

The Intelligencer

theintell.com

Twitter: @TheIntellNews

facebook.com/TheIntell



'Jungle Book' roars into theaters *ToDo*

\$1.00 THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2016

Hung up



PHOTOS BY MATT ROURKE / ASSOCIATED PRESS

About 100 Verizon workers picket outside one of the company's facilities Wednesday in Philadelphia. An estimated 4,600 Verizon employees from Pennsylvania joined thousands of others striking in eight states on the East Coast.

Verizon strikers focusing on jobs

Unions claim the company wants to freeze pensions, make layoffs easier and hire outside contractors.

STAFF and WIRE REPORTS

About 39,000 Verizon wire and cable workers, including an estimated 4,600 from Pennsylvania, walked off the job Wednesday morning after negotiations with the telecommunications company failed to generate any substantial progress.

The employees are members of the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and had been working without a new contract since August. The two unions represent Verizon workers in eight states from Virginia to Massachusetts.

"We're on strike to maintain good jobs and maintain our standard of living," said Keith Purce, president of CWA Local 1101, which represents about 3,500 workers in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Standing on a picket line in Manhattan with hundreds of union workers, Purce said they were prepared to stay out for "as



long as it takes."

He said that talks broke off last week and that no new talks were scheduled.

Verizon spokesman Rich Young said the

company was very disappointed that union leadership has called a strike. He said it has trained thousands of nonunion workers to

See **STRIKE**, Page A2

Zoning OK'd for creating New Britain Main Street

A retail and residential complex on the Knoell site will lead in creating a "university village."

By **CHRISTOPHER ULLERY**
STAFF WRITER

Redevelopment of Butler Avenue into the centerpiece of a new "university village" took a significant step forward at a New Britain council meeting Tuesday night.

The council unanimously adopted a mixed-use zoning ordinance for the area near the former Knoell property, 7 acres off Butler Avenue that housed the woodworking company, plus tracts on the other side of Butler Avenue.

The borough began looking at revitalizing the area after the Route 202 Parkway opened in 2012, siphoning traffic off Butler Avenue, which has since been designated Business Route 202.

The borough, which lacks a downtown atmosphere, wants to focus on Delaware Valley University students and faculty.

The idea is to turn the borough into a "Main Street American town associated with a university," said Steve Barth, the borough's economic development director.

Although the overlay encourages a walkable community, borough Manager Sam Bryant said it will not substantially impact zoning in the area.

"Because it's a zoning overlay, it's not changing an existing zoning. It adds another option for property owners," Bryant said.

The overlay allows residential development in areas zoned commercial, and commercial development in residential areas.

The overlay district is the first major step to bringing the village concept to fruition Bryant said.

Barth, who is also the economic development director for Perkasio, called DelVal the greatest asset in New Britain.

The Knoell property will be the first site developed by Ashley Property Management LP, which bought it for \$2.1 million in October 2014, records show.

See **VILLAGE**, Page A2

SEPTA

Continued from Page A1

SEPTA started planning for PTC shortly after the Rail Safety Improvement Act passed in 2008. Knuettel says the U.S. rail industry had suffered several deadly accidents in the years leading up to that.

The collision between a Metrolink commuter train and a Union Pacific freight train that killed 25 people in 2008 was the catalyst for the bill's passage. The Amtrak derailment last year in Philadelphia that killed eight and injured more than 200 people emphasized the need for an upgraded safety measure, rail officials said.

The law mandates that freight companies hauling toxic chemicals, intercity trains and commuter train systems implement a PTC program by Dec. 31. In October, Congress passed a three-year extension of the

deadline, to Dec. 31, 2018.

"The timing of the bill came at one of our lowest points in terms of capital funding," said Knuettel. "We put everything we had on the PTC program, which didn't leave room for any other upgrades. The Act 89 transportation bill in 2013 (in Pennsylvania) gave us a lot of help getting other projects started."

SEPTA spent seven years and more than \$320 million designing, installing and testing the technology, plus training employees.

"We used in-house staff to install the automated train controls," said Knuettel. "We contracted with an outside vendor to complete the overlay that made us PTC compliant. It was a good approach because it broke up the amount of work."

Knuettel said the installation involved upgrades to the train's on-board computer, the way-side equipment and signal

system, the controls and the communications. It was a challenging project to get everything working together smoothly, he said.

The complicated technology is a large reason why the U.S. freight industry struggled to meet the original deadline, said Ed Greenberg, of the Association of American Railroads.

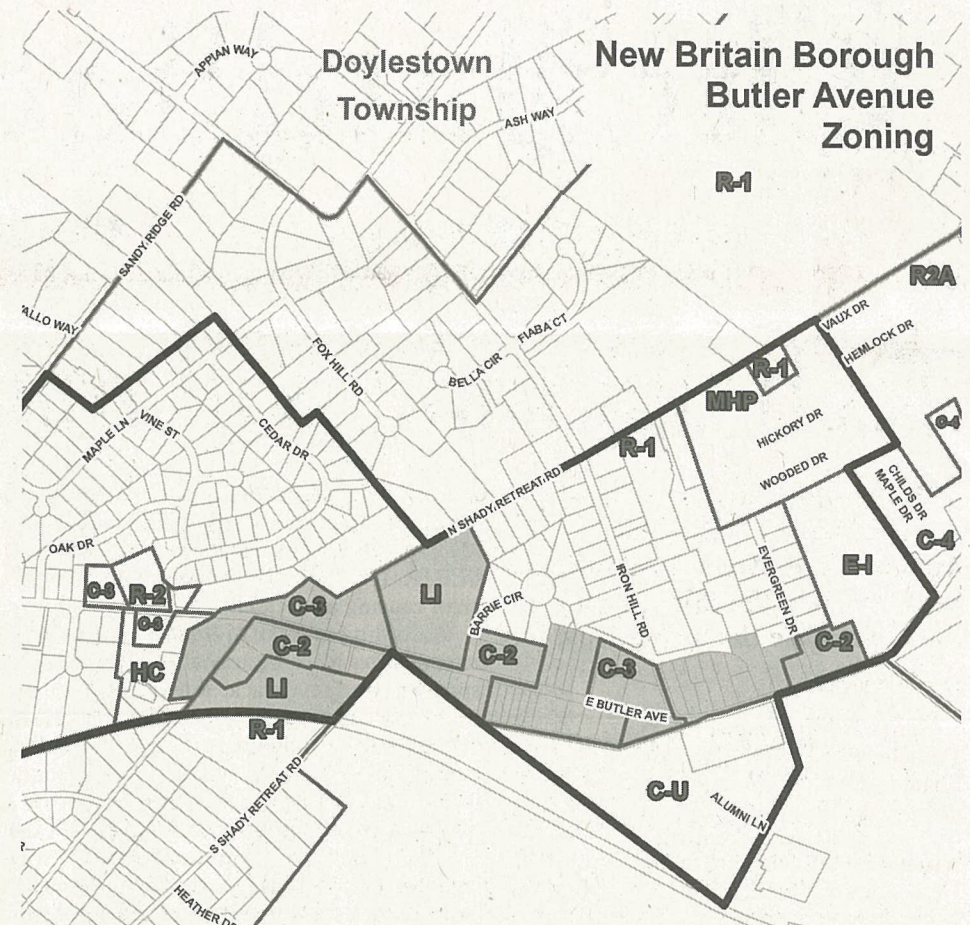
"Much progress has been made with the development and testing of this unprecedented technology, but our industry recognizes more work has to be done and is working all out to get PTC fully implemented," said Greenberg.

According to statistics from the railroads association, PTC is being installed on 60,000 miles of track across the country, expecting to cost railroads more than \$9 billion. The association expects 38 percent of track nationwide to have PTC by the end of 2016, with 63 percent of 22,066 locomotives equipped with the technology.

replacing underground cables in New York City for nearly 19 years.

"We have a clause currently that they can't just lay anyone off willy-nilly, and they want to get rid of that," said Collazo, a single father of three children. "I feel if the company had the opportunity, they would just lay people off."

But Young said the unions' talk about offshoring jobs and cutting jobs is



New Britain's new overlay zoning will allow residential development in commercially zoned areas and commercial development in areas zoned residential.

Strike

Continued from Page A1

fill in for striking workers.

"We will be there for our customers," Young said.

In Philadelphia, about 100 workers took to the streets near the company's headquarters and chanted, "Scabs, go home!" at nonunion replacement

Mike Panzerino, treasurer of CWA Local 1118.

"We're tired of fighting with the company," Panzerino said. "All we're asking for is a fair contract, and they don't want to give it to us."

Another inflatable rat was on display outside a Verizon office in Livingston, Essex County, New Jersey, where striking workers rallied Wednesday.

The unions say Verizon wants to freeze pen-

Village

Continued from Page A1

Kevin Reilly, vice president of Ashley Property's parent company, County Builders Inc., said his company has been working with the borough on the village project and waiting for the

ordinance to pass to move forward.

The developer wants to build a three-story building with retail and office space on the first floor and apartments on the top floors.

The zoning allows up to 117 apartments, Barth said.

Reilly said he expects construction to start in spring 2017.

Bryant said he was

optimistic about the project's potential.

"This is a huge opportunity for the borough, for its businesses, for its residents," Bryant said.

The news organization was unable to reach representatives from Delaware Valley University for comment.

Christopher Ullery: 215-345-3179; email: cullery@calkins.com; Twitter: @ulleryatintell