

Skulsky resigns as director of M-COG

By **JIM DINO**

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The Mountain Council of Governments (M-COG) and the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership have had the same leader for over four years.

Now, each entity have its own.

While Bob Skulsky will remain as executive director of the partnership, the group with which he has spearheaded the development of the hiking and biking trail originating in Hazleton, he has resigned as director of the M-COG.

Hazleton City Councilman Joe Yannuzzi, chairman of the COG, said advertisements seeking a replacement will be made soon.

"We need somebody with government experience," Yannuzzi said. "Of course, this will be part-time."

Yannuzzi also had praise for Skulsky's work.

"I can't say enough about Bob and the job he's done here," Yannuzzi said. "He's done everything

from getting grants to carrying flowers and dirt. We will really miss this guy."

Skulsky said he would stay on until a replacement is found.

He told the organization about the resignation in a letter read during its monthly meeting this week.

"It is with the utmost regret that I tender my resignation as executive director of the Mountain Council of Governments," Skulsky wrote. "In my over four years as executive director of the M-COG and the GHACP, I believe that jointly working with the officers and municipal officials we have moved both organizations in a positive direction."

Skulsky said he will stay on as GHACP director with the board's approval.

Because of a shortage in operating funds for the organizations, Skulsky works only 12 hours a week and said he must devote that time to the development of the trail.

He has also taken another part-time, trail-related post with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor.

"Many factors have led to this decision, especially the heavy workload created by the Rails-To-Trails project," Skulsky wrote. "Now that we have the trail completed for four miles we have an additional workload managing the start-up and maintenance of the trail.

"At the same time, the multiple tasks associated with continuing this project for another 12 miles by securing funding, land use agreements, and managing this \$1 million-plus project requires a focus on the project alone.

"We have created a great working relationship with federal, state and local officials, businesses and foundations that can provide the wherewithal to keep this project on the fast track. We can't afford to lose this momentum at this time for the good of the greater Hazleton area."