

Newport Township calls 'brainstorming session'

By Tom Venesky Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Glen Lyon was once a prosperous place and, like many towns in the northeast, it benefited from the economic wealth generated by the coal mining industry of decades ago.

Today, the mines are long gone, and so is the opulence that once defined Glen Lyon.

But community officials believe it can be brought back, albeit in small steps, and they have set up a meeting to plan the town's revitalization.

The meeting will be held on Monday, May 17, at 6 p.m. in the Newport Township Municipal Building in Wanamie.

According to township manager Larry Grove, the meeting is the result of a discussion between the township's commissioners earlier this month on ways to revitalize the community. He called the May 17 meeting, which is open to the public, a "brainstorming session" and they will seek resident input and donations from local businesses.

"We want to come up with ideas to help Glen Lyon turn the corner," Grove said. "But it won't happen overnight."

He said more than 20 people have already committed to attending the meeting, and possible projects include cleaning up properties and hanging wreaths along Main Street during Christmas.

"We'll start with beautification projects, even if it's sweeping corners or beautifying one

or two properties just so the community sees there's an effort to make a change," Grove said.

In the 1960s, he said, Glen Lyon boasted a population of 12,000, had full-time police protection, several fire departments and a high school with an indoor pool. Today, according to Grove, the population hovers around 4,000 and the community is in need of "tender-loving care."

State Rep. John Yudichak, D-119, said the best approach to improve a township is to approach the project regionally.

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Along with Glen Lyon, Newport Township consists of the communities

of Sheatown, Wanamie, Ridgeview, Lee and Alden.

When communities work together, Yudichak said, it will help them when it comes to state funding.

"The com-

monwealth is not just going to hand over money. You have to work together and look at the best way to grow," he said. "You don't want to chew up green space, but rather re-use our abandoned mine lands. If communities generate public interest and perform comprehensive plan-

ning, that's going to put them over the top."

Abandoned mine land is something Glen Lyon has in abundance, in addition to 5,000 acres of Earth Conservancy property and a significant amount of private land.

Because the community isn't landlocked, Grove said, the potential to grow and revitalize exists.

"If the infrastructure is put in, we have the potential for growth," he said.

That infrastructure could become a reality, Yudichak added, pointing to the proposed South Valley Parkway that will traverse the township.

With the highway will come the infrastructure to the southern part of the Wyoming Valley, Yudichak said.

"Glen Lyon is not likely to see the heyday of the coal era, but I do think there are good days ahead for that area and all the others in Newport Township. They're all nice communities," he said.

And the mining scars that have long been eyesores for Glen Lyon could turn into a financial benefit for the community.

Yudichak said there is language in Gov. Ed Rendell's economic stimulus package designating abandoned mine lands as a potential funding recipient. The package would assist communities with the financial requirements needed to rectify the abandoned mine lands to transform them into productive areas.