



Power up those dams

Daily Record/Sunday News staff editorial

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Assorted thoughts on assorted subjects:

Green power: Voith Hydro in West Manchester Township sure has become a popular stop for politicians.

Then-candidate Barack Obama stopped by last year and said he supported hydropower.

And last week Gov. Ed Rendell was at the turbine maker to tout a new study that says hydropower has great potential to boost the "green economy."

Amen to that.

Hydropower creates electricity without creating greenhouse gases.

Voith has been *adding* jobs -- even in this terrible economy.

And the company has the potential to grow even more if existing dams were upgraded with more efficient power generating equipment -- as PPL and Voith are doing at Holtwood dam on the Susquehanna River.

Here's a stunning statistic the governor cited: There are 80,000 dams in the United States, and only 3 percent are used to produce electricity.

Imagine how much green power and how many jobs could be created if generating capacity were added to even a fraction of those "unused" dams.

Actually, we don't have to imagine. The National Hydropower Association study says between 230,000 to 700,000 new jobs could be created -- along with enough electricity to power 31 million homes.

And since the dams already exist, powering them up wouldn't involve new river obstructions and resulting environmental problems.

Let's get moving on such projects.

Charter school: Speaking of dams, the York city school board is acting like one when it comes to a charter school proposed by YorkCounts.

The community improvement group is proposing an International Baccalaureate charter school -- starting with early elementary grades but eventually expanding to K-12 -- to be located in the Northwest Triangle redevelopment area.

This is a great opportunity to bring suburban and city students together for a curriculum that is, admittedly, not your typical three-Rs approach, but which has been shown to be a pathway to success for many students.

The York Suburban and Central school boards were quick to recognize the value in this option and signed on as sponsors. That's highly unusual, as public school officials have typically been antagonistic to charter proposals.

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Like city school officials.

A presentation on the proposal got a "chilly reception" from the York school board last week.

We understand board members want as much information as possible to make a good decision. But they seem overly antagonistic and close-minded to the possibilities here.

Granted, none of the charter schools in the city have posted outstanding -- or even good -- test scores. But neither have any of the district's own schools.

The status quo is *not* working.

City district officials should keep trying to find something that does work.

Those high-achieving suburban districts -- as well as former Northeastern Supt. Dennis Baughman, who is spearheading the effort -- see potential with this program.

Why would city school officials not be willing to work with their neighbors on this exciting concept?

This school is likely to happen with or without the city's cooperation. The school board should get on board.

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