

Landfill makes huge in-kind donation to athletic complex

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McELHATTAN - The Wayne Township Landfill is first and foremost in the trash business. But when its employees see a need elsewhere within the community, they're willing to think - and work - outside the box.

That's exactly what happened about a year ago, when plans for a new athletic complex at Central Mountain High School were finally starting to take shape.

"We're not in the business of being contractors, and we don't want to take work away from local contractors," explained Jay Alexander, landfill general manager. "But the school district didn't have enough money to let it (site preparation work) out to bid. That's when we decided to step in."

Since mid-July, about five landfill employees have been preparing the athletic complex site for general contractor J.C. Orr & Son Inc. of Altoona. Alexander estimates their work has saved Keystone Central School District at least \$500,000.

Alexander and Max Persun, the landfill employee who has been supervising the site work, estimate the landfill's contribution so far at about \$300,000 and, Alexander noted, "there's some more work to do."

Persun said he and his crew prepared the field area first, at the contractor's request, then the bleacher area. The crew is currently working on the outlying areas.

"It's more of a cosmetic deal at this point," said Persun. He agreed with an estimate by Jack Peters, school board president, that the landfill crew is 80 to 90 percent finished with its contribution.

Peters and Jim Russo, a member of an ad-hoc committee working to raise funds for the complex, represented the project at a Clinton County Solid Waste Authority meeting last night. They came to thank the authority for lending the landfill's manpower, equipment and services, and to offer the landfill an opportunity to be publicly honored for its donation.

"There's not a big enough 'T' in the words 'thank you' to thank you for what's being done up there. It's first-class work and I don't know if we could've done the project without your help. It's a very significant part of it," Peters said.

"The general contractor up there is so complimentary of the work you've done. You obviously know what you're doing. That's for sure," he added.

"This wouldn't have happened without you. This project would've been a long way from getting started if you guys wouldn't have gotten involved," said Russo. He also noted the landfill is the largest donor to the project.

Peters asked the authority board to consider how it would like to be recognized for its generosity, adding he would like to see a "major recognition that's on the site and that's permanent." He passed around a brochure of on-site tokens of gratitude available from one company and instructed the board to "just let us (the district and the ad-hoc committee) know what you'd like. We're pretty much at your pleasure."

Authority Board Member Linda Leonard asked Peters if the authority would have the option of naming rights that other donors of large amounts were given. Peters assured her this was a possibility.

Authority Board member James Maguire suggested the authority acquire a large natural stone and have it engraved, possibly with a message such as, "This project made possible by in-kind donations from the Wayne Township Landfill and the Clinton County Solid Waste Authority." He said he knew of places in the Snow Shoe area that could supply a 25- to 30-ton stone.

Gayle Love, board chairperson, said the recognition would be a topic for discussion on the next meeting agendas of both of the board's committees. All board members present seemed to agree that they would like to see the authority and the landfill recognized for the contribution.

"This speaks well for us and it keeps us kind-of separated from the John Doe's and Mary Smith's and all the others who made contributions," said John Rich, authority board member.

Peters also shared with the board the complex likely would not be finished in time for this football season, currently underway, but would absolutely be ready in time for the graduation ceremony in June 2009. He said the project would probably take two to three years to complete in its entirety.

The complex is expected to cost between \$3 million and \$3.2 million. Most of the funding will come from the \$1.25 million sale of Painter Stadium to the City of Lock Haven and a matching \$1.25 million state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant. That funding will allow for the construction of a soccer/football stadium, multipurpose physical education field, unfinished baseball and softball fields and the Wildcat Wall, a space designated to recognize financial supporters of the project.

The district created an ad-hoc committee to raise the additional \$600,000 to \$700,000 needed to complete the project. The complex as a whole would include a fieldhouse and finished baseball and softball fields. At least \$200,000 of that need will be fulfilled by two small subgroups, each of which has acquired the naming rights for various components of the complex.

One group is working to raise \$100,000 to name the football/soccer field after former Lock Haven High School and CMHS football coach Mike Packer and his late wife Paula, a former KCSD teacher and school board member. The other group, also with a goal of \$100,000, would like to name the stadium after former LHHS football coach Donald Malinak.

Tax-deductible contributions toward the project may be made to the nonprofit Keystone Central Foundation, P.O. Box 568, Lock Haven, Pa. 17745, or by visiting the foundation's Web site at www.kcfoundation.net and printing a contribution form to mail.