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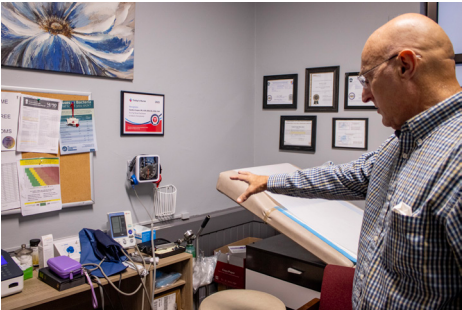
SMALL COMMUNITY FACES BIG CHALLENGES

Trucking leachate from BRADS landfill too much to bear, St. Clair resident charges during hearing



DEP representatives listen during Tuesday’s hearing in Saint Clair as residents deliver comments on the proposed BRADS Landfill permit change. AISHWARYA BEHL/STAFF PHOTOS

SCHUYLKILL



Volunteers in Medicine CEO Bob Alonge shows medical equipment inside an exam room at the clinic in Pottsville. AISHWARYA BEHL/STAFF PHOTO

Nonprofits team up to assist in transition from prison

By Michael Urban
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Two Schuylkill County nonprofit organizations are teaming up to provide health-care and medical guidance to those recently released from prison or hospital behavioral health units.

The new collaboration is between Volunteers in Medicine, which operates free medical clinics in Pottsville and Tamaqua, and Culture 2 Culture, a Pottsville-based group that provides mental health peer support for those in recovery and connects them to wellness resources.

Since both nonprofits work to provide vital stabilization services for vulnerable populations, it made sense to collaborate on the initiative, said Bob Alonge, CEO of Volunteers in Medicine.

The period immediately after release from prison or a hospital is crucial to long-term health and stability, and many being discharged need help with that transition.

This program is intended to bridge that gap between institutional care and community wellness.

“It’s about continuity,” he said. The program is now getting started with clients being referred to the Volunteers in Medicine clinic, which will provide services such as:

- Health insurance application assistance: Case managers and staff will work directly with individuals to navigate and expedite local and state healthcare insurance applications, transitioning them from uninsured to insured status without a lapse.
- Immediate free medical care: To ensure continuous, uninterrupted treatment, clients

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County explores \$50M partnership to repair 28 bridges

By Brian Bingaman
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POTTSVILLE — Repairs for nearly half of Schuylkill County’s bridges could be on the path to getting fast-tracked.

At the Sept. 16 commissioners meeting, a proposal was made to address the needs for 28 of the county’s 62 bridges over the next five years. Representatives from engineering and financial firms presented a plan to bundle the bridge projects into a single public-private partnership under Pennsylvania’s Act 88 of 2012.

The plan involves 23 full bridge replacements, three rehabilitations and two complete bridge removals. Tim Benner of the Allentown-based CDR Maguire Engineering said the top priorities are the “worst of the worst” structures that have been given a poor grade in biennial inspections. The targeted bridges are in Ashland, Tremont, Girardville, Auburn and St. Clair boroughs, and

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By Ron Devlin
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ST. CLAIR — David Plachko wasted no time in clarifying the issue facing the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at a public hearing on transportation of leachate from the Blythe Recycling & Demolition Site, or BRADS, a construction materials landfill near St. Clair.

“If there’s a pipeline in there, why are you considering trucking?” asked Plachko, the first to testify at the hearing Tuesday evening in St. Clair Area Elementary/Middle School.

A team from DEP’s Northeast regional office in Wilkes-Barre took testimony on BRADS’ request to continue using trucks to transport leachate, a toxic liquid that accumulates in landfill liners, to a local sewage treatment facility.

Plachko, an outspoken critic of the landfill, contends there was an agreement to install a leachate transmission pipeline when the landfill opened.

A retired district judge who lives in St. Clair, Plachko testified that it’s his understanding that a pipeline to the Schuylkill Valley Sewer Authority treatment plant near Cumbola has been completed but is not in use.

Mark Baddick, a former New Philadelphia Borough councilman, said only two members of the eight-member sewer authority were in favor of the pipeline. While there might have been a gentlemen’s agreement, he said, there was never anything in writing allowing BRADS to connect a pipeline to the Schuylkill Valley sewage treatment system.

No one from the Schuylkill Valley



David Plachko, of Saint Clair, voices opposition to the permit change, calling truck-based leachate hauling unsafe and citing carbon-emission concerns.

Sewer Authority testified, and it remains unclear if the pipeline is finished, operational and whether it could accommodate the amount of leachate BRADS generates.

St. Clair Borough Councilman Norm Diehl put the amount at 7 million gallons a year. In DEP permit filings, BRADS reported 8.1 million gallons a year.

‘TOO MUCH’ TO BEAR

Joseph J. Buczynski, DEP’s Northeast regional office director, headed the DEP team at the hearing. Included were engineers and project managers.

The hearing, normally held in the school’s cafeteria, was moved to the gymnasium in anticipation of a large crowd. A dozen or so people offered testimony at the hearing, a legal proceeding.

Speaker after speaker cited the

danger of trucks continuing to haul leachate on the Burma Road, a two-lane country roadway not equipped for heavy-duty usage.

Others saw the BRADS affair as symbolic of Schuylkill being victimized by outside forces — warehouse and data center developments, the proposed ICE detention facility near Tremont and biosolid processing facilities on the west end.

“The environmental impact of BRADS is way too much for a small community to bear,” said David Berdanier, “and pass on to its children.”

Councilman Diehl contended the question before DEP is not simply whether BRADS should be allowed to transport over 7 million gallons a year by truck.

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Analysis shows Trump admin has cut or frozen \$177B in grants across every state

By Mike Catalini
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Trump administration has cut or frozen up to \$177 billion in federal grants since the president took office for his second term, according to a tracking tool released Wednesday by a pro-democracy nonprofit and a group of researchers and scientists.

The cuts affected all 50 states and the District of

Columbia, with health, nutrition, the environment and disaster relief making up the largest share of cuts, the States United Democracy Center and Grant Witness organization found.

Among the grants that were eliminated, frozen or delayed were ones related to maternal health in Michigan, education research in Mississippi and assistance to minority farmers in Iowa, the researchers

found. California, Texas, New York, Illinois and North Carolina saw the highest amounts of interrupted grant money. The tracking tool is called Lost Funds.

“By bringing thousands of funding disruptions from the Trump administration together in a publicly accessible, verified database, Lost Funds puts the magnitude of their impact on full display,” Scott Delaney, co-founder of

Grant Witness, said in a statement.

The \$177 billion finding represents nearly 10% of federal discretionary spending, the groups said.

The tracker’s organizers said the disrupted grants were beyond the kind of cuts that typically happen when administrations change.

“Lost Funds shows the

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