

Thousand Acre Football, Who Scores

By Judy Hinkel

PORTLAND - Nearly fifty years ago when Upper Mount Bethel Township was drafting zoning ordinances, Metropolitan Edison Electric Company (Met-Ed) had recently built a plant along the Delaware River, south of Portland. The land area was expanded to a thousand acres to accommodate a future nuclear plant until the increase to buffer zone areas of two thousand acres proved unobtainable.

The company's "excess land" has since been maintained as farm field and woodlands, including the steep slopes, wetlands and a pond. It seemed reasonable in the 1970's considering the landowner's use to designate the parcels as Industrial and move on to the other zones in the ordinance. No one considered the growth of population and economy that would make natural areas and tourism a future commodity. Few recognized the value of being a gateway community in the shadow of the Delaware Water Gap and its future National Recreation Area, the Kittatinny Ridge with Appalachian Trail, the Delaware Wild & Scenic River and the future Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

These are appreciated nationally and internationally. The Conflict The Township now finds itself at a crossroads between traditional growth capitalism to provide for municipal expenses at the cost of quality of life for future generations of residents. The developer, River Pointe Logistics, LLC, purchased the 750 acre Industrial 2 zone last year and at a public presentation of considerations to develop, promised in a long list of what would be followed, where township ordinances, only to come soon after to propose a 28-page text amendment to replace or ne-gate parts of those same local zoning ordinances.

Changes would also apply to the Industrial 3 zone of the current electric plant along the river. This was not an official preliminary plan, but a concept plan to gauge its acceptance for a blanket agreement to begin development, irrespective of siting and size of a possible dozen buildings. Officials and a few committee members have been meeting with the developer and after many months of requests posted Version 10 of the amendment on the Township website, sent copies to our Planning Commission and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission for review as required. Both commissions, as well as residents' comments, are advisory, so do not have to be accepted.

The Issues Most agree an acceptable degree of taxable business and manufac-



turing is healthy for community well-being. This proposal is massively out of scale for our community. Its viability rests with proximity to Route 80 and possible nearby functioning rail line. It would require sewer and water expansion, and road upgrade for truck traffic.

The land that slopes 300 feet to the river, would be contoured to fit the buildings. Heights of buildings at 100 feet or ten stories with an additional 20 feet on roof tops for towers or air conditioning units will increase in size to 800,000 square feet or 21 acres from a recently revised maximum size of 300,000 square feet. There is also potential for three buildings at one million square feet or 26 acres each. Water supply and wastewater disposal are questions, as are the reduction of steep slopes

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Changes Being Implemented to Address Capacity Issues at Beltzville State Park

By DCNR

HARRISBURG, PA -- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today announced that a number of operational changes are being made at Beltzville State Park in Carbon County to address safety related to overcrowding that is occurring on weekends and when the weather is favorable.

"Pennsylvania state parks, including Beltzville, are intended for high-density recreation, which does present some challenges during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we are seeing significant increases in visitors looking to stay cool and enjoy the health benefits of the outdoors," Dunn. "We are taking a number of steps at Beltzville to minimize issues on really busy days so that we can continue to provide access to outdoor opportunities."

DCNR is implementing the following measures to help alleviate some of the issues related to the popularity of Beltzville including:

Additional dumpsters for trash disposal

Providing trash bags to visitors to use to properly dispose of trash

Signage outlining park regulations and courteous behavior related to alcohol use, noise, swimming in designated areas, and trash disposal

Bringing in staff from other state parks and central office to assist, and working with local and state law enforcement entities to increase officer presence on weekends and holidays

New gates and barriers to restrict parking and access to undesignated areas

Electronic signs on the Pennsylvania Turnpike informing potential visitors that the park is closed or near capacity

Making 7:00 P.M. announcements that the park closes at sunset so guests can begin the process of cleaning up and departing

Dunn noted that visitors can take actions that will help keep state parks and forests open and safe, including:

Don't park in undesignated parking areas as this impacts safety, natural resources and nearby residents

Carry out what you carry in or dispose of trash properly in bins and dumpsters

Wear a mask in the restrooms, buildings, and outdoors if you can't keep six feet of distance from other people

Swim only in designated swimming beach areas or pools at state parks

Be courteous to other visitors and abide by noise and alcohol restrictions, and other regulations

Ride ATVs and other motorized vehicles only on designated ATV trails

A Visitor Use and Impact Study with Penn State University researchers is near completion to examine many issues related to high use at Beltzville State Park on holidays and weekends in the summer.

The land and lake at Beltzville State Park are owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control and managed for recreation by DCNR and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The lease with the corps, as well as the source of federal funds used to obtain the lands at Beltzville, require that no person be excluded from public use of the premises.

State park attendance statewide was up more than a million visitors in both May and June.

More information about Pennsylvania State Park rules and regulations is available on the DCNR website.

