

"In review of all of the e-mail transmission it is clear that no violation has occurred," according to the document. "The e-mails between the [board] members are only an exchange of ideas and opinions on a recently passed smoking policy."

According to Andrews, "The board members rightfully kept their discussions to an exchange of opinions in preparation for the upcoming board meeting. It is formal action, which triggers the [Sunshine] Act, not mere consultation with other board members."

The Pennsylvania Open Meeting Act, or Sunshine Act, on the books long before e-mail was even anticipated, requires governing bodies to conduct scheduled and advertised public meetings to discuss and vote on issues. Only the purchase or lease of property, litigation and personnel matters can be discussed in closed sessions.

Gary Short, an Avonworth board member and a practicing lawyer, last month criticized e-mail sent from former board President Betsy Radcliffe concerning the school's controversial efforts to curb student smoking. He maintained the

e-mail violated the Sunshine Law. The 5 documents, sent between Feb. 20 and March 5, discussed many ideas that likely would have been controversial if they had been made available to the public. Those ideas included surreptitiously placing undercover students in the bathrooms to monitor other students' actions, and rewarding students who reported their peers' misbehavior. Short distributed copies of the e-mails at the school board meeting March 12.

Short called the e-mails an attempt to line up a vote in advance of any meaningful public deliberation and called the action "arrogant."

The ideas in the e-mails were merely brainstorming ideas, Radcliffe said. She resigned her post as board president last week although she remains on the board.

Short said that he "felt sorry" for Radcliffe and that it was not his intention to publicly humiliate her. He simply wanted to draw attention to the fact that board might be violating the law. Short said he visited Radcliffe to offer an apology.

The board subsequently asked Andrews to compose a legal interpretation of how the Sunshine Act relates to the use of electronic correspondence.

"A secret, prearranged meeting did not occur during the e-mail discussions," Andrews' report said. "Even though, the e-mail transmissions were sent to a majority of the board members, the discussions were not at a prearranged time. The discussions did not occur in 'real time' with the simultaneous

exchange and the receipt of opinions with a call for formal action."

Andrews cited *Sovitch v. Shaughnessy*, 1998, which he believes sets a prior precedent: "Private discussions or e-mail transmissions among board members are allowed as long as there is no formal action taken," the report said. Citing *Morning Call Inc. v. Board of School Directors of South Lehigh*, 1994, Andrews said the courts have approved straw votes in closed meetings of school board members because formal action was not taken until an open meeting.

"The analysis of the Morning call case is directly analogous to the [smoking policy] e-mail," Andrew stated. "There is no Sunshine violation with this e-mail because it was not a call for formal action with an intention to direct policy or commit the board to a course of action."

He said e-mail conversations are easily monitored and could be considered public if conducted on district computers, and that e-mail conversations that use equipment provided by an employer are open to scrutiny by the employer.

Andrews also recommended that the board develop a policy on e-mail, and to provide education and training to its members on its proper usage.

Superintendent James DeTrude said, "We are going through our current policies and checking to see what other policies exist out there."

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.

RAY
S

25
50
50
50
50

Too!
And

LE
S
HED
le
mpike

8
7-5

W

Brussels yesterday to protest the slaughter of cows and sheep
se's vital farm belt, confirming fears it could deal a blow to Europe's
cooked animal products from the European Union. **Story, Page A-4**

Thierry Roge/Fleuters

castration death

baum
to the
22 af-
drug
and
in a
e, au-
so un-
sex
st two
id was
ly as
ly, had
proce-



Steve Mellon/Post-Gazette

Tammy Felbaum is escorted from the state police barracks
in Butler yesterday.

ighbors

E A-10

may not be so easy

and revamp assessment opera-
tions under the new home rule
charter.

Spot assessing refers to re-
assessments that are done in a
way that creates, sustains or in-
creases disparities among proper-
ties' assessed values. It typically is
used to describe situations in
which assessment changes are
made in selective areas without re-
gard to the county as a whole.

It is not a worry in situations for
which taxpayers appeal the values
assigned to their properties by re-

assessment contractor Sabre Sys-
tems and Service. Property values
modified as a result of formal ap-
peal hearings will go on the books
as the official assessments for 2001.
That means taxpayers who appeal
and win should see the values
change before the end of the year.

The same is true for municipali-
ties and school districts that appeal
what they believe to be under-as-
sessments. The county is counting
on the taxing bodies to help weed

SEE **ASSESS**, PAGE A-10

... WITHIN THE PRES-
ident to oppose the plan to regulate
carbon dioxide.

"At a time when California has al-
ready experienced energy short-
ages, and other Western states are
worried about price and availability
of energy this summer, we must be
very careful not to take actions that
could harm consumers," Bush said
in his letter.

His policy change angered envi-
ronmental groups, some Republi-
cans and scientists who study global
warming. But utility interests
cheered Bush's stand as consistent
energy policy.

SEE **POLLUTE**, PAGE A-8

Sunshine Act said to cover school board's e-mail writings

By Rhonda Miller
and Matt DeReno

In tiny Avonworth School District
in Pittsburgh's north suburbs, the
use of e-mail has created a contro-
versy that mirrors a growing issue
facing school boards and govern-
ments across the nation: Does elec-
tronic correspondence among a
quorum of governing board mem-
bers violate open-meeting laws?

Gary Short, an Avonworth school
board member and an attorney,
opened up the Pandora's box at the
board meeting Monday night, dis-
tributing printed copies of five e-
mails sent recently to other board
members by Betsy Radcliffe, the
school board president.

The e-mails discussed ideas from
Radcliffe that likely would have
been controversial — if they'd been
presented in public.

Among other suggestions, Rad-
cliffe proposed putting casually
dressed substitute teachers surrep-
titiously in school bathrooms to help
catch smokers, and paying rewards
to students who report other stu-
dents' bad behavior.

Short said he believed that such
electronic discourse was a violation

SEE **E-MAIL**, PAGE A-10

...n ar-
...he
...saw
...ood-
...rved.
...what
...the
...that

...Adams, well
...10
...a total re-
...to be a total re-
...man said "In order to
...by neighbors
...no
...found numerous dead animals, in-
...cluding turtles, a parakeet and a cat
...that had been strung up in a tree in
...the back yard.

"At first glance, it was a drug overdose," McCune said. "The guy had a relatively small surgical cut. What they would see [at the hospital emergency room] was a surgical

The following day, Tammy Felbaum talked to investigators. "The accused related that the vic-

**ERIN GO BRACH
MIKE O'BENBERG**

victed of manslaughter. She
voluntary manslaughter.

Post Gazette staff writer
Jonathan Silver contributed to this report.

Sunshine Act said to cover school boards

E-MAIL FROM PAGE A-1

of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act and case law.

"Deliberation of the school policy by a quorum of school directors at a prearranged meeting of school directors without notice of the public is a violation of the act," he said.

Corinna Wilson, general counsel for the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association in Harrisburg, agreed.

Donald Owen, an attorney for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, said, however, he wasn't so certain.

"No one knows for sure if it's a violation of the sunshine law," said Owen. For a clear answer, he said, e-mail guidelines would have to be set by the General Assembly, or by the court. He added, though, that he advises school board members that "chat rooms might be a violation of the sunshine law if five or more board members are gathered together in cyberspace."

Owen said that he has received inquiries on the question from about 100 districts around the state.

Pennsylvania's Sunshine Law, created long before e-mail was invented, requires government bodies to hold prearranged meetings, discussions and votes in public. Only a few topics, including personnel, real estate or litigation, are exceptions to the law and may be discussed in closed session.

Wilson insisted yesterday that "whether it's an e-mail to all mem-

bers of the board, or a daisy chain where one member notifies the next board member, that is circumventing the sunshine law. You can't just have conversations and not give the public notice."

Radcliffe, who called Short's decision to release the e-mails was "unprofessional and reprehensible," said that school district policy was not being made in the e-mail correspondence. She said that the e-mails were directed to school administrators, with copies to the school board members.

Excerpts from the e-mails, all sent between Feb. 20 and March 5 by Radcliffe include an outline of a plan for monitoring school bathrooms:

"If agreed, just hire a female for next week (have her dress VERY casually and in sneakers)...have her mill around...until she spots some kids moving toward the girl's cafeteria bathroom... Simply have the monitor slowly enter the doorway and watch which stall they enter. If they're headed for the last three stalls, it's pretty certain what they're going to do.

"If another kid is stationed at the center of the sinks and is looking in the mirror, that's the kid who's doing the outlook. That kid should be nailed too."

Another e-mail handed out by Short at Monday's meeting calls for seniors to be rewarded for catching school students violating the policy:

"Perhaps the \$50 fine could be

doled out as follows: \$5 would go to the individual, \$40 would go to the senior class, and the remaining \$5 be put in the kitty for a reward each month for the student who has caught the most kids."

In another, she suggests asking janitors not to clean the bathrooms for a week to determine if that would encourage students not to litter the bathroom with cigarettes:

Short said, "These particular e-mails are an attempt to line up a vote in advance of any meaningful public discussion about the issue. It is not only arrogant but overlooks the fact that the public, who has elected the board, may have something to contribute to this deliberations."

Board member Susan Abramowich disagreed that the practice of sharing ideas via e-mails was wrong. "Sharing e-mails is like having a conversation — sharing information, balancing ideas. I have not heard that this is a violation of anything," she said.

But board member Lynn McGrath said she no longer wanted to receive e-mails concerning school policies and upcoming meetings.

Other states, including Florida, have more expansive public records laws, and the e-mail correspondence of public officials is open to the public.

Rhonda Miller is a Post-Gazette staff writer. Matt DeReno is a freelance writer.

Local News

COVERING THE NORTH ALLEGHENY AND PINE-RICHLAND COMMUNITIES

eBay auction disappoints comic book seller

By Matt DeReno

A rare comic book that surfaced last year in a Cranberry attic drew bids much lower than expected at an Internet auction and is still for sale.

The book, published more than 50 years ago, was valued as high as \$70,000 in mint condition but drew a high bid of about \$3,600 during the 10-day auction that ended Thursday morning.

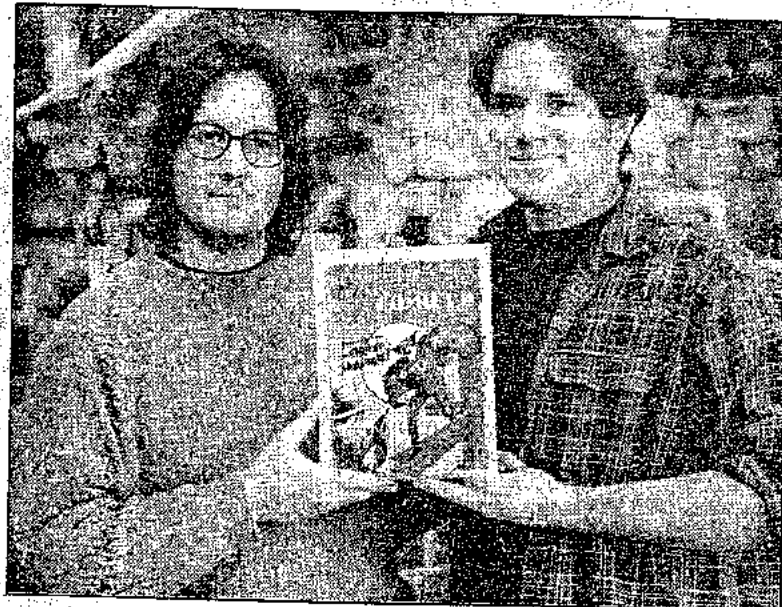
The comic, which introduced the super hero "The Green Lantern," received 28 bids from 18 bidders during the auction conducted by eBay, a popular auction Web site.

"I am definitely disappointed with the outcome of the auction," said Todd McDevitt, who owns Jew Dimension Comics in Cranberry and who purchased the comic in October from a Cranberry woman who found it and other comics while cleaning her attic.

"I was really hoping to get a lot more for it because I had higher offers for the comic before the auction," McDevitt said.

McDevitt would not say how much he paid for the comic, All-American No. 16.

The \$70,000 figure for the book came from Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, regarded in comic circles as the "bible of the comic book industry," and was based on



Tony Tye/Post-Gazette

New Dimension Comics in Cranberry acquired a rare All American Comics edition from 1940 featuring the first appearance of the Green Lantern. The store sold the comic book on eBay. Store manager Dean Focareta and employee James Duifée hold the comic book.

the book being in mint condition.

McDevitt said his copy is not in mint condition and requires restoration work to repair wear and tear and damage from marks left by tape. Pictures of the book were posted on the auction site to display its condition.

"I am a firm believer in Mur-

phy's law. All the other comics this lady sold to us were in excellent condition, but the one worth the most was not," he said.

McDevitt said since he did not get the price he wanted, he planned to showcase the book at a comic convention March 25 at Butler Mall. He also can feature it at

an appraisal fair there on March 25. He also will consider more traditional auction houses, such as Sotheby's in New York, which is known to attract serious collectors.

In light of the disappointment of the eBay auction, McDevitt's assessment of the Internet market is mixed.

"I really prefer to sell cheap stuff over the Internet," he said. "I don't get a lot of demand for items like this so I was not sure how well it would go. It does enable people to bid from all over the world. To buy the comic book, which is good news, one of the bids came in from a collector in Europe."

Tom Duncan, who owns Duncan Comics Books & Accessories in Ross and has sold comics through Internet auctions, agreed.

"The Internet is good for primarily moving the cheap stuff, but you don't really see a lot of interest in expensive comics online."

Duncan said he did not expect McDevitt's comic book to go for much higher than \$5,000 primarily because of its condition.

Jeff Bigley, of Bill and Walter's Hobby Shop in Northway Mall in Ross, said his shop has a Web site but he hasn't seen enough interest on the Internet to start auctioning comics.

Matt DeReno is a freelance writer.

SHALER

Tax rate stable; spending to rise slightly

By Matt De Reno

Shaler commissioners have approved a 1998 budget that increases spending by 1 percent over this year's plan.

The new budget is \$10.32 million, slightly higher than this year's \$10.305 million.

The property tax rate will remain unchanged at 13 mills, but sewage rates will rise dramatically.

Commissioners met Tuesday in the township building to act on the budget.

With real estate taxes remaining at 13 mills, a resident who owns a home valued at \$85,000, and assessed at \$21,250, will continue to pay \$276 in local property tax.

Sewer rates will rise about 39 percent, \$1.30 to \$1.80 per thousand gallons of water used.

The 1998 budget calls for no

increase in municipal staff.

Over the past seven years, the township has cut the number of municipal employees from 107 to 97, a reduction of 9 percent, township Manager Timothy J. Rogers said.

Under the 1998 budget, money for road paving will rise 44 percent to \$650,000, an increase of \$200,000 over this year's \$450,000.

Police, on the other hand, have been told to cut overtime by 10 percent.

Sewer rates are rising because of several problems, Rogers said.

- The township must pay more to Alcosan, the county agency that actually treats much of the sewage produced in the community.

- The township sewer pipes are aging. Deterioration of clay pipes and storm water infiltration were cited as the main reasons repairs

were needed to existing lines.

The township will move in 1998 to transfer responsibility for sewage treatment to an independent agency, much like the township water authority, Rogers said.

Sewage service has been operating at a deficit, he said. In 1997, the revenues from existing sewage rates will be \$325,000 while expenditures amount to \$638,365.

Money from the general fund was used to make up the difference, Rogers said. It is unfair to subsidize those losses from the general fund because not all of the five township wards are served by the same sewer lines, he said. Residents in the wards served by the Girty's Run sewer system are paying for maintenance of sewer lines that are serving others, he said.

By providing sewage service through a separate business, township residents will pay based on their use of the system, Rogers said.

In other business, commissioners voted to approve an ordinance that could require criminals to pay for any injuries that they caused to police officers.

The ordinance will give the township authority to try to recoup money it must pay out in higher worker's compensation premiums and disability benefits from someone convicted of a crime.

Commissioners gave tentative approval to the proposed Brenckle Fields development. It is a 38-unit condominium project proposed for a site on Soose Road. The developer, Kress Brothers Construction of Gibsonia, will have to meet 21 criteria set by the township.

Most notably, the developer must pay for a traffic study, maintenance of new roads and recreation areas, and landscaping to buffer the site from surrounding neighborhoods.

Matt DeReno is a free-lance writer.

BEN AVON

SHALER

Criminals may pay for officer injuries

Proposed ordinance requires offenders to shoulder costs

By Matt DeReno

Shaler commissioners may enact an ordinance that could require convicted criminals to pay for any injuries that they caused to police officers.

The bill would give the township a way to recoup money it must pay out in higher workers' compensation premiums and disability benefits when a police officer is injured by someone committing a crime.

Members serving on the township public safety committee met Nov. 25 and voted to send the proposed ordinance to the full board of commissioners.

They will meet at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in the township building, 300 Wetzel Road. A public hearing on the ordinance is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 13.

The proposed ordinance was the idea of Commissioner Thomas McElhone in response to an incident that occurred last year.

Three police officers were hospitalized after trying to arrest a juvenile, Township Manager Timothy J. Rogers said. One had minor inju-

ries, the second required surgery and the third is permanently disabled. Medical bills and lost wages for the three will cost the township about \$250,000, he said.

The proposed ordinance would allow the township to try to recover some of those costs from people convicted in such incidents.

"If the money is out there, we should be able to go get it," Rogers said. "One permanently disabled officer cost Shaler taxpayers more than \$1.25 million over his lifetime in lost wages."

The ordinance would cover police officers injured in the line of duty by someone convicted of aggravated assault or resisting arrest. It would not apply to other municipal employees, such as road workers, building inspectors or firefighters. The township would still have to file civil suits to recover costs in those cases.

The proposed ordinance is unique to Shaler, Rogers said.

Surrounding communities are interested in the measure, Shaler officials said. Municipal Risk Management, a consortium of communities that pools money to provide self-insured workers' compensation benefits, also is watching Shaler, they said.

The proposed ordinance would require the injured police officer and the township manager to file a claim against the person convicted of causing the injury.

Someone who had means but who failed to make payments could face additional jail time or loss of probation.

Someone who did not have the means to pay, however, could not be given additional jail time because it is illegal to jail someone just for debt, township officials said.

Matt DeReno is a freelance writer.

Contracts approved

Construction permits still must be obtained to start

By Matthew DeReno

Ross commissioners have approved contracts for construction of a proposed community park along McKnight Road.

Main access will be via Evergreen Road.

At a meeting on May 4, John Zottola Landscaping of Penn Hills was awarded the contract with a low bid of \$1,266,394.

There were five bidders, and the high bid was \$1,355,484.

The new park will offer a regulation American Legion-league baseball field, a dekhockey arena, grandstands, a locker room, a multipurpose field for either baseball or soccer, basketball courts, picnic pavilions, a playground, walking trails and a small amphitheater with a portable stage.

Work is expected to take four to five months.

Approval of the contract with Zottola helps assure that commissioners will be able to make use of \$300,000 in state funds set aside for the project.

Money to help buy and develop the park land was made available with the help of state Rep. Dave Mayernik, D-West View. Further project delays had put the development money in jeopardy.

"If there are no plans in place to build the community park by June 30, the \$300,000 would have to be returned to the state," Commissioner Kim Weigand said. "To return this money back to the state would be a slap in the face to Dave Mayernik, who has been a godsend in getting this money for us."

Voting against the contract, Commissioner Daniel P. Kinross expressed concern over the rush to award a \$1.3 million contract simply to make use of \$300,000.

Kinross said major issues pertaining to the park still need to be resolved before construction can begin. Ross must get several county and state permits and approval from several county environmental agencies before work can begin, he said. The township has awarded a contract to build a community park that it currently is not permitted to build, he said.

Township Manager Thomas Lavorini said that once the contract is awarded, a meeting will be arranged with representatives from the contractor to discuss a schedule for completion of the project. This meeting could take place in as soon as a week.

Paul Zottola, representing the contractor, was present at the meeting. He said it was normal procedure to wait until a contract had been awarded before speculating about projected completion dates.

Weigand said Ross badly needed another com-

SEE **PARK**, PAGE NW-3

Park construction gets go-ahead

PARK FROM PAGE NW-1

munity park. It will serve people of all ages, she said, and not just young athletes:

- Toddlers could make use of the playground.
- Teens could play dekhockey.
- Ethnic groups could host picnics.
- Senior citizens could have dances.

• Plays and small productions could be held in the amphitheater.

Ross does not have a similar facility now, she said.

Commissioners will discuss the project in greater detail at the public works meeting tomorrow at the township administration building on Perrysville Avenue.

Matthew DeReno is a free-lance writer.

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NORTH

Shaler's Gally heads police chiefs association

By Matt De Reno

When Jeff Gally became an Allegheny County deputy sheriff in 1967, new officers were not given much more than a badge and a gun, he recalled.

As the new president of the Allegheny County Chiefs of Police Association, Gally said he would work to ensure that new officers continue to be better prepared than he was when they hit the streets.

Gally, chief of police in Shaler since 1994, was sworn in Thursday as president of the chiefs association.

He succeeds Chief Jack Lennon of Kilbuck.

The association has 240 members representing 127 municipalities.

Gally, 54, said one of the greatest barriers to effective law enforcement was negative public perceptions of police. Police are too often shown in a bad light by newspapers and television, he said. It is rare when the public meets with police officers on "positive ground," he said.

Programs such as Shaler's Citizens Police Academy, however, will help to dispel misconceptions about the police, he said.



Police Chief Jeff Gally

The academy, similar to programs offered in Wilkesburg and Pittsburgh, is run in cooperation with the chiefs association. It is designed to show residents the kinds of challenges police face on the job.

"We want the public to know who we are, what we do, and why we do it," Gally said.

Twenty-three civilians of varied ages and occupations took part in the eight-week Shaler program, he

SEE NEWS, PAGE NW-2

Shaler's Gally heads county police chiefs association

NEWS FROM PAGE NW-1

said. Police officers, crime lab technicians and lawyers volunteered to instruct about subjects ranging from "The Use of Deadly Force" to "What is Required of a Civilian During an Arrest."

Participants seemed enthusiastic and interested, he said. Sessions scheduled for two hours routinely ran as long as four, he said. Similar civilian academies are being planned by chiefs in other municipalities, Gally said.

Gally is all for using modern technology, and he predicted that municipal costs could be cut by using up-to-date computer, video and surveillance equipment.

Offering one example, Gally said he would like to see introduction of a video arraignment system. Under such a system, district justices would be allowed to conduct the initial proceedings in a criminal case using two-way television cameras. The district justice would never have to leave his office, and the defendant would not have to be transported from jail. This procedure would save thousands of dollars in police travel costs and overtime, he said, and it would release police officers to spend more time on patrol in their communities.

Gally also favors greater use of video cameras in patrol cars. Such devices can protect both police offi-

cers and civilians, he said.

He favors adding sound recorders to patrol cars, but that would require a change in state law. In Pennsylvania it is illegal to record conversations without the consent of all individuals involved.

Most police like having video cameras in their cars, Gally said. Videotapes can be a powerful tool in drunken-driving cases when suspects can be seen stumbling around their cars, he said.

Gally said he regarded Shaler as the best kept secret of the North Hills. He has lived most of his life in the area. Gally and his wife Julie have two children, Jeff and Todd.

Besides his police duties, Gally has played a role in community

affairs.

Gally serves on the advisory board of the Cops for Kids Charities, which raises money for poor children through golf outings and other activities. He also serves on the boards of the Crime Prevention Officials of Western Pennsylvania, Shaler Area Emergency Medical Service and Beattie Technical School.

Gally joined Shaler police as a patrolman in 1969. He was later promoted to criminal investigator. He was made a lieutenant in 1987 and a captain in 1988.

Matt De Reno is a free-lance writer.