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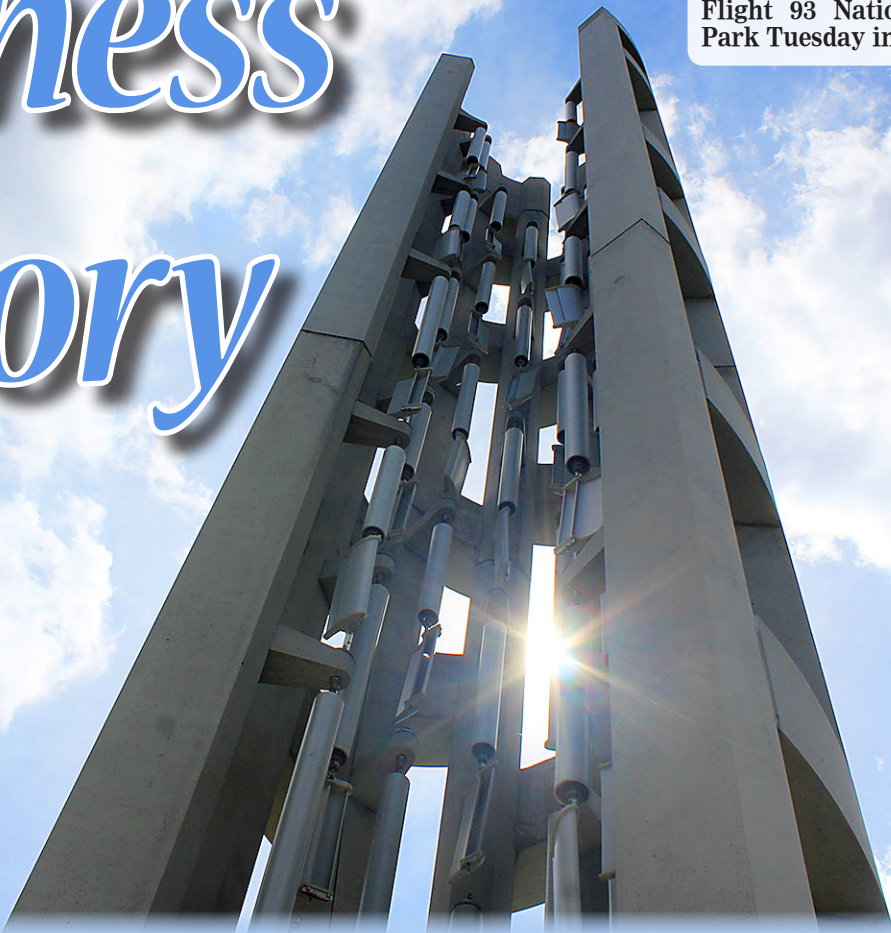
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FRIDAY

September 11, 2026

Witness to history



Mirror photo by Colette Costlow
The sun shines through the 93-foot Tower of Voices at the Flight 93 National Memorial Park Tuesday in Shanksville.

Nanty Glo man first on scene of Flight 93 crash

By MATT CHURELLA
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EBENSBURG — As a 29-year-old police detective for the Conemaugh Township Police Department in Somerset County, Nanty Glo resident Bubba Fatula was one of the first four local responders to arrive on scene minutes after United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in an abandoned strip mine in Stonycreek Township, about four miles north of Shanksville.



Fatula

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, it was Fatula's turn to take his officer handgun qualification, an annual test officers take to prove they can safely and accurately fire their duty weapons. The gun range officers would normally use was closed, so then-Police Chief Louis "Pete" Barclay took Fatula to a gun range in the woods near Shanksville, not knowing what the day was going to bring, Fatula recalled.

When they finished the qualification and started to leave the area, they received a 911 call that an aircraft had crashed near Shanksville, so they turned around and headed back, Fatula said, adding Barclay was familiar with the location Somerset County dispatchers gave to officers.

Upon arriving there, however, they couldn't immediately find the impact site, Fatula said. After getting the initial report of an aircraft down, Fatula said he thought it was a two-seater or some other type of light aircraft.

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Mirror photo by Jayla Nartatez

Visitors gather at the Memorial Plaza at the Flight 93 National Memorial site on Tuesday.

Memorial visitors reflect on events of fateful day

By JAYLA NARTATEZ
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Sept. 11, 2001 is a day that many Americans will never forget. Thoughts of where people were, what they saw and how they felt that day remain in their minds 25 years later. At the Flight 93 National Memorial Park, visitors carry those memories with them as

they honor the 40 passengers and crew members who lost their lives.

Each year, as the anniversary date approaches, Hal Hinton, seasonal park ranger, said the number of visitors increases as people come to learn about the memorial site and pay their respects.

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On the Net

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Blair to borrow up to \$144M

Commissioners authorize bond issue to fund three projects

By KAY STEPHENS
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HOLLIDAYSBURG — Blair County commissioners on Thursday authorized a bond issue borrowing of up to \$144 million to pay for three projects, including construction of a county jail.

While the action paves the way to borrow as much as \$144 million — probably the largest bond issue borrowing inside Blair County's border — Commissioners Chairman Dave Kessling said the intent is to borrow less and still be able to build the new jail and take on Lakemont Park dam repairs and courthouse energy improvements.

"I don't want people and the public to think that this is just the beginning and it's going to go higher," Kessling said. "It's not."

Commissioners offered no specific predictions on how the borrowing will affect future real estate taxes. An influencing factor — how much the county pays annually on the debt — should surface as the bond sale is completed and interest rates are identified. The closing is slated for the third week of October.

Bond counselor Jay Wenger of RBC Capital Markets said Thursday that the county's bond issue will be accomplished in two transactions — one in 2026 and one in 2027 — to be paid back over a 30-year period in level amounts.

"This is essentially like a home mortgage," Wenger said.

Borrowing in two phases, according to Commissioner Laura Burke, allows the county to avoid the impact of borrowing the full amount.

"But there will be a debt millage increase, I would say," Burke added.

Fellow Commissioner Amy Webster, who voted to authorize the bond issue borrowing, said commissioners have no alternatives.

"We have to do these things," Webster said.

Kessling agreed and said the county wouldn't be borrowing up to \$144 million if prior commissioners had pursued efforts to address unpopular issues that were allowed to languish.

"The prison is (nearly) 260 years old," Kessling said. "It's inadequate. It's falling apart and we can't fix it."

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Veterans remember victims of 9/11 terror attacks

By COLETTE COSTLOW
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Today marks 25 years since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, but to visitors at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Somerset County, it sometimes seems like only yesterday.

Retired member of the Air Force Kirk Lear was found Tuesday, standing beside First Officer

LeRoy Homer Jr.'s name on the memorial wall. He and Homer served together from 1985-86.

Homer was still flying Lockheed C-141s in the Reserves, Lear said, but was also employed by United Airlines, where on Sept. 11, 2001, he was the First Officer on Flight 93 when it was hijacked.

Lear didn't know when he first learned Homer was killed, but he remembers it was in the alumni system.

"That's just powerful. Ordinary people in crisis circumstances who rise and come together"

Kirk Lear, U.S. Air Force veteran

Walking through the visitor's center and the stone memorials, Lear said the story of Flight 93 is a "statement in American heroism."

"They made a decision; they had

like 15 minutes," he said. "I'm 30 years in the Air Force, Navy. We were trained to do this kind of stuff. None of these people were."

Making a split-second decision,

the passengers and crew tried to contact their loved ones to say goodbye, knowing they weren't going to survive the crash.

"That's just powerful," he said. "Ordinary people in crisis circumstances who rise and come together" to prevent what would have been an even bigger tragedy had the plane reached its suspected destination in Washington, D.C.

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