

living lackawanna

Official Newsletter and Report to Lackawanna County Taxpayers

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commissioners address budget shortfall

The Lackawanna County Majority Commissioners are chipping away at what was a looming \$9.2 million deficit in next year's budget through efforts such as a 5% workforce reduction and debt refinancing.

The process remains a constant struggle as the same economic forces that are impacting county residents are affecting the county's ability to trim costs. Regardless of the difficulties, the commissioners are doing everything in their power to ensure that county property owners will not be hit with a 2009 tax hike.

The commissioners' efforts were recognized when Lackawanna County received its first Standard & Poor's investment grade bond rating in at least 20 years on June 18, 2008. The rating saved the county hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual bond charges.

"It's humbling to have a financial giant like S&P recognize our efforts to establish fiscal discipline," Commissioner Corey D. O'Brien said. "We pledge to continue to put taxpayers first while making county government smarter, leaner and more effective."

In its report on the new rating, Standard & Poor's cited the majority commissioners' decision to eliminate a proposed 2-mill tax cut for 2008 and their workforce reduction that saved over \$2 million per year. Standard & Poor's also pointed to the debt restructuring, which eliminates a significant debt service spike in 2009 and saves millions in debt service payments from 2009 to 2014.

"Achieving a bond rating from Standard & Poor's within the first five months of the Washo-O'Brien Administration proves that careful management can result in financial savings for the taxpayer," Commissioner Michael J. Washo said. "An investment grade bond rating is something that is earned, not negotiated."

children & youth helping parents & children connect

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak are introducing an innovative way for parents with children in foster care to meet with them in a more welcoming environment. Instead of using the current drab and cramped foster care visitation rooms, the county is renovating a vacant house that it already owns to serve as the site for the meetings.

The larger space means parents will be able to meet with their children more often. The house also provides a natural setting for parents to learn the skills they need to be reunited with their children.

The bulk of costs for the renovation and staffing will come from state funds. Children & Youth Services Director William Browning said the color schemes are being selected based on research that shows what shades have a calming effect. Institutional office chairs and beige walls will be exchanged for family-friendly furniture. The house's kitchen will be used to teach parenting skills. The space is large enough so that staff can help parents interact with their children. The current rooms are so small that staff can only peak around the corner during the visits.



Research shows more visits between parents and children lead to earlier release from foster care programs, which will save the county money. The more frequent visits also allow staff to better assess the situation, so reunifications tend to be more permanent and safer for the child.

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INNOVATION STARTS HERESM
Lackawanna
County

in your corner

Commissioners' Message



Michael J. Washo



Corey D. O'Brien



A.J. Munchak

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Washo".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey D. O'Brien".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.J. Munchak".

Dear Residents,

As your Lackawanna County Commissioners, we are taking significant measures to conserve energy and encourage recycling in county operations and in the community at large.

"We're trying to do our part to conserve energy, which will help overall efforts to lower our country's dependence on foreign oil," Commissioner Washo said. "We hope that the residents of Lackawanna County will set their own example and look for ways in their own lives to reduce energy usage."



"Conservation doesn't start in Washington, D.C. or Harrisburg, it starts in communities like ours," Commissioner O'Brien said. "Changes, like switching to energy efficient vehicles and lower wattage light bulbs, can add up to a significant energy savings when everyone works together."

Commissioner Munchak said, "We teach our children to conserve. What better way can we show our children's children the path to conservation?" Our energy conservation agenda focuses on transportation, county facilities, community recycling efforts, and land use planning. Our agenda includes replacing gas-guzzling cars where possible with energy-efficient vehicles, expanding opportunities for public use of mass transit, exploring a fuel cooperative, and recycling in county buildings.

We're also installing motion-activated light sensors that turn lights on and off based on usage

and replacing higher-wattage light bulbs with bulbs that are energy efficient. In addition, we're taking simple steps like making sure lights and computers are turned off at the end of the day and setting thermostats at temperatures that will increase energy conservation.

Community efforts include an electronic equipment recycling event at PNC Field and accelerated efforts to educate our residents about recycling, composting and energy efficient living. We plan to encourage energy conservation planning in land use, development and transportation planning, as well as emphasize green construction methods like using recycled building materials and the recycling of building waste materials.

By working together, we can make a difference and ensure that our children will enjoy a greener tomorrow.

Educating Emergency Services Personnel

Lackawanna County will offer local firefighters and emergency management services line officers a chance to update their skills and learn more about the latest emergency equipment available at the first Fire/EMS Line Officers Educational Conference.

The conference will be held Saturday, October 11, 2008, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Lackawanna County Center for Public Safety, 30 Valley View Business Park, Jessup.



The free event will feature guest speakers, educational courses and vendor presentations. Refreshments will be provided.

For more information, call the center at 570-307-7300.

County Schedules Flu Shots

Lackawanna County's Area Agency on Aging will hold its 2008 Influenza Clinics from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. as follows: Oct. 2, Jewish Community Center; Oct. 3, West Scranton Senior Community Center; Oct. 6, Dunmore Community Center; Oct. 8, Jefferson Township Senior Community Center; Oct. 9, Carbondale Senior Community Center; Oct. 14, Abington Senior Community Center; Oct. 15, Downtown Senior Community Center; Oct. 16, North Pocono Senior Community Center; Oct. 17, Mid Valley Senior Community Center; Oct. 24, South Scranton Senior Community Center; Oct. 30, Taylor Satellite Senior Community Center. For more information, call the Area Agency on Aging at 570-963-6740.

Get Ready to Vote

Lackawanna County voters can find a one-stop shop to answer their questions about the November 4, 2008 general election at www.votespa.com. The state website includes important dates, voting system demonstrations, polling place locations and hours, forms and applications, and more.

Voter registration forms mailed to the Lackawanna County Department of Elections must be postmarked or dropped off at the office by October 6, 2008. Absentee ballots must be received by the elections department by 5 p.m. on October 31, 2008.

For more information, or to inquire about serving as an election day worker, contact the Department of Elections, 135 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503, at 570-963-6737.

Combating Teen Substance Abuse

Fall kicks off a host of substance abuse awareness programs sponsored by Lackawanna County that are designed to keep our teens drug, tobacco and alcohol free. Programs include: Afterschool Student 12-Step Recovery/Enrichment Support Group, the Red Ribbon Campaign from October 17 through October 31, 2008 and anti-binge drinking efforts on college and university campuses in Lackawanna County.

For more information on these and other programs, call 570-963-6820.



Scranton Cultural Center Receives County Funds

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak presented the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple with a check for \$250,000 on Thursday, April 10, 2008. The money is from a 1-mill county tax that is dedicated to arts and culture.

"We're pleased to assist the Scranton Cultural Center in its mission to bring the arts to the people of Lackawanna County," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said.

"It's an integral part of our budget," Mr. Flynn said of the county money. "Without this, the Scranton Cultural Center would be on a very limited operation."

First row from left: Nada Gilmartin, Scranton Cultural Center board member; Commissioner Washo; Matthew Flynn, Scranton Cultural Center executive director; Commissioner O'Brien; and Erin Speicher, Scranton Cultural Center staff.

Second row from left: Maureen McGuigan, Lackawanna County deputy director of arts and culture; Laurie Cadden, Scranton Cultural Center staff; and Commissioner Munchak.

did you know?

LaPlume Township was the birthplace of baseball great Christy Mathewson.

innovation starts here

Gentex Optics: Carbondale

Innovation is not just a buzz word at one Lackawanna County business whose multinational French parent company, Essilor, is on the cutting edge of technology.

Gentex Optics produces polycarbonate lens products for prescription, sun ware, military and safety use. The company employs a highly technical skilled workforce of 250 that takes pride in producing the highest quality optical lenses in the industry. Led by Operations Manager Donny Long, the manufacturing facility has received numerous supplier awards and has the distinction of being recognized as a "Best in Class" operation.

In addition, Gentex Optics supports various community groups including the United Way of Lackawanna County, Friends of the Poor, the Greater Carbondale YMCA, Friendship House and others.

Essilor, the world's leading spectacle lens manufacturer with factories in seven countries and subsidiaries in over 40 countries, owns the largest and most comprehensive optical laboratory network in the United States. Its technologies offer the possibility of "Seeing the World Better" – the company's slogan.

Company executives from around the world enjoyed a visit to Lackawanna County this summer, during which they were treated to a Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees game hosted by the Lackawanna County Commissioners.

To learn more about Gentex, please visit www.essilor.com



in mcdade park Bald Mountain Road, Scranton

County residents have even more recreation options at McDade Park with the addition this summer of a new pavilion, new children's play area, and a new soccer field complete with nearby renovated restrooms.

The pavilion, which seats 150 people, was designed to complement the park's existing pavilion by using West Mountain yellow stone pillars.

Overlooking the children's fishing pond and arboretum, the pavilion is also next to the new children's play area, which features a multi-slide climbing apparatus and swings. Deputy Director for Parks and Recreation, Bill Davis, recommends making reservations for the already popular facility during the winter for summer and weekend dates.

The soccer field was made possible through a private donation from Hank Evanish. The field allows the park to develop programs for the popular sport, starting this past summer with a soccer clinic for children ages 8 to 12. Lackawanna College also will use the field for its soccer program.

Mr. Davis and his staff are starting to spruce up the park in other ways. They are putting a fresh coat of paint on park buildings and overgrown landscaping beds are getting new plants.

Built in the 1970s, McDade Park was the first recreation area in the country to be constructed on reclaimed strip mine lands. The 200-acre park also features an Olympic-size outdoor swimming pool, picnic spots, a softball field, hiking trails, basketball and tennis courts, and a 1.8 mile cross country running course. The county hosts various events at the park including the popular Lackawanna County Commissioners' Annual Children's Fishing Derby. For more information, contact the park office at 570-963-6764.

Photo: Commissioner Michael J. Washo, Commissioner Corey D. O'Brien and Deputy Director for Parks & Recreation Bill Davis unveil the new multislide climbing apparatus.



Lackawanna County Attraction Hours



Lackawanna County Visitors Center and Whistle Stop Shoppe

99 Glenmaura National Boulevard, Scranton
1-800-22-WELCOME
Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour

McDade Park, Scranton
570-963-6463
Tours daily 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. from April 1 through Nov. 30. Closed Thanksgiving Day.

Electric City Trolley Museum

Cliff Street on the grounds of the Steamtown National Historic Site, Scranton
570-963-6590
Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through October 31. Open Wednesday through Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. after October 31. Closed Christmas, New Years Day and Thanksgiving.

in the spotlight

Purchasing Deputy Director Keeps Eye on Spending

Purchasing Deputy Director James McLaine is making private sector accountability practices work for county government.

Shortly after joining the Washo-O'Brien Administration in January 2008, Mr. McLaine, the former purchasing director for R.H. Donnelley, Inc. helped craft the first-ever written county policies and procedures for bidding, vehicle use and business travel. Clearly outlining the bidding

process ensures taxpayers are getting the best price when items are purchased. Developing a vehicle use and travel policy provides county employees with a concrete set of rules to reduce the risk of accidents and makes sure appropriate laws are followed. For example, employees who take county cars to and from work will now have to document that personal driving time in a vehicle log.

"In the past, policies might have been unclear," Mr. McLaine said. "Now, they are clarified, and we are sure that we are complying with state and county regulations."

It's all about getting the best value for county taxpayers.



in our past

In 1886, the city of Scranton welcomed innovation in the form of its electric trolley system. Scranton became the first city in the United States to have a street car system built to run on electric power. Creation of the system earned Scranton its nickname, "The Electric City".

The initial trolley line ran between central Scranton and the Green Ridge section. In 1903, a "third rail" rail line was built to connect Scranton to Wilkes-Barre. This high-speed line was more commonly known as the Laurel Line. The "third rail" was an electrically charged rail that ran the length of the track. The rail replaced the electrical cables that were typically suspended above the cars.



By the 1950s, use of other energy sources reduced demand for the rail system. The Laurel Line shut down in 1952. The trolley system closed in December of 1954, giving way entirely to buses as public transportation.

The Electric City Trolley Museum was established in 2000 in order to acknowledge and celebrate the history of this innovative transportation system.

in your town

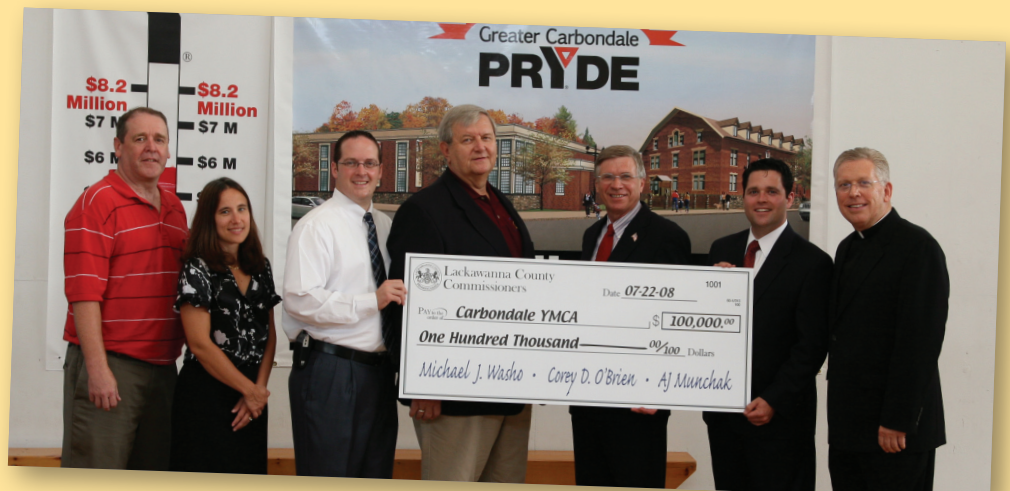
Commissioners Back Carbondale YMCA Capital Campaign

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak recently appropriated \$100,000 for the Carbondale YMCA's Capital Campaign.

The \$8.2 million capital campaign will more than double the YMCA's space by connecting the facility's two existing buildings and constructing additional space. Improvements include a new pool with a ramp, slide and fountain; an elevator and ramp to make the building handicapped accessible; a teen center; new locker rooms; and a new baby-sitting room. The additional space will allow the YMCA to expand its wellness, day care and teen programs.

Photo: Lackawanna County Commissioners join with YMCA and Carbondale officials to present \$100,000 for the facility's capital campaign.

From left: Steve Durkin, YMCA executive director; Christine Tocki-Mulvey, Carbondale community development director; Carbondale Mayor Justin M. Taylor; Commissioner A.J. Munchak; Commissioner Michael J. Washo; Commissioner Corey D. O'Brien; and Monsignor Joseph Quinn, YMCA capital campaign honorary chairman.



information

:: Airport
(570) 602-2000

:: Adult Probation
(570) 963-6876

:: Arts & Culture
(570) 963-6590

:: Area Agency on Aging
(570) 963-6740

:: Assessors
(570) 963-6728

:: Child Care
Information Services
(570) 963-6644

:: Children & Youth
(570) 963-6781

:: Coal Mine Tour
(570) 963-6463

:: COLTS
(570) 346-2061

:: Commissioners' Office
(570) 963-6800

:: Controller
(570) 963-6726

:: Coordinated Transportation
(570) 963-6795

:: Court Administrator
(570) 963-6773

:: District Attorney
(570) 963-6717

:: Domestic Relations
(570) 963-6721

:: Drug & Alcohol
Commission
(570) 963-6820

:: Emergency Services
911

:: Housing Authority
(570) 342-7629

:: Human Resources
(570) 963-6771

:: Judicial Records
(570) 963-6723 - Civil
(570) 963-6759 - Criminal

:: Juvenile Probation
(570) 963-6887

:: Nursing Home
(570) 489-8611

:: Parks & Recreation
(570) 963-6764

:: Penn State
Cooperative Extension
(570) 963-6842

:: Planning & Economic
Development
(570) 963-6830

:: PNC Field
(570) 969-2255

:: Public Defender
(570) 963-6761

:: Purchasing
(570) 963-6767

:: Recorder of Deeds
(570) 963-6775

:: Recycling
(570) 963-2017

:: Register of Wills
(570) 963-6702

:: Roads & Bridges
(570) 496-7733

:: Sheriff
(570) 963-6719

:: Tax Claims
(570) 963-6734

:: Toyota Pavilion
(570) 961-9000

:: Treasurer
(570) 963-6731

:: Trolley Museum
(570) 963-6590

:: Veterans' Affairs
(570) 963-6778

:: Visitors' Bureau
(570) 963-6363

:: Voter Registration
(570) 963-6737

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