

Borough may move Rain Day event to alleviate traffic jams

WAYNESBURG — The borough may have to stop closing High Street for Rain Day and other festivities to make way for heavy trucks.

Waynesburg closes the main thoroughfare through town every July 29 to hold a street fair in honor of the town's quirky holiday. Traffic is diverted to side streets, but a higher volume of truck traffic may force a change in that tradition.

Waynesburg police Chief Tim Hawfield told council Monday that problems with the detour route became evident last week, when High Street was closed for the Veterans Day parade. The street was closed "for only about 45 minutes, but in that time, we had traffic backed up past McDonalds," Hawfield said, referring to the restaurant about a mile away in Morrisville.

The traffic jam will be much worse if High Street is closed for the entire day, as it is on Rain Day, Hawfield said. The festivities may have to move elsewhere in town. Council members discussed several alternate locations, including the borough commons and side streets. Borough officials will consult members of the Special Events Commission to find a better site.

"Its never been a problem before, but we've never had the volume of trucks like we do now," Hawfield said. Most of the trucks are hauling water, equipment and other materials for natural gas pipeline projects and drilling operations. Those trucks, some of which are tri-axles or carrying wide loads, cannot easily make the tight turns needed to traverse the detour route through residential neighborhoods. During the parade Friday, many truck drivers opted to wait rather than try the detour.

"They honestly can't turn anywhere in the borough without messing something up," said Borough Manager Bruce Wermlinger.

2. In another matter, the project to remodel the borough police station will probably go out to bid in December or January. The side of the borough building that houses the police department has not been remodeled since 1974. The building at High and Morgan streets houses both the police department and borough offices, but borough offices were moved to the west side of the building in 1998.

Plans call for demolishing and rebuilding most interior walls to make the workspace in the building more efficient. The entrance also will be revamped to increase security, the facade will be restored and windows on the second floor will be replaced. The project is estimated to cost about \$250,000. The borough started contributing to a capital improvement fund a few years ago to help pay for the improvements. Wermlinger said he also is trying to obtain grant funding.

3. Council also passed a resolution to rename Fruit Alley in the East End. One of the six residents of the alley asked the borough to rename the road because of confusion with Fruit Street, which is located elsewhere in town.

Instead of one name, Fruit Alley will now have two. From Race to Braden streets, the alley will be called Wall Street, and from Braden Street south, it will be called Sunshine Lane.

Wermlinger said he consulted with the residents of the street, and they suggested those names. Wermlinger will contact the county's 911 dispatch center and the post office about the change. The borough also will install new street signs.

4. Council agreed to vacate another alley in the East End at the request of a property owner. Joe Ross owns all properties surrounding Cliff Alley and he asked the borough to vacate the street so he can use it as part of a building improvement project. The alley is located off High Street, between Woodland Avenue and Sycamore Street; it dead ends near Crooked Alley.

The borough vacated the southern portion of Cliff Alley in the 1960s, Wermlinger said.