

LOCAL

News from your hometown

James Kohler
Sugarloaf

Administrator briefs M-COG members about Central Court

Jim Torbik, administrator of the new Central Court in Luzerne County, informed members of the Mountain Council of Governments of its advantages during its recent meeting.

The court would have two parts, one dealing with northern Luzerne County and the other with the southern tier.

Torbik answered questions posed by representatives of approximately eight municipalities who were in attendance, as well as another dozen or so people present.

He quelled some fears that the Central Court would adversely impact local police forces and, in fact, municipalities would not wind up spend-

ing more in salaries for time and overtime by their law-enforcement officers.

That rumor was dispelled because it was pointed out that all hearings would take place on the same day of a given week.

It means that officers would be in and out in a timely manner.

Torbik emphasized that Central Court would cut costs because a lot of the hearings will be scheduled to be held via video conferencing.

However, he said, this project is still in its infancy.

When it's up and running, it would mean that local police departments won't have to transport all defendants to

and from hearings.

Another advantage of Central Court is that a member of the Luzerne County District Attorney's office will be present during all court cases and they will serve as prosecutors.

Police officers would simply be present as witnesses but will not occupy a prosecutorial position.

Part of the meeting dealt with the arrival of a sewer camera that has been obtained via a state grant.

The camera, when placed inside a sewer, will permit an examination of its infrastructure.

Dan Guydish, executive director, said the camera is expected to be in operation in

the spring.

He also informed council members that the abandoned vehicle agreement is close to fruition.

Another item on the agenda for council's next meeting in April will be more discussion on the possibility of forming a joint regional police force.

In 2000, eight communities had expressed an interest in a proposed regional police force. They included Hazleton, Hazle Township, West Hazleton, Beaver Meadows, Butler Township, Freeland, Conyngham and Sugarloaf Township.

Other items to be discussed will include the possibility of

pooled health insurance among participating municipalities and the enactment of a municipal construction code which would include mutual enforcement.

At the next meeting, representatives will witness a demonstration of a pothole filler.