

REGIONAL REVIEW

Volume 1, Issue 2

Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson
Metropolitan Planning Commission

June 2001

BHJ Annual Awards Dinner Slated for June: Three Local Representatives To Be Honored

The essence of regional decision making is committed officials and citizens. We are privileged to acknowledge these award recipients during our annual dinner. While others may question our economic future, these individuals are carving that future. They are leaders with an inherent public purpose," said BHJ Executive Director John Brown.

Three area leaders will be honored during the Third Annual BHJ Awards Dinner on June 20th at Williams County Club in Weirton.

2001 Public Service Award Recipient



West Virginia State Senator Edwin Bowman will be honored during the dinner for his long-time public service contributions. The Public Service Award recognizes leaders

who have furthered regional and community development planning.

A former City of Weirton Mayor, and now W. Va. State Senator, Mr. Bowman's efforts have created regional job opportunities throughout the Northern Panhandle.

Mr. Bowman has been an active participant in many public-private organizations such as the Business Development Corporation of the Northern Panhandle, the Weirton Housing Authority and the Hancock County Sheltered Workshop. His contributions to each of these organi-

zations have created regional investments through financial seed programs.

Mr. Bowman has been an essential and lead contributor to water and sewer planning in Brooke and Hancock counties. Through legislative funding of the Brooke-Hancock Water and Sewer Facilities Plan in Fiscal Year 2000, a document that stands as the priority infrastructure plan for these counties, has improved public health and created job opportunities.

2001 Special Recognition Award Recipient

The second award will acknowledge Mr. Domenick Mucci, Jr. for his outstanding contributions that have advanced the cause of regional planning.

Mr. Mucci, as the Mayor of the City of Steubenville and past four-time chairman for the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission's Policy Board, has not only advanced regional communication and joint deci-



sion-making, but is also known as a grass roots leader with a regional role in agencies such as Alliance 2000, BHJ and the Ohio Governor Taft's Urban Revitalization Task Force.

Mr. Mucci has been an untiring participant and voice in the need for regional job creation through road improvements, port development and bridge infrastructure improvements.

"From the creation of the Dean Martin Festival in Steubenville to the leveraging of funds for Steubenville's South End Project, Mr. Mucci has been a driving force behind community investment," stated BHJ Executive Director John Brown.

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From the Executive Director

Welcome to the Summer edition of *BHJ's Regional Review*.

I've heard more local officials use the term "regionalism" as a solution to local problems.



In the case of the recent POWER (Pennsylvania-Ohio-West Virginia Economic Region), three co-chairs (West Virginia Senator Ed Bowman, Columbiana County Commissioner Shawn Logan and Pennsylvania House Delegate Mike Veon) held a tri-state steel summit in late May to illustrate the importance of its residence and steel. For every steel job, four other jobs are created.

The ongoing port development discussion has consolidated a regional theme. Over the past year, three regional meetings have been held to clarify the purpose and need of economic diversification through a stronger use of the Ohio River. Regional sites such as Brown's Island have filtered to the top of the site selection process.

In 1994, the cities of Steubenville and Weirton prepared a joint federal empowerment zone application for a comprehensive tax incentive and local match program to encourage job development. While the application was a federal finalist, the joint effort was denied. A local advisory committee is considering a similar application for fiscal year 2002.

In summary, numerous driving forces have provided a beckoning call for an increased regional alliance. Key to this strategy are the following factors.

- *Because individual local governments lack the capacity or resources to address some issues, certain challenges are addressed better at a regional scale.*
- *Conserving resources at a regional scale makes economic sense. Inefficient transportation patterns directly affect future regional growth and economic development efforts.*

A hard look at recent economic trends for the three-county region illustrates many challenges and a need to seek creative solutions and provide a proactive response. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research for West Virginia University in its "Steubenville-Weirton Metropolitan Statistical Area Outlook" (May 2001), states

"The forecast for the region depends on the outlook for the national and international economies. If the U.S. avoids recession during the 2000-2005 period, that gives the region a solid foundation on which to build. However, regional growth is likely to be very slow and to fall well short of state and national growth rates."

This is not new news. There is a regional recognition that now, not later, is the time to build upon past successes and pursue further solutions. From brownfield development and the recycling of prime industrial property to the designation of free-trade zones and the creation of job diversification through port expansion, we have new partnerships to be made.

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Blasting Underway Along State Route 7 In Jefferson County : FHWA Approves Emergency Funding

Relief is on the way for motorists traveling along State Route 7 between Steubenville and Mingo Junction as blasting began to correct a failing slope along that stretch of road in Jefferson County.

After months of restricted southbound lane traffic between Steubenville and Mingo Junction, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved approximately \$2.7 million of emergency funds to repair the deteriorating slope.

Kokosing Construction Company Inc., from Fredericktown, OH, performed the first blast necessary for the excavation of the hillside on May 17 delaying traffic for

a short period of time. The delay provided the necessary safety requirements as well as time for needed cleanup. ODOT has worked feverishly since January to prepare construction plans to restore



the hillside. According to ODOT District 11 Deputy Director Myron Pakush the project is approximately 800 feet in length

and will include the excavation of approximately 350,000 yards of rock. A small retaining wall will be constructed at the toe of the slope to provide a future catchment area. The existing pavement will be milled and filled with asphalt when completed.

In late January, crossover construction got underway to move one-lane traffic into the northbound passing lane. Traffic has remained in this pattern, one-lane in both directions, throughout the construction phase of the hillside according to ODOT officials.

The project is expected to be completed and all four-lanes of SR 7 traffic reopened by mid-July 2001.

Multi-Million Dollar Construction Project Underway at Jefferson County Airpark

The Jefferson County Airpark, located just south of Wintersville, OH, stands to gain a great deal once a multi-million dollar runway expansion project and the relocation of County Highway 33 (Fernwood Road) is completed.

Project Engineer for Richland Engineers Hermann Schwanner, said this project is a direct result from not being able to utilize



the existing runway to its full capacity because of the location of County Highway 33. "This project provides the necessary safety area needed to fully utilize this

runway.

Relocating the existing roadway provides two major benefits for the airpark. First, the airpark is not limited to future runway expansion and the road will never have to be relocated again. Secondly, this construction project provides the opportunity for future economic development on excess airport land," stated Schwanner.

The excess land Schwanner referenced is land purchased by the Airport Authority for the expansion/relocation project. Schwanner noted that the project did not require the use of all the land opening a window of opportunity for corporate business are interested in relocating within direct proximity to the airpark.

Major improvements were recently made to Runway 14/32. The reconstruction in-

cluded lengthening the runway to 3,500 feet and widening to 60 feet. Further improvements were made to the taxiway as well as the reconstruction of a new apron area.

Other notable projects in the last three years include the construction of a new terminal building, upgrade of Runway Protection Zone at approach end 14, and the installation of a visual-aid slope indicator at approach end 32.

Phase two of the project, site preparation and road relocation, is expected to be completed sometime in June. The third and final phase, paving of the roadway, is expected to be completed near the end of 2002.

The airpark currently serves as a Class III airpark.

BHJ Hosts Statewide Conference for Economic Development

On May 16 through May 18, the West Virginia Regional Planning and Development Council held its 11th annual conference at Mountaineer Race Track and Gaming Resort in Hancock County. Hosted by the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHJ), conference attendees heard an impressive array of speakers evaluate the changing structure of economic development in the mountain state.

Senator John R Unger II, from the 16th Senatorial District in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, called for an "enhanced vision of economic development" through the leadership of West Virginia's Legislature and the creation of a joint commission on economic development, as described in Senate Bill 716. Commonly referred to as the "Economic Competitiveness Act", Senator Unger, the principle author for Senate Bill 716, solicited support and comments from those attending regional council members during hearings. By late summer, Senator Unger expects to convene a special legislative session to explore the reorganization of government to deliver services, align the state tax system and support entrepreneurs by streamlining business regulations.

John Snider, executive director for the West Virginia Development Office (WVDO), provided insight on West Virginia's competitiveness and efforts to attract jobs. Touting recent marketing success, Director Snider stated, "I've been around the state development office for 20 plus years. Structure does not change the economy. It's the programs that count. Our programs have changed and responded. We used to have double digit employment. Now, we're at 5 percent. We're in the mix."

Mark Scott, president of the National Institute for Chemical Research and past deputy director for West Virginia's Department of Environmental Resources (WVDEP), pointedly illustrated West Virginia's lead program to clean up and redevelopment brownfield sites, the Brownfield Assistance Program. As a joint effort by the WVDEP and WVDO, the program has developed a brown fields database and will evolve into an initial revolving loan program of \$40 million. "Developable, flat and accessible land is at a premium in West Virginia. The Brownfield Assistance Program returns strategic parcels to the market place. A need of \$2.71 billion in water and sewer infrastructure is estimated throughout the state. The

Assistance Program, due to its renewal of key parcels adjacent to existing infrastructure, is cost competitive.



Mr. Ken Green (standing) President of the West Virginia Regional Planning and Development Council (WVRPDC) was one of the featured speakers at the WVRPD Conference held at Mountaineer Race Track & Gaming Resort in May. Seated next to is Mr. John Snider, executive director for the West Virginia Development Office.

In addition to legislative initiatives and challenges, conference attendees were offered a first-hand look at an impressive and emerging hotel conference center at Mountaineer. A top ten revenue source for the State of West Virginia, Mountaineer provides Hancock County with an estimated \$3.5 million in local dollars.

Rideshare Program Plans Transit Fair

September kicks off the annual Try-Transit Week Public Awareness Campaign. The BHJ Rideshare Program in cooperation with the Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority is planning to host a one-day transportation fair.

After nearly one year of surveying Jefferson County residents whose communities presently do not have access to transit services, BHJ and SVRTA in their transit expansion efforts are going to host a mock transit levy election during the fair.

SVRTA has agreed to provide the necessary transportation from the Wintersville, Toronto and Wells Township areas of the county for the one-day event. BHJ encourages all residents who are interested in bringing transit to their communities to plan on attending.

Additional information will be released as it becomes available.



2001 Regional Volunteer Award Recipient

Ms. Ruby Greathouse, the third award recipient, will be acknowledged for her outstanding efforts as a regional volunteer.

The BHJ Volunteer Award recognizes a volunteer who has willingly and enthusiastically given their time to the cause of regional planning and whose contribution has expanded community and regional opportunities.

Ms. Greathouse is the president of the Brooke Pioneer Trail Association, an organization dedicated to the completion of a pedestrian pathway and bikeway which parallels West Virginia State

Route 2 in Brooke County. With the assistance of BHJ staff, she has worked diligently to obtain federal transportation enhancement funds to improve the Brooke Trails.

Ms. Greathouse is a community energizer and holds multiple regional volunteer titles including membership in the Friends of Brooke County, Brooke County Genealogical Society, Brooke County Planning Commission, Northern Panhandle Resource Conservation District and the Tri-State Trails Connection Coalition.

“This award formally acknowledges the extraordinary volunteer efforts made by Ms. Greathouse as well as her pursuit to improve the quality of life in the Northern Panhandle,” stated BHJ Executive Director John Brown.

Ted Arneault To Speak at BHJ Annual Awards Dinner

Mr. Edson R. “Ted” Arneault is the featured guest speaker at the 2001 BHJ Third Annual Awards Dinner slated for June 20th at Williams County Club in Weirton.

Mr. Arneault serves as president and chief executive officer of Mountaineer Race Track & Gaming Resort, located in Chester, WV.

Arneault became CEO of Mountaineer in 1995, taking Mountaineer from a \$5.2 million operating loss in 1995 to an operating profit of \$34.9 million in 2000. MTR Gaming Group, Inc. was cited as the 45th fastest growing company in the United States by *Fortune Magazine* in both 1999 and 2000.

Arneault’s vision for Mountaineer includes creating a destination resort with the amenities and diverse entertainment offerings desired by an increasingly discerning public. A certified public accountant, licensed in Ohio and Michigan, Arneault earned his bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Bowling Green University and his master’s in Business Administration from Cleveland State University.

Believing that the region’s future is

vested in its ability to provide both educational and job opportunities for its youth, Arneault initiated the “Mountaineer Futures Scholarship Program.” This scholarship not only provides students at each of Hancock County’s three high schools with \$1,000 per year towards tuition, text and fees for each year of their degree program, and a job in their field of study during the summer.



Upon successful completion of the degree program, graduates are offered a full time job at Mountaineer. A summer youth employment program also provides jobs to high school and college students during summer months.

Arneault also brought the “Space is Special Program” to West Virginia. A program designed to build self-esteem and team building skills in at-risk and special youth, the Space is Special Program enabled 18 area students to participate in a 10-week preparatory space training program and subsequently attend space

camp in Huntsville, Alabama. Mountaineer teamed with the Pittsburgh Penguins to raise \$40,000 to fund the program. A second project spearheaded by Mountaineer will involve high school science students in protein crystal growth experiments for use in the NASA Space Center in Florida to observe their experiments being launched into space. Arneault serves on the Board of West Virginia Hospitality and Tourism Association; is a member of the Robert Morris College Hospitality and Tourism Management Board of Visitors and serves on the Board of Directors of the Center For Excellence in Workplace Education. He is a member of the West Virginia Business Roundtable, a select group of business leaders dedicated to promoting economic development in the State of West Virginia. He recently was recognized for his leadership and vision by being selected by the State Business Journal as one of eight outstanding business leaders in the State of West Virginia in 2000.

WTC and SVRTA Bridge The Transportation Gap: September Kicks Off New Transit Link

Weirton Transit Corporation (WTC) and Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority (SVRTA) will showcase a never-before transit link during the Nationally Recognized Try-Transit Week held annually in September.

Board members for the WTC and SVRTA approved motions to proceed with a transfer point after months of negotiating. The details surrounding the linkage are still sketchy at this time; however, both transit providers’ board of directors are working closely with one another to provide a safe, accessible and affordable transportation system linking the two cities together.



80-Year Old Bridge In Amsterdam Reopens

The Liberty Street Bridge, located in Amsterdam OH, was restored to its original 1928 form earlier this year. Restoration funds were provided by the Jefferson County Engineer’s Office, the Ohio Department of Transportation Bridge Fund and the BHJ Metropolitan Planning Commission.

The Bridge deck between the arches was glazed and waterproofed as well as a cast foot rail with newer posts on the outside of the



structure were installed.

The total cost of the improvements neared \$168,000. The BHJ allocation of \$15,000 is one of the agency’s first expenditures of federal TEA-21 Enhancement Grant funds. These funds, which originate from the Federal Highway Administration, have also generated sidewalk improvements in Wintersville and a streetscape project in Steubenville.

BHJ’s Transportation Study Prepares 2002-2007 Regional Transit Development Plan

BHJ’s Transportation Study is collecting data in conjunction with the planning of the 2002-2007 Regional Transit Development Plan. The intent of this study is to provide a broader vision and analysis of transit and transportation services within the BHJ region.

Every five years BHJ prepares a five-year short-range Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Steubenville-Weirton Metropolitan Area, the previous being the 1997-2001 TDP. This TDP primarily concentrated on two local transit providers in the BHJ region, Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority (SVRTA) and the Weirton Transit Corporation (WTC), and overviewed and analyzed the two transit providers in various components.

The 2002-2007 TDP will have a primary concentration on SVRTA and WTC. In addition, it will include and concentrate on CHANGE Inc. as a regional transit provider. Furthermore, it will provide a general review/inventory of other local transportation

services in the BHJ region.

Under the Urban Mass Transit Act of 1964, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is a principal source of federal financial assistance for planning and operating of mass transportation systems.

With limited federal and local resources, good planning is especially important to justify the need for programs and equipment and to analyze how transit and/or other transportation services be provided in a cost efficient manner while still providing a productive service for the community. As a Transportation Planning Organization, it is the responsibility of BHJ to provide such documentation for the region it serves.

A draft copy of the TDP is expected to be completed for review in mid-to-late August.

BHJ Clerk Retires After More Than 20-years of Service

After 20 years of service to the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission, Clerk Jill



Jill Morris

Morris retired from her duties. Miss Morris was honored for her contributions to the organization during a special reception held at the BHJ offices in March.

Local elected officials as well as representatives from the Ohio Department of Transportation and former BHJ employees gathered to celebrate Miss Morris's years of service.

BHJ Executive Director John Brown reorganized Miss Morris with a plaque in honor of her dedication to the planning organization over the years.

"Without a doubt, Jill was a loyal and dedicated employee of BHJ for many years. She will be sadly missed, and she

will always be an important part of BHJ's history. I, as I am sure the rest of the organization, wishes her well on her retirement.

Miss Morris expressed her deepest gratitude to not only present and past staff members but to BHJ funding agencies and local officials who have played a vital role in the daily operations of the organization over the year.

Miss Morris said she planned on using her retirement to get some much needed rest. She is residing with family in Steubenville.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

2001: Summer Regional Events

June 20 — BHJ Annual Awards Dinner; Williams County Club; Weirton, WV; \$22 6 p.m.

June 27 — Route 2 Discussion Group for Hancock County; Hancock County Courthouse; New Cumberland 9 a.m.

June 28 — Ohio Department of Transportation; Regional Project Review; State Director Gordon Proctor; Holiday Inn Steubenville; (a light lunch will be served.) 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

July 3 — BHJ Executive Committee; BHJ Conference Room; Steubenville Noon

July 19 — Business Development Corporation of the Northern Panhandle (BDC); Holiday Inn; Weirton 8 a.m.

August 1 — JobLink 2001; Jefferson Community College; Sunset Blvd.; Steubenville 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

August 7 — BHJ Executive Committee Meeting; BHJ; Steubenville Noon

August 16 — Business Development Corporation of the Northern Panhandle (BDC); Holiday Inn; Weirton 8 a.m.

Related Web Sites

Alliance 2000
www.alliance2000.org

State of Ohio Government Information
www.state.oh.us

Appalachian Regional Commission
www.arc.gov

State of West Virginia Government Info.
www.state.wv.us

Brooke Pioneer Trail Assoc. Inc
www.angelfire.com/wv/bpt

U.S. Census Bureau
www.census.gov

Business Development Corporation of the Northern Panhandle
www.bhbdc.org

U.S. Department of Transportation
www.dot.gov

CHANGE, Inc.
www.changeinc.org

Village of Wintersville
www.wintersville.net

Hancock County Convention and Visitors Bureau
www.hancockcvb.com

Weirton Chamber of Commerce
www.weirtonchamber.com

Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce
www.jeffersoncountychamber.com

Weirton Steel Corp.
www.weirton.com

Ohio Department of Transportation
www.dot.state.oh.us

West Virginia Department of Transportation
www.wvdot.com

State Route 2 & Interstate 68 Authority
www.route2andi68.com

West Virginia Development Office
www.wvdo.org