

West Hazleton tables vote on abandoned car agreement

By **AMANDA CHRISTMAN**

achristman@standardspeaker.com

West Hazleton Borough Council tabled a vote on the multi-municipal abandoned vehicle agreement with members of the Mountain Council of Governments (MCOG) until a few questions are answered.

During Thursday night's meeting, Councilwoman Karen Reynolds said she would contact someone from MCOG to come to the borough's next work session to address the questions.

The proposed resolution for the agreement states that the borough's intention is to curtail the abuse of abandoned vehicles who move cars between neighboring municipal lines.

According to borough Solicitor

Lorine A. Darraugh, the only municipalities that have not entered into the agreement are West Hazleton and Foster Township.

The proposed resolution states that the participating municipalities will agree upon a central salvor.

One of the questions dealt with how the borough would enforce the agreement and another dealt with there being one central salvor.

Councilwoman Kelly Feltes and Councilman James "Bucky" Kulaga said they believed the resolution was a good idea but questioned how the agreement would be enforced.

Kulaga said that vehicles have been tagged in the borough as abandoned in the past and nothing fur-

ther has been done, such as towing the vehicle to a salvor.

"They were never followed up on," he said.

Kulaga said that although he didn't have any problems with the resolution itself, the borough should become tougher on abandoned vehicles before it enters into the agreement.

Mayor Mark Rockovich said the resolution would take time to work out and said residents should call the police station so the borough's police sergeant can ticket cars.

However, Feltes said that people have called the police and vehicles have sat "for a year." She said the agreement was "great," but that the vehicles in question need to be followed up on for the agreement to be useful.

■ Area towns joining together against junked cars
- Page 17

Councilman Mark Yeager also questioned who the vehicles would be towed by and where they would be stored. He said the agreement makes it seem as though there is only one firm acting as tower and storage yard. Yeager suggested that it should be up to each municipality to decide who tows the vehicles and who stores them, in order to support local businesses.

The resolution states that any vehicle tagged by another municipality as abandoned would be considered such in any participating municipality. All municipalities would consider a vehicle tagged on the day it was tagged in the originating municipality with no additional time granted.

A vehicle tagged and then towed cannot be released by the salvor

until all fines, towing and storage fees are paid.

In related news, council will not accept a deal with MCOG to share a sewer camera with another municipality. The cost for West Hazleton would have been around \$12,000 total. However, council members found out that sewer cameras were used a total of four times during the last 10 years. Members also questioned the financial loss if the equipment was stolen or damaged.

Council also held an executive session after its meeting Thursday night to discuss the public work's department collective bargaining agreement, which will expire soon and personnel. No one could comment further on the executive session.