

HEALTH & PROSPERITY

THROUGHOUT THE NEW YEAR

THURSDAY
WEEKLY

The Fulton County News

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109TH YEAR, NO. 2

McCONNELLSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

JANUARY 8, 2009

Tolls On Turnpike Increased Sunday

Fares between toll booths will now be 25 percent higher

By Jean Snyder
STAFF WRITER

Pennsylvania Turnpike travelers may have experienced an economic jolt on Sunday as turnpike tolls were increased by 25 percent. The new rates become effective at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009.

With the new tolls, the most-common cash rate for passenger vehicles will increase from 75 cents to 95 cents, while the most-common cash rate for commercial vehicles will increase from \$6.25 to \$7.85.

According to a Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission press release, the increase is required to enable the turnpike to meet financial obligations under Act 44, passed by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Rendell in July 2007. With Act 44, the turnpike is providing \$2.5 billion in supplemental transportation funding from August 2007 to May 2010. New toll revenue from the increase will mostly be used by PennDOT for off-turnpike investment. The press release goes on to say that "more than 90 percent of the toll-increase proceeds will benefit non-turnpike road and bridge projects and transit operations."

One Act 44 project scheduled for Fulton County is \$3.750 million for concrete renovations to Route 30. Another Act 44 project scheduled for 2009 and 2010 is a curve realignment east of the Blue Mountain Tunnel.

The previous turnpike toll increase occurred in August 2004.

Tolls will increase across the entire system with two exceptions: Tolls on the newest sections (Findlay Connector/PA-576 and Mon-Fayette Expressway/Turnpike 43 Uniontown to Brownsville section) will remain at their current rates that were set in anticipation of the increase.

In the future, the turnpike is
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PA Turnpike Commission 2009 Toll Rate Increases

From Ft. Littleton Interchange To:	Current Cash Toll*	Previous Cash Toll
Breezewood	\$1.60	\$1.25
Bedford	\$2.85	\$2.25
Carlisle	\$3.75	\$3.00
Gettysbg. Pike	\$4.10	\$3.25
Harrisbg.-West	\$4.40	\$3.50
Valley Forge	\$10.35	\$8.25

Source: Pa. Turnpike Commission
*EZPass rates are usually a few cents less

DEATHS

Carbaugh, Amos, 67, Greencastle
Hoffman, David, 55, Hancock
Jay, Joanna, 98, Everett
Jay, Vera, 104, Artemas
Layton, Reed, 77, Fishertown
Long, Chester, 82, Chambersbg.
Mellott, Annie, 90, Needmore
Naugle, Roger, 56, McConnellsburg.
Sipes, Bonnie, 85, Harrisonville
Spyker, Edith, 90, Stewartstown
Stotler, Ruth, 83, Hancock
Tice, James, 83, Cressston
Weller, Ruth, 91, Chambersbg.

OBITUARIES, Page B3



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Schmidt Trust Awards \$30,000 To HAVFCO, NVFC



Representatives of the Hustontown and Needmore volunteer fire companies accept checks in the amount of \$15,000 each from the Arthur and Ruth Schmidt Community Trust committee. The donation was made at the office of trust committee member attorney Jim Schall in McConnellsburg December 30 and was given in support of the two companies' building projects. Pictured, from left, standing, are trust committee members Denver Kuhn, Schall, Dr. Harry Johnston and Needmore company member Brian Strait. Seated, left, are Hustontown company member Marvin DeShong, trust committee member Clyde Bookheimer and Needmore company member Ronald "Buck" Richards.

Fulton County Adopts 2009 Budget

Property tax rate holding at 10 mills

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

As one of their final acts of the year, the Fulton County commissioners gave a final nod to the proposed budget for 2009 that shows revenue totalling \$5,973,309 and expenditures at a slightly higher level of \$6,277,662 last Tuesday.

Few changes were made to the budget since its initial unveiling on December 1 by com-

missioners Bonnie Mellott Keefe, Daniel Swain Jr., David Hoover II and business manager Tim Stanton. At the time, the commissioners said due to the current state of the economy and the changes that could occur within certain areas of the budget as a result, they preferred to wait until after the budget was adopted on December 30 to comment publicly.

With the budget holding the line on both real estate (10 mills) and occupation (20 mills) taxes, Commissioner Swain shared with the "News" last week the

lone expansion in the scope of services the county will offer in 2009 is a "small contribution" in the amount of \$2,000 to the Fulton County Parks and Recreation Commission. All other services will remain the same, Swain added.

"We always aim to run a very cost-effective government and continue to do so this year, particularly in light of the current economic circumstances," he concluded.

In a press release issued by the office of business manager Stanton, the commissioners

Boro Police Arbitration Finalized

Disbanded force wins concessions on leave payout, insurance and pensions

By Jean Snyder
STAFF WRITER

All end-of-contract issues for the disbanded McConnellsburg Borough Police Department have been settled as a result of a ruling made following binding arbitration held in December of last year.

Although the agreement was not unanimously agreed upon, two of the members did agree to the terms that must now be met by Borough Council. The agreement was made by a three-person arbitration board that included Carlton Cook Walker, at-

torney for the borough of McConnellsburg; Anthony Busillo, attorney for the McConnellsburg Police Association and an impartial arbitrator, Ralph H. Colflesh Jr.; Esq. Colflesh, a Philadelphia attorney, was appointed by the Pa. Dept. of Labor as the neutral arbitrator. The board met in McConnellsburg on December 8, 2008, to take testimony on the issues.

According to an official copy of the agreement obtained by the "News" through a "Right To Know" request, the two borough police officers, whose employment ended at 11:59 p.m. on December 31, 2008, will receive additional pension benefits, paid time for any future required court appearances, as well as payouts for sick leave, personal leave and vacation days accumulated, but not used by the end of their contract.

According to the binding arbitration agreement, former Chief Gary Long will be paid \$26,743.49 and former Sgt. Doug Thomas will be paid \$26,726.40 for sick and personal leave and vacation days accumulated but not used. The officers were to be paid \$5,000 each as a pre-payment on January 2, 2009. The majority of the arbitration board members found that such payment would have been required had either officer terminated employment with the borough even if the department had not been disbanded.

The agreement also requires that the officers' pension benefits must be amended, retroactive to January 1, 2009, to provide for a spousal and dependent survivor's benefit of 50 percent of the monthly pension benefit the officer was receiving at the time of the officer's death, including any cost of living adjustment required by legislative enactments that are applicable. The benefit will cost the borough about \$48,000 total and must be contributed to the borough police pension fund by January 1, 2011. Also with regard to the officer's pension, the plan is required to be amended to allow for "full superannuation benefits (60 percent of final average compensation) upon the completion of 25 years of police service to the borough and the attainment of age 51 instead of age 55. Because only one officer is impacted by the change, it is estimated that change will cost the borough an additional \$30,000.

With regard to health insurance benefits, the borough must reimburse each officer up to \$1,000 per month for the first 36 months for the officers to obtain alternative medical coverage (receipts must be provided). In the event the officer opts out of this coverage, the officer will receive a \$500-per-month cash bonus.

Although Borough Council cited economic reasons for disbanding the police department, the cost of the end-of-contract package will eventually likely exceed the \$166,308 projection of costs to operate the department for one year. Council, however, anticipated a one-time payout in exchange for being able to drop future year police expenditures.

Life insurance policies owned by the McConnellsburg Police Pension Plan (\$15,000 per officer) will continue to be owned by the plan by using the cash value of the plan or by continued premium payments. Group life insurance in the amount of \$50,000 can be changed to an individual policy at the employee's expense by February 1, 2009.

In addition to the above concessions, the officers also must be paid for any future court ap-

2008 The Year That Was!

It was all about the economy

By Jean Snyder
STAFF WRITER

The old year drew to a close last week amid mixed emotions. While many were glad to see it go, others expressed concern for the year that lies ahead. During the 2000 presidential campaign, then-candidate Bill Clinton was reminded regularly by his staff that "it's the economy, stupid!" And, now just eight years later, those words have never rung truer. The United States has ended the year in a dramatic economic slump fueled by the failure of banks, brokerages, small businesses, the Big-3 automakers and retail stores.

When President-elect Barack Obama takes office later this month, he will face a tough road ahead as he prepares to lead the country into what many hope will be a brighter

With a sincere wish for the safety and success of our new president as we hopefully begin a new day, here is a recap of the stories that dominated Fulton County's "News" in 2008:

January

The new year began with the closing of the Giant pharmacy. The pharmacy opened with the Giant Food Store in 2005. Company officials cited lack of business as the reason for the closing of that portion of the store;

The state announced that lifeguards would be eliminated from most of the state parks in Pennsylvania, including Cowans Gap, beginning with the 2008 season;

Needmore and McConnellsburg volunteer fire companies and the Fulton County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism held their annual banquets;

County Commissioner Ellis Yingling and District Attorney Dwight Harvey retired from office, and David Hoover and Attorney Travis Kendall were sworn as com-

missioner and district attorney, respectively;

February

Greg "Chip" Rouzer was charged with attempted murder after he shot Randy Walters outside of Walters's home on Sipes Mill Road. Walters recovered from his wounds, and Rouzer remained at large for eight days until he was arrested near Chambersburg Hospital and charged with attempted murder and aggravated assault;

Longtime Central Fulton school board member Jeff Culler resigned from the board and was replaced by former board member Jim Babinsack;

March

The Fulton County Library received a \$500,000 Keystone matching grant from the state to be used for rehabilitation and renovations to the library;

The Hustontown Area Volunteer Fire Co. held its annual banquet;

Fastenal, the largest fas-

tomorrow.

The mountains that seemingly separate and isolate Fulton County from the rest of the world have been no barrier this year against rough economic times. The county has seen massive layoffs at its largest employer, JLG, as well as in other companies such as CitiCorp in Hagerstown, Md.

In terms of unemployment, Fulton County spent much of the year with higher rates than the state and national postings. In both August and October of 2008, Fulton County had the highest unemployment rate in the state, breaking the 10 percent mark.

Locally the JLG layoffs dominated the news while other economic problems also dominated, such as the closing of the Ford/Mercury dealership, leaving Fulton County with

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tener distributor in North America opened a store here in the old Fulton Motor Sales service building;

April

And Then There Was One - The BiLo supermarket, owned by Penn Traffic, closed its doors after anchoring the Penn's Village Shopping Center since 1990 when it took over the old IGA Foodliner. Calling it "an underperforming store," Penn Traffic's closing of the market left McConnellsburg with only one supermarket, Giant, in the county. BiLo had enjoyed the status of the being the county's only supermarket since its opening in 1990 until the Giant opening in 2005. At year's end, the 50,000-square-foot storefront remained vacant;

Greg "Chip" Rouzer, his girlfriend, Mildred Tressler, and his father, Kenneth Rouzer, were all charged in Franklin County with trying to hire a hit man to kill

See REVIEW BY MONTH, Page A2

2008 Fulton County Celebrities

- McConnellsburg Fire Co.'s "Firefighter of the Year" - Roger Everts
- Needmore Fire Co.'s "Firefighter of the Year" - Denis Strait
- Hustontown Fire Co.'s "Firefighter of the Year" - Jeff Black
- Fair Queen - Forbes Road senior Olivia Strait, 17
- Historical Society's "Historian of the Year" - Richard Miller
- Chamber of Commerce & Tourism's "Man of the Year" - D.A. "Andy" Washabaugh
- Chamber of Commerce & Tourism's "Outstanding Citizen" - Kindred Spirits.
- Chamber of Commerce & Tourism's "Special Service" award - Helen Overly
- Chamber of Commerce & Tourism's "Excellence in Small Business" award - Dalcon Construction Co.
- Folk Festival Parade Marshal - Doug Ray

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