

Design moves rail trail into Lewisburg

By Evamarie Socha
The Daily Item

LEWISBURG — Design plans to extend the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail through Lewisburg are on track, and a conceptual plan for a segment going across the Susquehanna River is under way, the rail trail committee reported at its meeting Wednesday.

Larson Design Group, which designed the nine-mile path between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg, is working on the plan for the trail portion from Route 15 east to North Fifth Street, committee member James Buck said.

The project is being funded with money remaining from a state Department of Transportation grant used to construct the trail. PennDOT gave the group until June 30 to use the rest of the grant funds. Lewisburg borough

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and East Buffalo Township kicked in matching funds as well.

The concept for the second segment, from North Fifth Street east and across the river, is funded under a \$5,000 award from the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, given in September.

Larson will do this segment as well and is planning to use Bucknell University students

in the research and development of the second segment, Buck said he learned from Michelle Oswald, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Bucknell.

Oswald and Bucknell students have been involved extensively with the rail trail, from design and engineering studies to research on the number of trail users.

The rail trail committee begins the new year with a new person at the helm. Sam

Pearson was elected chairman of the panel.

Pearson takes over for Buck, who gave up the seat given his election as chairman of the East Buffalo Township supervisors. Buck will remain on the rail trail committee.

"Sam has provided many years of service," Buck said in nominating her, noting she recently ended a 5-year term on the Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority board. "She has been so helpful in moving

trail projects along."

Expenses for June through December ran higher than expected at roughly \$11,500, LARA Executive Director Katie Davis said.

A "big chunk" of the expenses, Davis said, went to Hackenberg's Tree Service, of Winfield, for pruning and trimming trees along the trail. She did not disclose the amount. With \$8,707 in the rail trail's account with LARA, the recreation group will hold off a bit on its re-

imbursements from the trail account.

"It's a tricky balance," she said. "We're not sure when to reimburse ourselves." Davis said she just deposited a \$1,800 donation from Earl's

Bicycle Store, Lewisburg.

LARA manages the rail trail's account on its behalf, Pearson said. It sets the budget and spends the money for the rail trail, then reimburses itself later.