



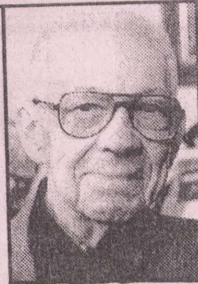
T.L. 6-7-97

J. Donald Munson

June 5, 1997

J. Donald Munson, 86, of Vine Street, Edwardsville, and Phoenix, Ariz., died Thursday at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.

Born in West Pittston, he was son of the late Edward and Katherine Bedell Munson.



He graduated from Coughlin High School and received his engineering degree from Penn State University Extension School.

He and his wife, the late Marion E. Munson, founded and co-owned Kingston Electric Company and Climate Equipment Company, Edwardsville, which specialized in air conditioning, heating and refrigeration, for more than 40 years.

Early in his career, he was affiliated with the Surveyors Engineer Corporation in the coal mining industry, and Popky and Company and the C. Foster Hicks Company in the refrigeration industry.

He was also an engineer and partner with Ellsworth Swank in the refrigeration and air conditioning field.

He was elected a life member of the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers Inc., in 1976.

He was a life member of Masonic Lodge 61 F&AM, Wilkes-Barre, the Keystone Consistory of Scranton and the Irem Temple, Wilkes-Barre.

He was a former member of the Wilkes-Barre Kiwanis Club.

He was a member of the First United Methodist Church, Wilkes-Barre, and the Central United Methodist Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Marion, in 1994; a sister, Emma M. Hoover; a brother, Robert Munson.

Surviving are brothers Russell M. Munson, Chester, Conn.; Edward B. Munson, Milltown, N.J.; three nieces and three nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Monday from the Harold C. Snowdon Funeral Home, 420 Wyoming Ave., Kingston.

Friends may call from 1 p.m. Monday to the time of service.

Interment will be in the Oak Lawn Cemetery, Hanover Township.

Memorial donations may be made to the charity of the donor's choice.

Marion Munson

Feb. 11, 1994

Marion E. Munson, of Vine Street, Edwardsville, and Phoenix, died Friday at home in Edwardsville.

Born in Hazleton, she was the daughter of the late Edward and Martha Braun Zboray. She was a lifelong area resident.



She was a 1938 graduate of Hanover High School. She was a member of First United Methodist Church, Wilkes-Barre, and Central United Methodist Church, Phoenix, Ariz.

A musician, she studied with Sarah Stanford, and was a lyric soprano. She was a member of the Wyoming Valley Oratorio Society Chorus, and well as one of its board members. She was a member of the Mozart Club, and sang with their Women's Chorale.

A member of the Shawnee Chorus, she was a soloist at the First United Methodist Church of Wilkes-Barre, and the Church of Christ Uniting, Kingston.

She was a member of the Women of Wilkes-Barre Kiwanis, Irem Temple Auxiliary, and was a former board member of the YWCA.

For more than 40 years, she was co-owner with her husband, and office manager of Kingston Electric and Climate Equipment Co., Edwardsville.

Surviving are her husband, J. Donald; brother, Robert, Fairfax, Va.; Donald, Austin, Texas; two nephews.

Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday from the Harold C. Snowden Funeral Home, 420 Wyoming Ave., Kingston, with the Rev. James A. Wert, pastor of Shavertown United Methodist Church, officiating.

Interment will be private.

Friends may call from 1 p.m. until time of services Tuesday.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, Wyoming Valley Unit, 57 N. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre, 18701; Hospice St. John, 665 Carey Ave., Wilkes-Barre, 18702; or to the charity of the donor's choice.

STAT: Don and Marion Munson file

6-19-97
T.L. 7.1

■ VALLEY WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT

Will offers 50 acres for new school building

KINGSTON — An Edwardsville philanthropist who died June 5 has left the Wyoming Valley School District 50 acres of ground in Edwardsville to build a new high school or other educational complex.

A letter from J. Donald Munson's attorney made only one stipulation: that the school be named after his late wife, Marion E. Munson.

School Board President Raymond Lowery read the letter

at a budget work session on Wednesday.

At that work session, Business Manager Alan Yendrzeiwski said he was able to trim spending by \$177,000, which would cut next year's property tax increase to eight mills. Residents currently pay 203 mills.

Munson and his wife, after whom a technology center at College Misericordia is named, founded and co-owned Kingston Electric Co. and Climate Equipment Co. in Edwardsville.

In 1994, Wilkes University paid tribute to Munson by naming a field house adjacent to Ralston Field in his honor and in memory of his wife. Munson had donated \$250,000 to Wilkes.

Superintendent Andrew Marko said the Edwardsville property is worth more than \$1 million.

But Lowery said the board must pass the 1997-98 budget before resuming talks on a

building program.

Plans for a new high school were put on hold last year after a heated public debate. Lowery said he did not know what effect Munson's gift might have on plans for a new school.

The letter from Munson's attorney, James Harris, said Munson's will stipulates the board has six months to accept the gift. After that, the will's executor will have authority over the property.

— Pat McGlynn

Battle looms over new school at WWV

By Carol Crane
Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Battle lines are being drawn in the Wyoming Valley West School District over talk that a new high school is needed.

Although the school board is not set to reorganize until Dec. 3, several board members have already taken positions regarding any proposal for additional district construction.

Board member Michael Barna who recently was elected to a second term said he believes that statements suggesting enrollment has gone up by more than 500 students over the past five years are

incorrect. He pointed to pupil enrollment numbers provided monthly to board members as his source.

Barna said enrollment totals include students who attend the West Side Vocational-Technical School. He argued voc-tech students enrollment numbers should not be considered in any proposal for a new school because those students do not utilize district facilities.

"None of the schools are in bad shape," Barna emphasized. He lauded district maintenance workers for keeping facilities in top condition.

Barna said his check of enroll-

ment records showed that in November 1993, the district's total enrollment was at 5,740. Of that number, 321 students attended the voc-tech school.

In November 1997, records provided school board members show a total of 5,688 students. Of that, 335 attend voc-tech.

Talk of a new school was sparked by the district's acceptance of a donated 50-acre tract of land in Larksville. The land was bequeathed to district by the estate of the late Donald Munson with the stipulation that any school built on it be named for the late Marion E. Munson.

Barna said discussions about a

new school quieted in the weeks leading to the Nov. 4 election. However, now that the election is over, he said the prospect of building a new school is looming.

Board president Ray Lowery, however, said it's not student enrollment that is the deciding factor in building a new school. In an age where students must be taught computer skills, the need for space for computer labs and other innovative curriculums must be looked at. Also, there is an increased demand for classes for special education students.

"We cannot look purely at enrollment. Certainly it is a factor, but there are other factors," he stressed. "The fact that all the other uses of school facilities that have popped up in the last decade have to be looked at as well."

Lowery emphasized that any talk of building a new school is extremely preliminary since several things must be done before any proposal can be considered, including an update of a district feasibility study.

However, Barna is not the only board member who already is opposed to new construction. Board member Vivian Gullo who will be sworn in in December said. "They don't need a new school."

Gullo said his campaign pledge was, "No new school. No new taxes."

"I'm going to live up to that promise," he insisted Thursday. He predicted that if a proposal to build a new school comes before the board, the majority will vote it down.

The board's reorganization meeting is slated for Dec. 3.

C.V. 11-20-97

C.V. 11-15-97

Free land offer sparks debate at WWV

By FRED NEY

Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

Wyoming Valley West School Board's acceptance of a 50-acre tract of land in Larksville from the estate of the late Donald Munson has set the stage for a new era of development within the school district as well as some lively debate.

Munson, a noted area businessman and philanthropist, died last June 5. In his will, he provided the school district with an opportunity to acquire 50 of his 75 acres in Larksville at no cost. His only condition was that any school built on the site must be named for his late wife and called "The Marion E. Munson High School or Educational Center."

District officials have been dis-

cussing the possibility of building a new high school since enrollment, now at 5,740, is about 500 more than five years ago.

Also a concern is the aging of existing district buildings, some of which are nearly 100 years old.

The Munson will specified that the WWV school board had until Dec. 5, 1997, to accept the property. The offer would be withdrawn after that. The decision to accept the offer came on Nov. 12.

Board President Raymond Lowery commented after the meeting, "The land's value has been estimated at between one-half million to one million dollars. Imagine what a travesty it would have been if we had declined the offer and then, somewhere down the road, were forced to buy land for fair market value. What a

tremendous loss that could have been."

Asked what will be the next likely step, Lowery suggested, "I think we'll have to do a new feasibility study to update the process and to determine options."

The board president acknowledged that the board may have to explore the possibility of acquiring some land adjacent to the Munson land which is owned by the Popple Estate and currently valued at \$800,000. The Popple land is the parcel that formerly housed the West Side Drive-In Theater.

The only significant debt the district currently faces is the bond issue on the high school. The district must still pay \$1.3 million for the next two years; \$1 million the year after that and a final annual payment of \$100,000.

Last August, Lowery reviewed those numbers and observed, "This gives us some financial flexibility and we would not have to raise taxes for the building program...It's good that we're close to paying off that bond issue."

But the issue of building a new high school at Wyoming Valley West is likely to touch off a debate as well as a polarization within the school board.

Two new board members elected this year, James Fender, Larksville and Vivian Gullo, Edwardsville, are both against a new school building project and higher taxes to pay for it.

Gullo's campaign literature steadfastly declared, "No new school...no more taxes."

Fender defeated incumbent

Daniel Chipeco while Gullo ousted incumbent Rowland Roberts. Both Roberts and Chipeco were aligned with the board majority which included Lowery, Neal McAndrew, Ed Maxwell, Paul Cwalina and Robert Walsh.

Cwalina did not run for re-election and is being replaced by Allen Bellas who is also seen as leaning toward the majority faction.

Incumbents James Youngblood and Michael Barna are perceived as being somewhat aligned with Gullo and Fender. If the newly constituted board turns out as predicted, a new 5-4 majority-minority will be formed along with the likelihood of some highly animated discussions on many issues, especially a new school building project.

Gift of land to Valley West comes with price tag

■ *Mine tunnels under much of the parcel could force the School District to buy adjacent land to carry out any plan of building on it.*

By **CHRIS SCHNEIDMILLER**

Times Leader Staff Writer

LARKSVILLE — The Wyoming Valley West School District has 50 new acres of land. Now its School Board must decide what — if anything — to do with it.

The board on Wednesday voted 6-0, with two abstentions, to accept a plot of land in Larksville willed to the district by late businessman and philanthropist Donald Munson.

Munson requested the land be used for educational purposes and that any new facility be named in memory of his wife, Marion E. Munson. The deadline to accept the offer was Dec. 5.

Board members have discussed using the land, which is valued at more than \$500,000, for a new elementary or high school. If they agree on a plan, a new facility could be there in two years, said board President Raymond Lowery Jr.

"My feeling is at some point we will use it for an educational facility," Lowery said. "To not accept it right now and have to come back in a year or two (to buy property for a school) would have been a shame."

There's just one problem. Board member Michael Barna said discussions of using the Munson land for a school are pointless because only four of the 50 acres are usable for construction. Abandoned coal mines are too close to the surface to build elsewhere on the plot, he said.

"I don't know what we're going to do with it," Barna said. "You can't build on it."

Lowery said the district would have to buy an adjacent plot where the West Side

“My feeling is at some point we will use it for an educational facility.”

Raymond Lowery Jr.

School board president

Drive-In Theater formerly operated, at a cost of \$500,000 or more. The Munson land could be used mainly for athletic fields and parking lots, he said.

Barna and board member James Youngblood abstained from Wednesday's vote because they oppose use of the parcel. And recently elected board members Vivian Gullo and James Fender, who take office next month, oppose any tax increase that would possibly come with construction of a new school.

"I'm against building a school until we get some other funds to do it," Gullo said. "We can't do it right now. The cost factor

is too high."

Enrollment in the district is about 5,800 students this year, having increased by at least 200 students during the past four years, said Superintendent Andrew Marko. The high school holds 50 more students this year than last.

Proponents of a new school say the Munson land provides an opportunity to relieve overcrowding.

"If they don't want to build a new school, I'm all ears as to what they want to do. Because we have to do something," said board member Neil McAndrew.

The district needs another study of its options for dealing with overcrowded and aging schools before deciding whether to build a new school, Lowery said.

Remaining debt on the existing high school in Plymouth will be paid off in the next few years, said Lowery, adding that property taxes going toward that building could then be used to fund a new school.

"There'd be a minimal tax increase," he said. "There might not be any."

HAZ. T. L. 11-16-97

Edwardsville man bequeaths land to WWV

C.V. 6-19-97

By KEVIN DONLIN

Citizens' Voice Staff Writer

The generosity of an Edwardsville resident could pave the way for a brand new Wyoming Valley West high school or educational center.

Wyoming Valley West School Board president Raymond Lowery read a letter dated June 16, 1997 from Attorney James Harris detailing the last will and testament of J. Donald Munson, as it pertained to the school district during last night's special budget meeting.

The will read, in part, that if at the time of Mr. Munson's death, which occurred on June 5, the school district was still interested in his land or part of his land and the transaction had not been completed, he would donate 50 of the 75 acres to the school district.

The will expressed that Mr. Munson's only request would be that the school be called the Marion E. Munson High School or Educational Center.

"This is something to be considered," Lowery offered. "Our primary goal right now is to get through this budget, but this is certainly awfully, awfully nice of Mr. Munson."

One board member estimated the property itself could be worth more than \$1 million. Board member Rowland Roberts said the five acres that makes up Mr.

Munson's home has an estimated value of \$300,000 alone.

"His home would also be available," Superintendent Andrew Marko said. "The home area consists of about five acres and it could be incorporated into the education complex."

The executors of the will may rescind the offer if the board does not decide to accept it within six months of Mr. Munson's death. The offer expires on Dec. 5, 1997.

Lowery described Munson as a noted philanthropist, citing instances where Munson donated money to College Misericordia and to Wilkes University, the latter of which resulted in the J. Donald Munson Fieldhouse.

In other business, the board managed to reduce a millage increase for the 1997-98 operating budget to eight mills. The board, earlier this month, had managed to bring a prospective 13-mill increase down to nine. On Wednesday, the cutting continued.

"We continue to make progress on this," Lowery said. "And we're not going to stop at eight mills. We'll be set to pass this budget next week. Right now, the big number is the earned income tax."

The district's current millage is 203. A mill is a tax rate of \$1 for every \$1,000 of an assessed property value.

Business manager Alan Yan-drzeiwski said the district was

able to identify an additional \$117,014 in cuts. The reductions result in a \$557,776 deficit, which represents the need for the district's eight mill increase on property taxes.

While trying to identify other areas for cuts, Lowery asked if there was a need for a fourth elementary principal. Currently, there are three elementary principals. A fourth is retiring. The district has a total of seven elementary school buildings.

"This is a key factor," Marko said. "We need to keep the administration in the elementary schools. It would be a terrible mistake on the district's part to eliminate one of the principal positions."

Board member Michael Barna said the elimination of the position would be equivalent to a one-mill budget reduction.

"You can't handle six to 7,000 students with a part-time administration," Marko countered. "You just can't do it. Educationally, it's the wrong thing to do."

The district and the municipality of Kingston went head-to-head at the meeting as the district wanted to know why, for the first time, it was being charged to use the municipality's tennis courts and parks.

Kingston Mayor Gary Reese attended the budget meeting, at the request of the school board, to discuss the fees.

"This is something that's never been done," Lowery said. "We've always shared our facilities."

While the district uses Kingston's parks and tennis courts, the municipality gets the use, free of charge, of several of the district's facility.

Reese resolved to speak to the municipality's recreation depart-

ment and let them make the decision.

"I'll go on the record and say I will not charge you but I'll have to do the same for Bishop O'Reilly (who also uses the municipality's facilities)," Reese said.

Reese said he would recommend that the recreation department not charge the school district.

