

## The Express

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Robert O. Rolley, Jr.

Publisher

Lana Muthler

Managing Editor

Walter Corter

Circulation Manager

Trevor Evans

Advertising Manager

Tina Geyer

Office Manager

### OUR VIEW

## Western Clinton County's challenges

The energy at last Thursday night's public forum in Renovo on ways to improve Western Clinton County was palpable.

It inspires optimism that residents from a handful of municipalities comprising Greater Renovo have begun a journey to create ideas and find resources to build improvements.

Their success will be measured by their ability to sustain their efforts, to overcome both indifference and differences in just what change must come.

There can no longer be the mindset of one municipality or community versus another.

There must be a regional approach to tackling the issues that have kept the area stagnant for far too long in terms of population, economic and community development.

In the meantime, we offer our own thoughts on some of the priorities brought out last Thursday night:

■ There is no formal, public park and access to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River in a town whose founding was due, in large part, to the river. It's time there was one.

■ There are a lot of blighted properties, meaning officials have their work cut out for them. But the challenge is identified as a priority. That's a significant start.

■ Officials and volunteers in the boroughs and townships must give potential developers reasons to invest. They can do that by working together — over the long term.

■ While the Flaming Foliage Committee operates a visitors center in town, why not consider a partnership with the state to have it become a full-fledged visitors center and perhaps draw state tax dollars — and more visitors — to the area?

■ Lock Haven has become a River Town and has a River Town Team. It is working on a couple of projects that envision a direct connection to Renovo to take advantage of the beautiful, scenic — nay, "breathtaking" — water trail between the two communities. Why not, after more organization and time, begin to share some strategies?

Moving forward:

■ It is important that the River Town Team, in cooperation and communication with area and county officials, the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, SEDA-COG, know what the next steps are.

■ It's paramount that those involved keep the positive momentum and make sure everyone is clear about roles, responsibilities and expectations.

Those involved know that working to bring prosperity back to Western Clinton County is not just about brick-and-mortar improvements.

With limited financial resources, consider what's affordable, and what partnerships must be forged to leverage local dollars for more investment.

Also, what can be done that just costs people's time and some hard work?

Revitalization starts with a mind-set ... one that listens to and tries to take advantage of ideas, opportunities and partnerships.

It starts with the glass-half-full approach: How can we do something, not why we can't.

People in communities in this region have, for far too long, failed to work together in a meaningful way, to openly support each other when it counts for jobs, investment and community improvement, and to understand that physical improvements and investments in one community ultimately benefit all residents in the region.

Stop this "you can't tell me what to do" attitude that has been prevalent among some people in decision-making capacities.

That does not inspire change and improvement. That does not help to generate private and public investment.

It does help to convince our kids to leave.

In many ways, Western Clinton County's challenges are the same for many communities in this rural part of Central Pennsylvania.

How we work together ultimately determines our success, or failure.