# BCAP 60th Anniversary NewsClips

**October 18, 2017**

***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***
**Moody's ranks Pittsburgh, Philadelphia high on their potential to deliver Amazon HQ2**

***Allentown Morning Call***
**Bethlehem to open internet portal for public information**

***Pennlive***
**Former Pa. state House employee loses bid to sue former Gov. Corbett, others, over "Computergate" charges**

***Washington Post***

Falls Township (Bucks Co.) made history Tuesday evening as the first municipality in Pennsylvania — and only the second local government in the country — to approve privacy requirements for broadband companies handling internet customers' "personally identifiable information." Seattle was the first.

There's one catch: Comcast and Verizon will not have to start complying with the requirements right away, following a last-minute change supervisors made to their proposed online privacy ordinance. If the supervisors had passed their original ordinance, provisions prohibiting Comcast and Verizon from selling or sharing customers' personal information and mandating them to mail customers annual opt-out notifications would have gone into effect Monday.

But two representatives, one from each company, told Falls officials at a private meeting Tuesday afternoon the township would be breaking its existing franchise agreements with the companies, to provide residents service, if the privacy requirements went into effect. Lauren Gallagher, one of the township's solicitors, agreed, saying that both the township and companies would need to approve any changes made to the agreements before their expiration dates. Verizon's deal is set to expire at the end of 2018, followed by Comcast's agreement at the end of 2021, she added.

Falls officials amended the ordinance to go into effect for any future agreements with broadband companies and approved it by a 4-1 vote, with Supervisor Brian Galloway casting the sole no vote. Before the vote, the two broadband representatives spoke publicly at the meeting, both opposing the ordinance and emphasizing Comcast and Verizon already have pledged not to share customers' personal information.

Comcast and Verizon would have to deal with a "quiltwork" of regulation if thousands of municipalities in Pennsylvania passed their own online privacy ordinances, said Doug Smith, Verizon Pennsylvania's vice president of state government affairs. That could create "unintended consequences" for all parties involved, added Brian Jeter, a senior director of government affairs with Comcast.

**Trump's FCC chair has finally addressed the NBC license issue**

***Bloomberg***
**Facebook and Google Helped Anti-Refugee Campaign in Swing States**

***New York Times***
**How Many Watch People Netflix? Nielsen Tries to Solve a Mystery**

***Zap2It***
**Cable Top 25 for Week Ending October 15**

***Pennlive***
**After 50 years, 'it's time' to fix Pa. government with a constitutional convention: lawmakers**

Both representatives also stressed that federal law does not grant local governments the authority to pass ordinances addressing online privacy. Instead, they said, supervisors should table the ordinance and revisit the privacy issue with Verizon and Comcast when they re-negotiate the franchise agreements.



Falls resident Kim Jabat answered those comments with skepticism. "If they truly protect our privacy, what would it matter if this step is taken?" she asked. "They must be afraid of something ... There must be a reason why they're not so agreeable to do this."

Board Chairman Bob Harvie said he believes that Comcast and Verizon do not currently share personal information but speculated that company executives might change those privacy pledges in the future as a money-making measure. Supervisor Jeff Dence said at the meeting passing the ordinance years before Falls can re-negotiate its franchise agreements renders it little more than a "feel-good" measure. But Harvie said the ordinance's passage would make a "clear statement" that will stay in effect, even if the board's makeup changes following future elections. "Everybody's on notice that this is something we're serious about," Harvie added.

In addition, Gallagher said, the privacy requirements would apply immediately to any agreements forged between the township and new broadband providers beginning service within its borders. Harvie acknowledged that, if the companies agree to the privacy requirements independently in re-negotiations, the supervisors could then decide to rescind the ordinance. He also referred to "a lot of municipalities" watching Falls to see township supervisors' ultimate verdict on an online privacy ordinance.

Lower Makefield and Middletown — both in contact with representatives from Comcast, Verizon and four national broadband lobbying groups — are currently working on ordinance drafts their governing bodies hope to pass in the coming months. – ***Doylestown (Bucks Co.) Intelligencer***

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The state House of Representatives passed a bill Tuesday night that represents one way to backfill the bulk of a $2.2 billion deficit in **this year's $32.0 billion state budget.** The plan, like most considered in this cycle, relies mostly on borrowing, one-time fund transfers and other accounting maneuvers to belatedly balance the budget.

But because it does not meet Gov. Tom Wolf's targets for new, recurring revenues to fund state government, it seemed likely to serve mainly as the launch point for the next, and hopefully final, round of negotiations with the administration and state Senate. At worst, it could lead to continued stalemate. Senate Republican and Democratic sources made clear Tuesday night they had not agreed to the House's proposal, and would only begin considering it now. Wolf's office, meanwhile, continued to stump publicly for a new tax on gas production from the state's Marcellus Shale formation as a vital component piece of any final revenue package.

Pennsylvania is currently the only Marcellus Shale state without a severance tax on gas production, though producers here do pay impact fees on individual drill sites as they are constructed. There were signs late Tuesday such a levy could get a fresh chance to enter the late-stage talks as early as Wednesday. That's when the House Finance Committee is scheduled to consider a shale tax bill. Details of the proposal were not available Tuesday night, but several sources said if that bill passes out of the committee it could get consideration on the House floor as early as next week.

The shale tax was always going to have to be launched on a second track, however, as it is opposed by top House Republican leaders including Speaker Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny County, and Majority Leader Dave Reed. The consensus Tuesday was that it still had only an outside chance of being in the final revenue mix for this year.

**The tax code bill that won House approval Tuesday** on a 102-88 vote was really more of an authorization to borrow - it carries language approving a $1.5 billion cash advance against future revenues due Pennsylvania from the 1998 multi-state settlement with big tobacco companies. That would be a one-time cash infusion to largely cover a 2016-17 deficit that will force a portion of the future settlement payments - currently about $350 million a year and used for a variety of health-related programs - to be swept off in repayments to whatever lender steps forward.

**Tobacco borrowing has always been a part of the budget-balancing package this year,** but the House plan took it to higher levels so as to minimize the need for new taxes. As presented Tuesday, the bill has only about $85 million in new revenue from a variety of tax measures, none of which would hit the typical Pennsylvanian in the course of their everyday lives. They include:
* A projected $52 million from changes in the state's rules regarding businesses ability to deduct past years' operating losses against current taxable income.
* $20 million in new projected revenue from changes in procedures regarding state tax appeals and withholding of rent, royalty and other income paid to non-residents.
* $10 million in the current fiscal year from efforts to wring more sales tax collections from certain online sellers.
* $2.6 million from a new tax on the retail purchase of fireworks.

Some of those revenue lines would grow in 2018-19. But they are still small in comparison with a Senate-package - negotiated with Wolf in July - **that contained roughly $570 million in new taxes,** highlighted by its own version of a severance tax and other new taxes on natural gas consumption. Tax-averse fiscal conservatives in the House's 121-member Republican majority had enough strength to kill that plan, but they have struggled - until now - to offer a complete counter-proposal. In the interim, the state has lurched forward with an out-of-balance spending plan, **delaying payments,** taking out loans against funds held in the Treasury, and suffering the national black eye of **a credit downgrade.** Programs and services, however, have largely been unaffected.

There has been general agreement on some other steps - to be taken up in a series of follow-up measures - to balance the books, including $300 million in one-time fund transfers from apparent surpluses in various special state accounts; a **controversial sweep of $200 million** from state-established medical malpractice insurance provider; and new licensing fees and taxes on profits from a yet-to-be-completed expansion of legal gambling. But those were stalled by grinding fights over a final tax piece to meet Wolf's demand for about $400 to $500 million in recurring revenue to at least partially offset new recurring expenses in the current fiscal year.

With Turzai and Reed dead-set against a shale tax, a variety of proposals were considered including a new statewide hotel tax, application of the state sales tax on commercial storage, and a surcharge on motorists entering or exiting the state on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. All faltered in the House this month. Wolf, in the absence of a final revenue plan, has threatened **to move forward unilaterally with his own fiscal management plan,** which would include getting his own cash advance against future state-owned liquor store revenues and a lease of the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg. House leaders from both parties set their struggles aside Tuesday, if only temporarily, by simply agreeing to boost the previous cap on the tobacco borrowing from $1.3 billion to $1.5 billion. "We had folks on both sides of the aisle kind of say, look, we're fighting over a hundred million, two hundred million dollars," Reed said in describing Tuesday's House truce. "It's a thirty-two billion dollar state-funded budget. "Let's figure out a way to work through that and let's move on."

Taken together with the other transfers and gambling expansion, Reed said, "we think this package will take us through last year, this year and help balance next year as well." Democratic Leader Frank Dermody, D-Allegheny County, said House plan does set a course toward giving the beleaguered governor more options. But the absence of public statements and press calls after Tuesday's vote seemed to indicate all sides recognized that this was really only another step along the way.

The House floor debate was dominated by opponents, who mostly decried the imbalance balance between the proposed one-time revenue sources and the limited new, recurring revenue. "That is like buying groceries on a Visa card," complained Rep. Kate Harper, R-Montgomery County. "As much as I would like a (completed) budget, and I'd like it yesterday... I can't vote that we'll be paying back for the next 20 years a $1.5 billion loan for operating expenses." "As many of us say, we can't tax our way to prosperity," agreed Rep. Russ Diamond, a Republican from Lebanon County. "We also can't borrow our way to solvency... This revenue package before us is not a major tax increase today, but it will certainly call for a major tax increase in the future." But **when the roll call was taken,** 70 Republicans and 32 Democrats voted yes, apparently in hopes of getting the four-month budget deadlock off-center. We should know soon if it worked. – ***Pennlive***; **also in *pennlive.com*, "Welcome back to the show that never ends"**

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The Pottsville Free Public Library will host Brian Lockman, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Cable Network, on Thursday for a presentation on the History of Cable Television and Pennsylvania's Cable Television Pioneers. The free presentation starts at 6 p.m. Thursday at the library. Seats can be reserved by calling 570-622-8880.

"Mahanoy City and Pottsville were instrumental in the development of cable television," Jean Towle, library director, said Friday. Most Schuylkill County residents have heard about Mahanoy City's claim to being home of the first cable television system in the country. In 1948, General Electric appliance owner John Walson connected homes in the borough with a cable to bring in television signals not available because of the mountains blocking broadcast signals from Philadelphia and New York.

Lockman, author of **"Pioneers of Cable Television,"** will talk about Walson's role in cable television history as well as the contributions of Pottsville cable operators Bob Tarleton and Marty Malarkey. Named president and chief executive officer of the Pennsylvania Cable Network in February 1999, Lockman joined PCN in November 1994 after more than 15 years with C-SPAN. He served as one of C-SPAN's original four employees and spent more than 10 years as the network's vice president of operations, according to a bio provided by the library.

During his tenure at C-SPAN, Lockman produced and directed the first live television coverage of the Iowa presidential precinct caucuses, directed C-SPAN's first live coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and produced C-SPAN's coverage of the aftermath of the 1991 military coup in the Soviet Union. In addition, Lockman he served two years on the board of U.S. Capitol Radio-Television Correspondents Association, the organization comprised of the Capitol Hill radio and television press corps, serving one year as its chairman.

Lockman is a founding board member of the Pennsylvania Press Club and served for three years as its first president. He is also a founding board member of NAPAN, the National Association of Public Affairs Networks and a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association Bar/Press Committee. Since 1996, Lockman has been on-air host of the weekly interview series PA Books, and is a frequent host of the PCN Call-in program. He is author/editor of five books, PCN Tours released in 2003, "World War II: In Their Own Words" and "Pioneers of Cable Television," both released in 2005, "World War II Reflections," released in 2009, and "Arlen Specter: An Oral History" released in 2017. – ***Pottsville Republican-Herald*** **(Brian Lockman was the recipient of the BCAP President's Award in 2014)**

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