

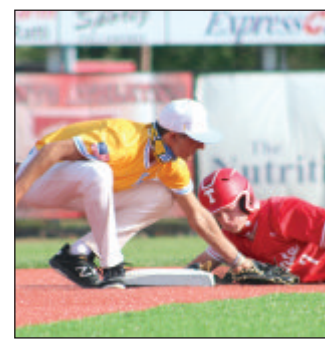
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\$1.00



• **INSIDE:**
Toronto walking on sunshine.
— Page 1B

Former school site eyed by retailer

By **LINDA HARRIS**
Staff writer

STUEBENVILLE — Urban Projects Director Chris Petrossi told council Tuesday the nationally known retailer eyeing the old Grant School site before the pandemic is back in the picture.

Petrossi said the company, which has never been identified, "put (its) search on hold for the pandemic but they're back, actively looking at the community again."
In October 2019 — before the pandemic — council agreed to rezone the property to central business district (B-1),

paving the way for that unidentified retail developer to come forward with plans for the 0.94-acre site.
Petrossi said a one-acre site is the developer's sweet spot.
"They want to be downtown," Petrossi said. "We are working with that company

again."
Petrossi's comments came after 1st Ward Councilwoman Asantewa Anyabwile renewed concerns over the lack of grocery stores in walking distance to the city's downtown population.
Anyabwile said several council members, herself

included, have tried to interest grocery chains or mom-and-pop operations in opening a store downtown, but suggested council "get together as a committee to address it, because we're always stronger in numbers."
See **SITE** Page 5A ⇨

A bridge timeline...

June 2000: A BHI-commissioned study presents evidence supporting the need for a new bridge.

August 2005: U.S. Sens. Robert C. Byrd and Jay Rockefeller, both D-W.Va., secure \$18 million for planning and initial construction for the bridge.

November 2013: The Federal Highway Administration issues a Finding of No Significant Impact after studying environmental and other impacts of establishing a new bridge.

July 2016: The Flatiron Corp. of Broomfield, Colo., is selected to build the bridge after submitting a bid of \$131 million, the lowest of three received for the project.

July 2018: A groundbreaking ceremony is held in a lot behind the Wellsburg Smith Oil gas station, where crews later established an assembly yard for the bridge's 830-foot-long main span.

April 27, 2021: Crews transport the main span down river to the bridge's future site and lift it 80 feet into the air and onto its piers.

January 1998: The BHI Metropolitan Planning Commission names a new Ohio River crossing its top transportation improvement goal.

September 2003: A BHI advisory committee of public officials and citizens select a general area south of Wellsburg and near Brilliant as the best site for the span.

August 2012: Public meetings are held at Wellsburg Middle School and Buckeye North Elementary School to accept comments on proposed sites around the two communities.

January 2015: The West Virginia and Ohio departments of transportation agree on the division of costs for the bridge, with West Virginia to provide 65 percent and Ohio, 35 percent.

November 2016: Officials announce the span will have a tied arch, or bowstring, design.

December 2018: Crews begin construction near Ohio Route 7 of a temporary trestle from which they will build piers for the future bridge. A trestle near West Virginia Route 2 follows.

Fall 2022: Following completion of the bridge's 60-foot-wide deck and approaches on both sides of the river, the bridge is expected to be completed.

Photo by Joe Lovell
Information by Warren Scott
Graphic by Michael D. McElwain

Development of new bridge was a journey in itself

By **WARREN SCOTT**
Staff writer

WELLSBURG — Delivery of the 830-foot main span of the new Ohio River bridge to its piers between state Routes 2 and 7 occurred within 12 hours, but the journey to the project's development involved many individuals who pushed and worked to make it a reality.

While there's still more work to be done, with the span slated for completion in fall 2022, past and present local officials have been reflecting on the legwork that led up to this point.

"These are once-in-a-life-time things," said Mike Paprocki, executive director of the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission, who noted his children have grown since the bridge was made a top transportation goal by the regional planning commission.

Paprocki was a transportation study director under then executive director John Brown at the time.

"It's the culmination of a lot of hard work," said former Brooke County commissioner Norm Schwertfeger. He recalled Brown, soon after his hiring by BHI in 1998, coming to the county commission to ask their priorities.

Schwertfeger said he and others suggested a bridge between the southern ends of Brooke and Jefferson counties, an idea that had been talked about for decades; and he was recruited to chair BHI's first committee to pursue it.

Paprocki said the project became timelier as the Market Street Bridge, built in 1905; the Fort Steuben Bridge, constructed in 1928; and even the Veterans Memorial Bridge, completed in 1991; at the time each underwent major repairs.

While the latter span was expected to stand for many more years, the possibility of

the next closest river crossings north or south being 25 miles away became very real, Paprocki said.

Paprocki noted the concerns later proved valid as the Fort Steuben Bridge was demolished in 2012, though the Market Street Bridge gained a new lease on life through major renovations in 2011.

Schwertfeger said response to the idea at the northern end of Brooke County was cool initially.

"It didn't happen at a time when everybody was jumping up and down about a bridge," he said.

Schwertfeger said it may have been because the

proposed new span was seen by some as a potential replacement for the Market Street Bridge.

But Paprocki said officials with the West Virginia and Ohio departments of transportation saw the benefits of another Ohio River bridge and their joint support helped to propel the project.

He noted both departments funded two studies commissioned by BHI to determine the need for the bridge and identify the best locations for it years before they agreed to split the \$131 million cost for the span's construction 65-35.

See **BRIDGE** Page 5A ⇨

Mingo officials asking for patience during road work

By **ANDREW GRIMM**
Staff writer

MINGO JUNCTION — Work on village streets as part of the storm sewer separation project has drawn the ire of residents.

Early in Tuesday night's council meeting, Mayor Ed Fithen informed council and village administrator Bob Smith that he has been receiving complaints about the condition of the streets being worked on as part of the project, both by phone and in-person around town.

"I get the calls," Fithen said. "When I'm out and about, it's everywhere you go. People are asking time frames."

Smith asked residents to be patient while the work continues, noting he himself has experienced driving on the roads and understands the frustration.

"I know it's an inconvenience," he said. "I understand. I ask people to please be patient. This is part of what had to be done."

The project is to separate the village's storm sewer lines from sewer lines, which was mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency. It is funded by a zero-interest loan through the EPA.

Smith said the anticipated completion date is the end of May to beginning of June.

Fithen acknowledged the project is one that should have happened sooner and had to be done.

Smith told council the pavement that has been torn out cannot be replaced until the curbs are replaced, a process he said that was supposed to start last week.

He said asphalt was not available until April 12.

See **MINGO** Page 5A ⇨

Bridge name, illegal dumping concern commissioners

By **WARREN SCOTT**
Staff writer

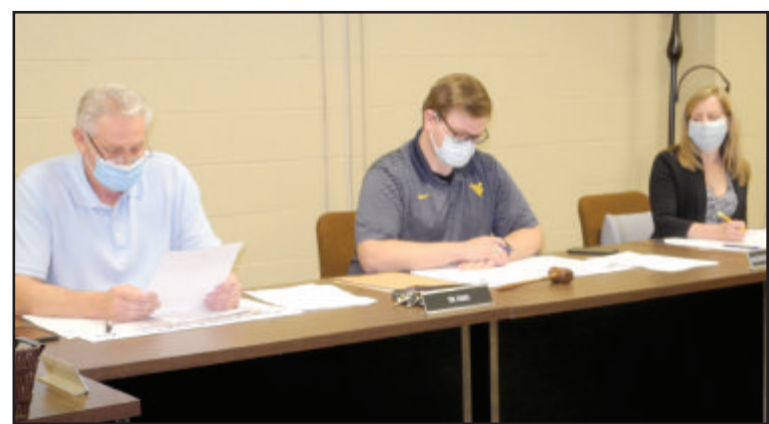
WELLSBURG — The Brooke County Commission turned its attention to a potential name for the new Ohio River bridge and the recurring problem of illegal dumping.

County Commissioner Tim Ennis said at Tuesday's meeting that the recent transport of the future bridge's main span to its piers between Brilliant and an area a mile south of Wellsburg inspired him to consider a name for the span.

While noting the name ultimately will be determined by the West Virginia Legislature, he suggested the span be dubbed the Pioneer Bridge.

Ennis acknowledged the bridge is slated to include a bicycle path that will lead to the Brooke County Pioneer Trail below, but he said that's not the only motive to name it as such.

"What we saw yesterday was a pioneering marvel of engineering," he said, alluding to a process in which the 4,100-ton main span was carried by four



Warren Scott

WHAT'S IN A NAME? — The Brooke County Commission discussed a possible name for the new Ohio River bridge on Tuesday, noting it will rest ultimately with the West Virginia Legislature.

barges and lifted onto the piers using hydraulic jacks.

But Ennis said that also isn't the only reason behind the name.

He noted the definition of pioneer, as a verb, is "to develop or be first to use or apply a new method, area of knowledge or activity."

Ennis and his fellow commissioners said the bridge can serve as inspiration to them

See **CONCERN** Page 5A ⇨

COVID-19 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death for confirmed COVID-19 coronavirus cases. The following symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, call your health care provider for medical advice.

CONFIRMED CASES

- **Jefferson County:** 5,425 (150 deaths)
- **Harrison County:** 1,079 (24 deaths)
- **Hancock County:** 2,735 (87 deaths)
- **Brooke County:** 2,143 (59 deaths)
- **Ohio:** 897,574 (19,188 deaths)
- **West Virginia:** 151,848 (2,662 deaths)

INSIDE TODAY



McKay tosses 13-strikeout perfect game

Page 1B

SOUND OFF

Today's question is:
Did you fill out a U.S. Census form?

Tuesday's question:
Did you watch the Wellsburg Bridge float down the Ohio River?

Yes 21%
No 79%

Log onto heraldstaronline.com before 9 p.m. today to cast your vote.

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Bridge

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Joe Lovell

WATCHING THE MOVE — Many people gathered near Third Street in Brilliant to observe as the 4,100-ton main span of the new Ohio River bridge was lifted, with hydraulic jacks, onto its piers between state Routes 2 and 7. Many individuals were involved in the steps that brought the project to that point.

Paprocki recalled being accompanied by four representatives of the West Virginia Department of Transportation when he pitched the project to Ohio's Transportation Review and Advisory Council in Columbus.

He said each presentation was given a time limit, with a simulated traffic signal serving as the timer.

"When it turned yellow, you had two minutes left. But when I was talking and it turned red, they gave me another 20 minutes to talk about it," Paprocki said.

He said Jerry Wray, state director of ODOT; and Lloyd MacAdam, deputy district director of ODOT; were strong supporters.

Paprocki said afterwards, he told the advisory committee for the bridge study, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's no guarantee, but this is promising."

He said the project gained further momentum when U.S. Sens. Robert C. Byrd and Jay Rockefeller, both D-W.Va., allocated \$18 million for its planning and initial construction.

Schwertfeger recalled accompanying Brown and others on visits to the senators and other representatives in Congress to seek support for various projects.

"That (the bridge) was always part of our conversations," he said, adding, "It was because of the influence we had in Congress at the time that we were able to pull it off."

"I just take a lot of pride in having played a part in it," said Schwertfeger.

Paprocki said, "I guess in reflection, it is exciting. How many people can say, you advocated for something like that and it came to fruition? Yeah, it's exciting."

Site

Continued from Page 1A

Sixth Ward Councilman Bob Villamagna said he'd contacted "probably half a dozen chains." "Everybody I called said the same thing, the market ... is too small," he said.

After the first reading of an ordinance that would amend the rules of public forum — giving townspeople who wish to address council until noon Tuesday to sign up — Anyabwile proposed giving residents another hour.

Anyabwile reminded her fellow council members she's been pushing the idea of amending the rules for months, but an ordinance she sponsored to repeal the existing public forum rules was tabled indefinitely March 30 for lack of support. Her proposal had called for creating new rules, but none had been drafted prior to the measure being brought to the council floor.

At last week's meeting, Villamagna and three other members — Second Ward Councilman Craig Petrella, Third Ward Councilman Eric Timmons and Fifth Ward Councilman Willie Paul — proposed the noon

deadline. "We had a meeting a couple (weeks) ago," she said. "I took notes, took into consideration all suggestions ... Some us still believe there should be no sign ups, some said (set a sign-up deadline) for noon, someone even said Monday."

"I didn't know there was such a rush that (a proposal) had to be presented last week by Mr. Villamagna because I was the one that wanted (a change)."

She proposed amending Villamagna's amendment to set the deadline at 1 p.m., saying working people might not be able to get there by noon.

"When someone has an issue or question, that issue needs to be addressed," she said.

Timmons reminded Anyabwile the charter allows the mayor the freedom to recognize anyone he wants to, signed up or not.

"He can call on anyone during the meeting he wants to. If you don't sign in by (noon), you can just come to the meeting and the mayor can call on you."

"He could but he might not," Councilwoman at large Kimberly Hahn said. "If they sign up, it's pretty much guaranteed."

Villamagna said in the past, the mayor has recognized residents who haven't signed up, as has council during committee meetings.

"He's done it before, we've done it," he said. "I don't really understand the amendment."

Dressel seconded Anyabwile's amendment to Villamagna's amendment, saying, "Let's vote on it and see what happens," but her amendment was rejected by a 3-4 vote.

Petrella, meanwhile, joined Anyabwile in complaining about properties littered with garbage and high grass, and asked if anyone keeps track of problem properties.

"I believe the Litter Control Officer has that information," Petrossi said.

Petrella said he wants to make sure it's a "perpetual list, not a one-time-shot list that we have to reinvent every year."

He also said they need to keep updating the list of city

properties deemed demolition worthy, "so we can start addressing that."

"We need to start chipping away at that list," he said. "Once we get the financial reports in and know what money is available, the time frames, we can hire seasonal help (to mow and clear lots). I want to make sure we keep this at the forefront and don't slide back."

At Law Director Costa Mastros's request, council tabled for two weeks an ordinance that would convey two parcels to the Jefferson County Port Authority, which in turn would sell them to Franciscan University of Steubenville.

FUS is considering changing its campus access, but to do it university officials say they'd need a 10-foot strip of land next to Super 8 as well as another small parcel on Franklin Avenue near Capri Sausage Shop.

Mastros said he just finished the deeds and the agreements between city and port and university, "now they're in (their) hands."

He said the other entities will probably have some

minor changes, and the delay is a chance "to iron out those minor details."

Council voted 7-0 to proceed with the demolition of properties at 100 Harding, 1228 Tweed, 1317 and 1319 Wellesley, 634 N. Fifth St. and 841 Lincoln.

Second readings were heard of ordinances reclassifying properties the Diocese of Steubenville owns at 3100 St. Charles Drive and 200 Rosemont/100 Etta Avenue to public and semi-public.

Council approved the city's participation in the ODOT road salt contracts for 2021. It was scheduled for its first reading, but because of timing issues council decided to waive the rules and allow the second and third readings to proceed.

Paul moved the start time of the May 4 safety committee meeting to 6 p.m. to allow time for council to discuss hiring a dog warden/police officer and large commercial trucks parking on city streets.

He also scheduled a finance committee meeting for 6 p.m. May 11.

Concern

Continued from Page 1A

He said Brooke County has seen a steady decline in residents in recent years and currently has a population of about 21,000. Thomas said new approaches are needed to reverse that trend.

"We need to be pioneers so why not start fresh with that moment?" he said of the bridge's development.

County Commissioner Stacey Wise said the panel is hopeful its future establishment of a judicial annex to house all of the county's courts and staff, planned for the corners of Sixth and Main streets, also will help to

spur interest in the city and county.

She noted the commission awaits approval by the state Supreme Court of plans for the court facilities, which fall under its jurisdiction.

"Hopefully it will be a domino effect for more people to come to Brooke County," Wise said, adding staff with the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission is exploring avenues to secure more funds for infrastructural improvements in the county.

Wise said one way residents can encourage

development is by abstaining from and deterring illegal dumping.

She said she and the other commissioners joined Brooke County Sheriff Rich Beatty and Follansbee Police Chief Larry Rea in investigating three areas beneath the Veterans Memorial Bridge where things were illegally dumped.

The items ranged from a hot tub and a toilet to children's clothing still bearing the tags, which Thomas said was saddening because it could have been donated to a local charity.

"We just want to make

it known we're going to work really hard against it," Wise said while referring to illegal dumping and littering she said makes areas of the county an eyesore.

Thomas added the sheriff's department has been encouraged to issue the highest fines for such actions. He acknowledged the recent collection of litter along Cross Creek Road by the Brooke High School chapter of Skills USA and other volunteer efforts.

County officials noted all residents are required under state law to pay for garbage collection and

may dump trash at the Brooke County Landfill, a private business in Colliers, on the last business day of each month.

In other business, Larry Swanson, a former leader of the Brooke County Economic Development Authority, told the commission the group has reorganized as an independent, nonprofit

group called Ohio Valley Business Alliance Inc.

He said it includes many of the same members who will work to promote economic development in Brooke County as well as all counties from Hancock to Wetzel.

(Scott can be contacted at wscott@heraldstaronline.com.)

Mingo

Continued from Page 1A

Smith, during his report, noted that the village is anticipating receiving approximately \$630,000 in funding from the American Rescue Plan, though exact details about how the funds can be spent are not yet known. He said he's attending a virtual seminar about the funds later this week. He would like to use it to further improve the roads if possible.

Another re-occurring topic brought up was the lack of applicants for positions at the village pool. As of now, the village has received no applications for a park manager and only four applicants for life guard.

It was noted that the positions are not limited to village residents.

During the discussion, Councilwoman Jody Fitzgerald said other pools in the area are struggling with similar staffing issues and may have trouble opening, though village clerk

James Huggins noted Follansbee's pool has been able to find guards.

Village solicitor Ernie Wilson suggested offering to reimburse applicants the cost of the life guard certification class if they work a certain number of hours over the course of the summer.

A suggestion to look at increasing the pay for the park manager position could be looked at to attract applicants.

It was also noted the village is advertising for a full time and part time police officers, a truck driver for the village garage and Fithen is going to meet with Fire Chief Brandon Montgomery about hiring a full-time firefighter.

Also noteworthy:

■ During his report, Montgomery informed council that Brilliant Assistant Fire Chief Gary Fellows died recently after more than 50 years of service as a firefighter. Montgomery said that 12-

15 firefighters from his department have volunteered their time to cover Brilliant during the viewing and funeral services today and tomorrow.

"We have always helped each other," Montgomery said, noting Brilliant has done it for the village in the past. "It is something we do. We have 12-15 people donating their time wanting to help them out."

"While (Brilliant's firefighters) are going to the funeral and visitation, they shouldn't have to worry about (calls). We're going to cover their calls and ours. We're going down there to help them."

He noted to council due to the firefighters donating their time, it will not be an expense to the village.

"It's really cool you guys do that," Fitzgerald said.

■ Waste water treatment plant operator Kyle Moffatt informed Smith and members of council

new pumps are operational at the plant but have experienced issues. Smith advised that now that he's aware, he will contact the contractor.

■ Councilman Jack Brettell, who serves on the recreation committee, told Fithen he will provide a list of needed equipment for the village's parks by the end of the week. Fitzgerald volunteered to help inspect at least two of the parks to assist with the report.

■ Jeffrey Schuetz presented council with dates for the return of the village's concert series. Concerts will take place from 6-8 p.m. on May 24, June 7 and 14 and July 19 and 26. An artist is needed for the concert on May 24. There also will be a car show from 1-4 p.m. on May 30 with food available.

■ It was noted the village received a compliment from a resident about how hard the village employees work.

BRIEFS

Cross Creek cleanup set

WINTERSVILLE — The Cross Creek Township 2021 tire collection and community cleanup is set for 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Thursday, and the collection will be held at the Township Garage, 1267 Cadiz Road.

Items accepted include:

■ Old household items, appliances, furniture, carpet, car batteries, household batteries and toys.

■ Standard car and light truck tires (tire Requirements - under 54 inches in height and 16 inches in width and no heavy accumulation of water or dirt).

Not accepted:

■ Mattresses, box springs, electronics or paints.

■ Liquids or hazardous waste materials.

Church to sell ramp dinners

COLLIERS — Olde St. John's Episcopal Church, at the intersection of Eldersville and St. John's roads, will be selling ramp dinners to go from noon Saturday until they are sold out.

The cost is \$10 for each dinner, which will include ham and bean soup and cornbread, both cooked with the wild leeks known as ramps; a home-made cookie and a booklet of ramp recipes and puzzles.

The church normally holds a yearly ramp dinner but is doing take-out only because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Edison school board to meet

RICHMOND — The Edison Local Board of Education will have a special meeting at 1 p.m. Thursday.

The purpose of this meeting is to approve a contract for site electrical work, and the meeting will be held virtually via Google Meets.

Those who wish access to the meeting can contact the Edison Local Schools District office for login information at (740) 282-0065 ext. 1100.