



READY FOR THE CHALLENGE
ROB McCLELLAN FOCUSES ON
PLAYING WELL AT PGA CHAMPIONSHIP
Page 15

BOROUGH LANDMARK
Historic hotel turns into
judge's office Page 19



Butler Eagle

Butler County's Great Daily Newspaper

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Mars near 1-year deal with teachers

Current terms to be extended

By Paula Grubbs
Eagle Staff Writer

ADAMS TWP — A one-year contract for Mars School District's 200 teachers will likely be in place by the end of the month. District solicitor Tom King announced at Tuesday evening's school board meeting that the two sides met a few hours earlier for a negotiating session. King said teachers at the session offered a one-year contract that is essentially an extension of

the 2010-11 contract, which expired on June 30. That means no salary increases, step-ups in pay level, hourly employee wage increases, or stipend increases for coaches. The only possibility for a salary increase would be if a teacher earned a master's or doctorate or some higher educational level. The starting salary for a teacher with a bachelor's degree at Mars is \$37,532. The average salary is \$55,445, and the highest paid teacher in the district, who has a master's degree and is at the top of the salary schedule, makes \$72,712. Health and dental benefits

would also remain the same as in the 2010-11 contract. The contract's pay freeze parallels those agreed to by Mars administrators, cafeteria workers and King's law firm resulting from difficult financial times in public education across the state. The contract also includes the reinstatement of an elementary and a secondary teacher who were furloughed in the financial hurdles caused by deep cuts in state reimbursements. King said the pay freeze included in the contract allows funding to reinstate the furloughed teachers. The board voted unanimously

to approve the contract, and Mars Area Education Association Vice President Scott McCarthy said after the meeting that teachers would vote on the deal on Aug. 25. "I am confident our teachers will be reasonable in their decision," McCarthy said. King said because it is identical to the 2010-11 contract, the contract will have no impact on the 2011-12 budget passed in June. King said according to state school code, negotiations on a longer contract must begin by Jan. 12, 2012. No board members commented

on the contract. After reaching an impasse in negotiations, the school board requested a fact finder in March. The board voted to approve the fact finder's contract, but teachers voted against it. No negotiations had been held since May, and the association announced a change in the chairman of the teacher's negotiating committee last week. "We hope the association passes the settlement, and we'll move on to next year," said superintendent William Pettigrew on Tuesday night.

BAND CAMP AT MONITEAU



Travis Genaway plays the quint drums Tuesday during band camp at Moniteau High School. With the start of school just around the corner, band members are busy

practicing their halftime shows for high school football games. JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

Bus stop talk sparks Clinton ethics debate

Supervisor aims to file complaint

By Tom Victoria
Eagle Staff Writer

CLINTON TWP — A township supervisor said Tuesday he will file a complaint against a fellow supervisor with the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission.

Supervisor Ed Boyd accused Supervisor Jim Halstead of trying to secure votes in the May primary by talking with residents in the Plantation housing plan about their desire for a bus stop. Boyd said Halstead should not have driven the township truck to the Plantation. Neither should he have had a fellow road crew worker with him.

"It was inappropriate and unethical," Boyd said. He unsuccessfully tried to pass motions by the supervisors to either ask Halstead to resign or to take steps to fire him as the township roadmaster. Neither Halstead nor Supervisor Mary Zacherl would second the motions. Boyd then stated he would notify the state ethics commission. Halstead replied he had no problem with Boyd doing so. "I know I'm innocent of all charges," Halstead said.

I know I'm innocent of all charges. I welcome the investigation. I have nothing to hide.

Jim Halstead,
Clinton Twp. supervisor

"I welcome the investigation. I have nothing to hide."

He said his May 12 visit to the Plantation was a response to residents' concerns.

The township initially decided to not take over any roads in the housing plan until 80 percent of it was built out, but parents of South Butler School District students wanted immediate action.

Halstead said he took two hours of vacation time to avoid any conflict.

Len Haney, a former township supervisor and roadmaster, said Halstead should not be logging in vacation hours while acting as a supervisor.

"You don't get paid while you're meeting with people as a supervisor," Haney said.

Halstead reminded Haney that vacation time is used at the discretion of

See Debate, Page 5

Home weatherization funds ready

Housing Authority to spend \$1.2M

By Ed Biller
Eagle Staff Writer

Low-income, eligible renters and homeowners in Butler County can apply to get a piece of \$1.2 million in federal stimulus funds to weatherize their homes. The Housing Authority of the County of Butler this

summer was awarded \$1.2 million in federal funds, administered by the state Department of Community and Economic Development, to fund the Weatherization Assistance Program in the county. This program helps low-income, eligible renters and homeowners retrofit homes with energy cost-cutting measures such as insulation, caulking, weath-

er stripping and furnace and water heater repairs. "This is a case of use the money or lose it by next September," said Perry O'Malley, housing authority executive director. "We expect to do 165 homes, minimum, in the next year." He said 20 homes already have been done since the program kicked off in late June, and the

authority has "burned through" its waiting list, meaning applicants will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis. For the past 20 years, the county did not have a weatherization program O'Malley said. Rather, money intended for Butler County was routed through Mercer County's program, See Funds, Page 5

Former firefighter sentenced for arson

By Kim Paskorz
Eagle Staff Writer

A former probationary firefighter, who will serve up to 23 months in prison for trying to set Freeport High School on fire, reportedly was diagnosed with pyromania.

Lucas J. Cressler, 19, of Natrona Heights allegedly confessed to the crimes at

the school on Route 356 in Buffalo Township, according to court documents. Court records say on Dec. 12, Cressler stuffed newspapers into an air vent on the side of the building and lit the papers on fire. Then on Dec. 20 he returned to the school and See Arson, Page 5



For a complete weather forecast see Page 2.

VOL. 142, NO. 138



INDEX

Births	10	Focus	9
Business	18	Horoscope	26
Classified	20	Lotto	2
Comics	26	Sports	15
Crossword	27	Sudoku	24
Editorial	4	TV	27

INSIDE

■ Larry Henry retires after 17 years as superintendent of the Karns City School District, and he doesn't know what he will do next. P/2

DEATHS

- Capt. Wayne D. Bartley, Warrensburg, Mo.
 - Donnie Earl Christley, West Columbia, S.C.
 - Carolyn M. Aiken Anthony Durci, Butler
 - Twila A. Robinson Ellis, Butler
 - Gunther H. "Hank" Griwatz, Mars
 - Ruth M. Hilderbrand, Fenelton
 - Ronald E. "Ron" Park Sr., Valencia
 - Ruth L. Williams Rodgers, Zelenople
 - Rev. John H. Schneidmiller, formerly of Butler
 - William E. Swartout, Butler
 - Roy D. "Doc" Turner Jr., Butler
 - Dixie Lee Heath Young, Butler
- See Pages 6, 7

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Toomey hopeful for debt panel

By Associated Press

HARRISBURG — U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey didn't vote for the deficit-reduction package that passed Congress last week because he didn't think it was serious enough, but he said Tuesday that he's hopeful that a congressional committee created by the law can make strides toward balancing the federal government's budget.

Toomey, a Republican, said painful events — turmoil in world equity markets, Standard & Poor's downgrade of long-term U.S. government debt and what he expects will be somber forecasts by congressional analysts — should spur the committee to make significant progress.

He said he expects the Congressional Budget Office will pile on the bad economic news in the next couple weeks.

"It's going to be a very gloomy picture," Toomey said. "They're going to have to significantly revise downward their prospects for economic growth and the corresponding deficits. I'm hoping that the combination of those facts will instill a sense of urgency and allow us to get something done."

He said the U.S. is still the biggest and strongest economy in the world, but after doubling government spending over the past decade, he warned that time may be slipping away to address a growing debt and trillion-dollar-plus deficit that he says is threatening the nation's economic health.

The law enacted last week contains more than \$900 billion in cuts over the coming decade to the annual operating budgets of Cabinet agencies. The panel's target is to find \$1.2 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in budget cuts in the next 10 years, including interest savings.

A major problem Toomey cited in the deficit bill is that most of the spending cuts it contemplates would be made in later years and could be reversed by a future Congress.

Arson

From Page 1

allegedly lit on fire a paper towel that he threw into a Dumpster-type container, documents said.

Police described the container as a "sawdust catch" attached to the building to collect debris from the school's wood shop.

The sawdust catch was smoking when police got to the school. Inside the container, investigators found an empty bottle of alcohol and a water bottle that was "full of an accelerant," according to court documents.

No one was injured, and police said the school was

Funds

From Page 1

meaning Butler's housing authority had no reliable way to track the results.

"We've been chasing to get these funds back here for the past three or four years," O'Malley said.

"We feel Butler County residents will be much better served with the Butler Housing Authority administering the program."

He credited the efforts of Butler County Commissioner Dale Pinkerton; state Rep. Brian Ellis, R-11th, and Leslie Osche, executive director of the United Way of Butler County, with bringing the program back to Butler.

Furthermore, the weath-

COME ON DOWN



A girl comes down the big slide Tuesday at the Butler Farm Show. The annual event runs through Saturday.

JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

Pa. House will look at shrinking itself

By Associated Press

HARRISBURG — State lawmakers returned on Tuesday to a familiar topic: whether to start the lengthy process required to cut the size of the 253-member General Assembly.

At a House State Government Committee informational hearing on a handful of pending bills, the idea's projected benefits — mainly more efficient lawmaking and lower costs — were contrasted against potential harm — such as a loss of clout for rural residents.

Rep. Mark Cohen called a smaller General Assembly a "terrible idea" that would reduce the range of political opinions that are currently represented in Harrisburg, in part by making it more expensive to win a House seat.

The House currently has 203 members and the Senate 50. Each House member currently represents about 63,000 people, a typical senator about 254,000.

House Speaker Sam Smith predicted his plan to cut the House to 153 members would improve members' understanding, communications and ability to build consensus.

He said the chamber's relatively large size has been a problem for members during floor debates.

Rep. Mark Mustio, R-Allegheny, discussed his three bills that take different approaches to downsizing, including "nesting" House districts inside Senate districts and expanding legislative terms, currently two years in the House and four in the Senate, by two years.

not damaged.

Only days before the first fire attempt, Cressler, who had no previous criminal record, had joined the Freeport Area Fire Department. He was on the standard one-year probationary period when he was arrested.

Department officials said they removed him from the department after the arrest.

Cressler pleaded guilty to one felony count of attempted arson.

He was sentenced Tuesday by Butler County Judge William Shaffer to serve 11 1/2 to 23 months in the Butler County Prison

followed by six years of probation.

Cressler made no comment during the sentencing hearing.

However, his defense attorney William Krzton told the judge that after Cressler was charged he sought the assistance of a psychologist, and he was diagnosed with pyromania.

Krzton told the judge that since that time Cressler has been in counseling and on house arrest with electronic monitoring, and he has had no further problems.

Cressler was ordered to pay the district \$1,224 restitution.

erization program, which is overseen by four trained housing authority staff members, is considered a job energizer.

"It's considered to be, indirectly, an entry-level training program for con-

struction workers. Then they can move on to bigger and better things," O'Malley said.

For information or to apply, call the authority at 724-287-6797 or visit www.housingauthority.com.

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Clinton approves plan for new Marcellus well

Kittanning firm to do drilling

By Tom Victoria
Eagle Staff Writer

CLINTON TWP — The township is getting another Marcellus Shale natural gas well.

The township supervisors on Tuesday approved two land developments, including Snyder Brothers' plan to drill vertically on land leased by Joe Thrower off Lardintown Road near Route 228.

Supervisor Mary Zacherl, board chairwoman, said the company, which is based in Kittanning, plans to drill the well of Aug. 15, with fracking beginning in September.

Hydraulic fracturing, more commonly known as fracking, is the process in which water, sand and chemicals are pumped at high pressure into a shale

formation to crack the rock, releasing the natural gas.

Unlike the previously approved plan by XTO Energy to drill horizontally on property off Kennedy Lane, Snyder Brothers will drill vertically.

Doug Miller of Snyder Brothers said trucks accessing the site will travel only on state roads.

Zacherl said the company is drawing water from a mine pool in West Winfield.

The supervisors approved the land development, which is what gas drilling is categorized as under township code, with 10 conditions.

Along with having the necessary permits, the company would be held accountable for any harm to nearby residences' water supplies.

Zacherl said the township encourages gas

drilling as long as it's not hurting residents.

"This is an economic engine we want in the township — why wouldn't we — but we want it in the safest way," she said.

The supervisors two years ago amended the township's land use regulations to require every drilling project be reviewed as a land development plan.

If Snyder Brothers would decide to begin horizontal drilling, it would have to come before the supervisors again.

The supervisors also approved a plan by Davis Machine Shop to build an addition to its building off Saxonburg Boulevard.

The addition will be 32 feet by 80 feet and be 17-feet high.

Supervisor Ed Boyd abstained from that vote, saying he knows the Davis family.

Debate

From Page 1

the employee. In response to Boyd's criticism of using the township truck, Halstead said it's an unwritten policy that supervisors can use vehicles while representing Clinton.

Halstead said in an interview that the other worker, Blane Martin, was doing official paperwork while Halstead was speaking with the residents.

Although Boyd conceded he supported Art Biernesser, Halstead's opponent in the November election, Boyd denied his allegations were politically motivated.

"I believe Mr. Halstead's actions reflect poor judgment," Boyd said.

Biernesser, a frequent critic of Halstead, attended the meeting, but declined to speak during public comment.

Some of the roughly 30 residents packing the meeting room in the township building on Saxonburg Boulevard defended Halstead.

Todd Cress praised Halstead for going to the housing plan to hear residents' concerns.

"I applaud you for that," Cress said.

Leroy Zacherl, Mary Zacherl's husband, said Halstead should sue Boyd for defamation after the ethics commission clears him.

Halstead didn't rule out that possibility.

"I would consider it," he said in an interview.

Boyd said in an interview he will contact the ethics commission next week.

He said Halstead's presence at the Plantation was a way to snag votes.

Boyd said the supervisors in December decided to not deviate from the original covenant by taking over a road for the purpose of adding a bus stop there.

"The three of us said no," he said.

Boyd said the request suddenly became an issue days from the primary.

Halstead narrowly beat Biernesser for the Republican nomination. Biernesser received enough write-in votes to get the Democratic nomination.

Halstead disagreed with

Officials address vandalism at park

By Tom Victoria
Eagle Staff Writer

CLINTON TWP — To curb vandalism at Spring Valley Park, township officials are considering such measures as installing surveillance cameras.

Supervisor Ed Boyd on Tuesday suggested the use of a camera to record anything that happens in the park off Victory Road.

"It's in a desolate area," Boyd said about the park.

His fellow supervisors, Mary Zacherl and Jim Halstead, agreed the park's susceptibility to abuse needs to be addressed.

The latest spree occurred overnight Sunday. Along with garbage strewn throughout the park, the portable toilet was toppled and a picnic table was left on the roof of the pavilion.

Linda Klee, chairwoman of the township park advisory board, said beer cans and cigarette butts were left throughout the park.

She said the vandals also tried to pull out the young trees planted in the park.

The vandals apparently placed the table on the pavilion roof by standing on two stacked tables.

Klee and her husband, Jim Klee, found the park in disarray when they opened the gate Monday morning.

"It's a shame the way they're treating it (the park)," she said.

Linda Klee said state police intend to patrol the area more frequently.

Police recommended moving the entrance gate closer to Victory Road to prohibit cars from parking in the gravel lot and installing lights that operate from dusk to dawn.

Boyd reiterated security steps must be taken because the problem isn't going to go away.

"It's going to be more and more of a nuisance," he said.

Boyd about what the board discussed in December, saying the door was left open to find a way to make a bus stop viable.

Mary Zacherl said in an interview her recollection of those events are the same as Halstead's and that she doesn't think he did anything wrong on May 12.

Shari Brewer, director of the Butler County Elections Bureau, said it is up to the township to decide whether there was a violation in such a case.

Resident Walt Whitten, president of the Plantation's homeowners association, also defended Halstead, saying it was nice having an official come to discuss the issue.

Whitten said he was saddened his group's concern is tied into the dissension among the supervisors.

Resident Bill Purvis said the dispute doesn't benefit the township.

"I hate to see this," he said. "It's like a vendetta. It's not good for anyone in this room."

Despite that debate, the supervisors unanimously approved a new agreement in which the township adopts the first 500 feet of Plantation Drive in name only.

Under the agreement, the township is indemnified from being responsible for road maintenance of that stretch until the entire drive becomes a township road.

The board's action enables the school district to have a bus stop outside the Plantation clubhouse.

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