

Observer-Reporter

OUR 202ND YEAR, WASHINGTON, PA

50 CENTS

www.observer-reporter.com

FRIDAY,
NOV. 20,
2009

County asks for extension

Commissioners assert substantial progress toward reassessment

By BARBARA S. MILLER
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Saying they have taken substantial steps toward conducting a countywide property reassessment, Washington County commissioners asked a judge Thursday to give them an extension until Dec. 31, 2010.

Susan Key, the attorney representing the Washington and McGuffey school districts, went back to court in late October, saying she had seen no evidence of progress.

As part of a stipulation reached a year ago, the commissioners agreed to begin a reassessment unless either the Pennsylvania appellate courts or the Legislature changed the real estate assessment law by Sept. 30 of this year.

Key could not immediately be reached for comment Thursday.

In their legal document, the commissioners listed several steps they took before the Sept. 30 deadline in preparation for property tax reassessment:

- Completing aerial photography, known as pictometry, of the county. The county has a database containing the myriad images.

- Advertising for firms to conduct the reassessment. The three vendors who responded were interviewed and one was called back for a second interview.

- The county hired summer employees to review property record cards and fill gaps.

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Police hit man with Taser



SCOTT BEVERIDGE / OBSERVER-REPORTER

Washington police Capt. Bob Wilson, left, and Lt. Daniel Stanek field questions from the media Thursday about a police Taser incident that sent a man to Washington Hospital a day earlier.

City resident remains hospitalized, faces assault charges

By SCOTT BEVERIDGE, Staff writer
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A Washington man lost consciousness and was soon revived Wednesday after being hit twice with a Taser by city police during a struggle in which the man bit one of the officers several times.

Ronald Petruney, 49, of 1090 Jefferson Ave., remained in Washington Hospital Thursday, and his condition was not immediately known, city police said at

a news conference that morning.

An officer, whose name was not released, was patrolling Jefferson Avenue when he encountered Petruney on the ground near his apartment about 1:05 p.m., suffering from what appeared to be a seizure.

Petruney then stood up, disoriented, and attempted to walk into traffic, police Lt. Daniel Stanek said at the news conference.

Petruney refused orders to sit down and charged the officer,

biting him and swinging his arms when the two began to struggle, Stanek said.

Another officer, who also was not identified, arrived on the scene. Petruney was first shot in the legs with two Taser wires. The second officer then applied his Taser directly to Petruney's torso, Stanek said.

At that point, Petruney lost his pulse and was revived by paramedics.

Stanek said the officers followed department procedures in

using Tasers. He said city police have had problems in the past with Petruney, who has known mental health issues. He has bitten a police officer before, Stanek said.

Police are preparing to charge him with aggravated assault and resisting arrest upon his release from the hospital.

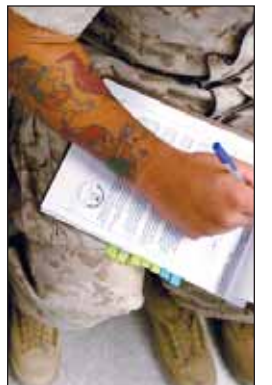
Police Capt. Bob Wilson said the hospital refused to release Petruney's condition when he inquired about it Thursday.



GLITCH CAUSES DELAYS

For the second time in a little more than a year, a glitch at one of the two centers that handle flight plans for the nation's air travel system sets off delays and cancellations for passengers around the country.

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PREDICTING PTSD

A military experiment to try to predict who's most at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder may be an aid in understanding underlying triggers.

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ONE MORE TIME

Cal U. and Shipensburg will meet again in the second round of the NCAA Division II playoffs.

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WEATHER



Clouds breaking for some sun.
High 54. Low 36.
Complete weather,
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In this Oct. 5 photo, Fred Massoomi, pharmacy operations coordinator at Methodist Hospital in Omaha, Neb., examines a box containing five doses of swine flu vaccine, part of the first shipment of swine flu vaccine.

Gripes about swine flu vaccine abound

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA - When the nation's swine flu vaccination program began in early October, health officials predicted it was going to be "messy." They were right.

The program has been plagued with problems and information gaps:

- Health officials have been terrible at predicting when and how much vaccine would be available. Only about 44 million doses have been shipped so far.

Initially, officials said more than three times that would be out by now.

- At times vaccine shipments have been inexplicably lopsided. For example, smaller counties in Illinois and California have received the same amount delivered to counties with seven times as many people.

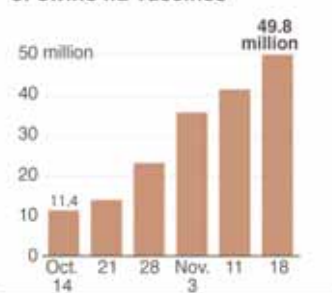
- Health officials have stressed that people most at risk for swine flu complications

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Supply increases

As of Thursday, there were 49.8 million doses of the H1N1 vaccine available, an increase of nearly 21 percent from Nov. 11 to Nov. 18.

Weekly availability of swine flu vaccines



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention AP

Gates Foundation gives \$335M for teacher quality

\$40M heading to Pittsburgh Public Schools as part of reform program

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE - Three school districts and a coalition of charter schools have agreed to test kitchens for some radical ideas for improving teacher quality - from paying new teachers to spend another year practicing before getting their own class to letting student test scores affect teacher pay.

In exchange, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is handing them the biggest pile of cash it has spent on education reform in about a decade.

The foundation announced \$290 million in grants to the four groups on Thursday, plus another \$45 million for education research aimed at uncovering what exactly is an effective teacher.

The grants include \$100 million to Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., \$90 million to Memphis City Schools, \$60 million to a coalition of charter school organizations in Los Angeles, and \$40 million to Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Vicki Phillips, director of the foundation's K-12 education program, said the investment is big, the ideas are bold and she hopes the impact could rock every school and every district in the nation.

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Foundation co-chair Melinda Gates said she and her husband, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, consider education reform one of the toughest issues the foundation has taken on. The foundation is best known for its work fighting diseases like AIDS and malaria worldwide.

"Any time you're trying to change a system and really have some innovative approaches, it's going to take some long-term work," Melinda Gates said.

The foundation purposely picked four diverse organizations to work with: from the four corners of the U.S., of a variety of sizes and ethnic mixes, all with existing problems and some successes meeting the educational needs of their students.

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