

Barkeyville residents challenge permit

Proposed asphalt plant dominates agenda at borough council meeting

By LEIGH PROTVNAK
Staff writer

BARKEYVILLE — Tempers flared Tuesday night as a proposed 25-acre asphalt plant dominated the conversation at the Barkeyville Borough Council meeting.

About 50 residents attended the meeting, mostly in support of a zoning appeal hearing to revoke the building permit for the plant.

Joe Jenkins and a group of other Barkeyville-area residents have petitioned the zoning hearing board to review the building permit issued on New Year's Eve by former zoning official

Gary Dovey on the grounds that it violates the borough zoning ordinance. Jenkins and others have collected information on the types of pollutants produced by coal-burning asphalt plants.

Jenkins cited portions of the borough zoning ordinance that forbid industries that emit noxious, offensive gases and odors and are harmful to the land, people and wildlife.

"This is the so-called law of the land. Does the zoning official have the authority to override the zoning ordinance?" he asked.

Jenkins questioned whether Dovey's employment with the Oil Region Alliance of Business Industry and Tourism — the economic development agency that sold the land to Hawbaker — provided incentive for him to approve Hawbaker's zoning permit.

Jenkins said the challenge to the permit was not because the residents were against businesses, the ORA or council, but because they believe the permit was issued in error by someone without the

borough's best interest in mind. Bill Coursen, who helped draft the borough zoning ordinance, said, "Hiring an employee of the Oil Region Alliance was a mistake."

A third resident, Randy Martin, said he thought the residents, ORA and the board got off on the wrong foot.

Martin said the industrial park was stagnant, save one business, for the past seven years, and was happy to see the new developments, but hoped the ORA "did not overlook our ordinance just to sell land."

ORA president Randy Seitz said, "I am proud to be a part of the Oil Region Alliance and here tonight I can see a group of people who love the community, but are doing hurtful things out of fear and a little bit of ignorance."

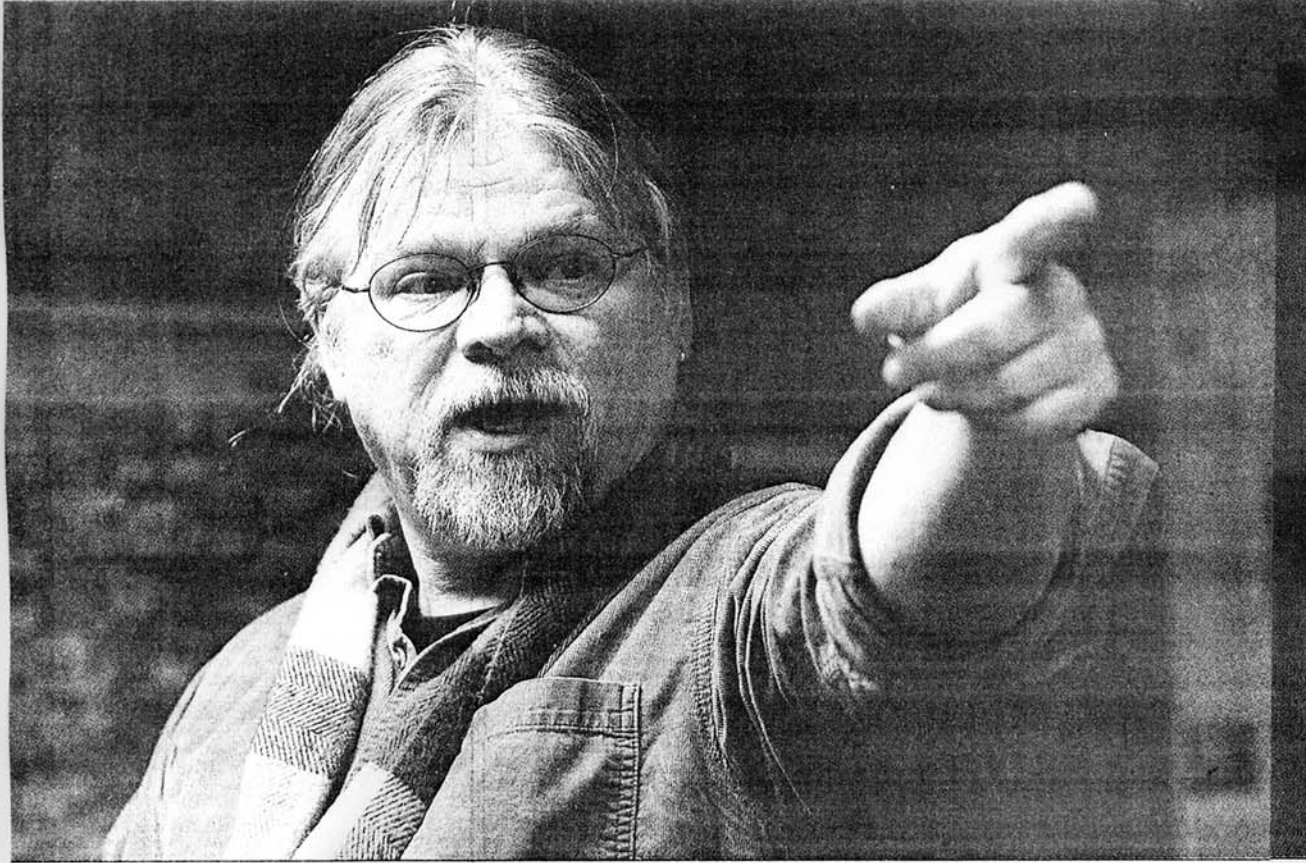
Seitz said the Barkeyville Industrial Park was included in the ORA's comprehensive plan because many Barkeyville officials complained they were tired of being overlooked in county economic development efforts.

Seitz said the citizens' opposition to the plant was shining a negative light onto the area that could potentially drive away future investors.

"Ask yourselves, where are my grandchildren going to work? How far will I have to drive to visit them?" he told the crowd.

He also defended the ORA and Dovey, saying the former zoning official did not receive any commission for the Hawbaker deal and the Alliance took a loss on selling the property in order to get the Hawbaker deal.

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Raymond Hanna, long-time resident and owner of Hanna's Music Supply in Barkeyville, expresses his concern over a proposed Glenn O. Hawbaker asphalt plant at the borough council meeting.

Photos by Matthew Hovis

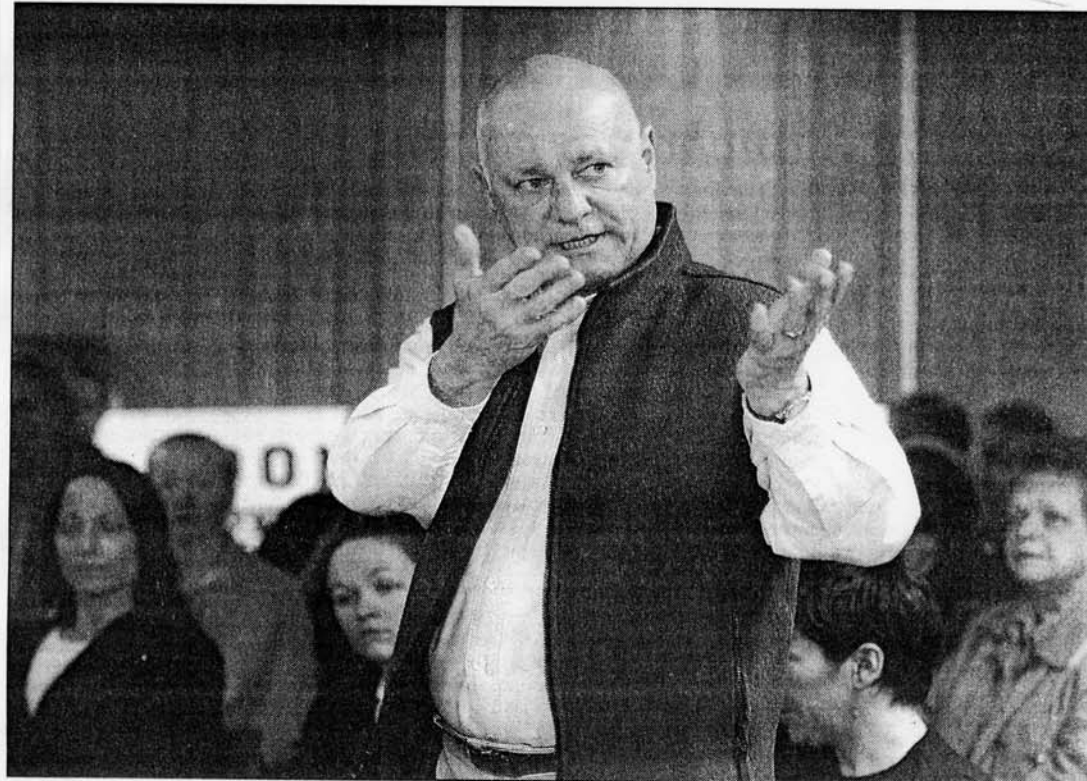


Joe Jenkins, a long-time resident and business owner in the borough, presents viewpoints against the proposed asphalt plant to about 50 people who attended the council meeting.



Mike Hawbaker, a third-generation of Glenn O. Hawbaker Asphalt, listens to citizens' concerns at the council meeting.

Franklin, PA
News Herald
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William D. Coursen Sr., a 60-year resident of Barkeyville Borough, makes a point about the proposed asphalt plant at the council meeting.

By Matthew Hovis

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"You've never met with Hawbakers or sat down with anyone at the Oil Region Alliance, but you've labeled them monsters, and you labeled us money fiends," Seitz said.

Several attendants chimed in with more assertions that the toxic output of asphalt production causes cancer.

Resident Raymond Hanna said, "I have very seldom let someone call me ignorant. If you want the plant so badly, you build a house in its backyard and see how far you have to drive to visit your grandchildren in a cemetery."

Mike Hawbaker, part-owner of Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc. of State College, said his company is very community-friendly and had no

intentions of being a "flash in the pan."

Hawbaker said he began working in his family's asphalt plants at age 12, and would have no hesitation about letting his children work there — or any of the Hawbaker facilities — because of the company's high operating standards.

If the plant is constructed, it will nearly fill the county-owned Barkeyville Industrial Park located along Stevenson Road in Barkeyville Borough. The plant is expected to bring between 60 and 80 new jobs to the Barkeyville area — about seven employees will work inside the actual plant, and the rest will be truck drivers and mechanics, Hawbaker said.

The building plan limits the plant to 560,000 tons of asphalt per year and would combust natural gas, fuel oils, reprocessed oils, biodiesel, coal or any combination of the fuels. The plant

would emit 8.96 tons of volatile organic compounds, 28 tons of nitrogen oxides and 37.8 tons of carbon monoxide per year.

If the plan is approved, the DEP will issue an air quality permit for the plant and maintain records and operating restrictions designed to keep the facility operating within all applicable air quality requirements.

A public input hearing on the air quality permit will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Barkeyville municipal building.

Council president Leanne Stearns said a zoning appeal hearing could not be scheduled until two members, Diona Brick and Gladys Berg, whose resignations were accepted Monday, were replaced. Two audience members were appointed to the panel before council recessed into executive session to discuss hiring a new zoning officer.