

“FAA changes impair flight tower programs.” May 19, 2014. Beaver County Times.  
[http://www.timesonline.com/news/local\\_news/faa-changes-impair-flight-towerprograms/article\\_98ed0c20-4cda-5a37-8b7e-e789509ea691.html](http://www.timesonline.com/news/local_news/faa-changes-impair-flight-towerprograms/article_98ed0c20-4cda-5a37-8b7e-e789509ea691.html)

In December 2013, the Federal Aviation Administration announced new rules for hiring practices, which meant air traffic school graduates would no longer have a preferred selection process for federal jobs. Eventually I learned about a discrimination complaint because students felt a new biographical questionnaire was improper, and when I connected the dots with an aviation lawyer in this story, several national media outlets began reporting on this angle.

"Local police dogs detect new opioid while federal canine training drags." Hearst TV stations' websites, including WGAL-TV. June 26, 2017.  
<http://www.wtae.com/article/local-police-dogs-detect-new-drug-as-federal-canine-training-drags/10214229>

While federal officials cited roadblocks in having drug-sniffing dogs detect fentanyl in the U.S., police in Connecticut and Canada have shown success.

“Moon Township police chief, trail group look to improve bicycling safety.” Beaver County Times. April 10, 2016.  
[www.timesonline.com/news/local\\_news/moon-township-police-chief-trail-group-look-to-improve-bicycling/article\\_9cc2c94c-fc15-11e5-967a-d7320a54ccfa.html](http://www.timesonline.com/news/local_news/moon-township-police-chief-trail-group-look-to-improve-bicycling/article_9cc2c94c-fc15-11e5-967a-d7320a54ccfa.html)

Three bicyclists died on Route 51 over 25 months between July 2013 and August 2015 on a state road, also a state-designated bike route. But a state safety committee found no reason to make changes. I found this issue after a source mentioned the scoop in passing when I was working on another assignment.

"State pushed as future video game mecca." Vermont Press Bureau for The Times-Argus and Rutland Herald. Jan 31, 2013.

<https://www.timesargus.com/articles/state-pushed-as-future-video-game-mecca/>

State legislators paraded the capital region's potential to recruit gaming companies. I quickly filtered through rhetoric during a hectic day to find what they wanted: Money in the state budget.

"County waiting for death-related earnings after pumping money in." Beaver County Times. December 2014.

[http://www.timesonline.com/news/local\\_news/county-waiting-for-death-related-earnings-after-pumping-money-in/article\\_89de7cfe-8b8c-11e4-a0cc-efcdc9ed60c3.html](http://www.timesonline.com/news/local_news/county-waiting-for-death-related-earnings-after-pumping-money-in/article_89de7cfe-8b8c-11e4-a0cc-efcdc9ed60c3.html)

A \$15 million Beaver County pension investment basically yields money when rich people die because their life insurance policies were taken over.

## FAA changes impair flight tower programs

By David Taube

A dramatic shift in how the federal government hires air-traffic controllers has prompted some graduates of aviation programs to file labor complaints.

Recent changes in a federal hiring process for air-traffic controllers have meant many aviation students aren't even advancing past a questionnaire screening for public-sector jobs, Community College of Beaver County air traffic program coordinator Jim Scott said.

Many students and graduates see the changes as discriminatory, a form letter to legislators says.

The changes come as the Federal Aviation Administration has sought to comply with federal diversity directives for air-traffic controller hiring, according to a letter the administration apparently sent. The National Air Traffic Controllers Association had posted the document, but FAA officials refused to provide a copy of the document.

As part of the changes, a new biographical questionnaire is now an initial qualifier for job seekers, federal officials say. The questionnaire asks questions like one's favorite class in high school, Scott said.

The new policy means students and certain graduates of about 36 collegiate air-traffic controller programs, including CCBC's in Chippewa Township, must take part in public hiring announcements for federal jobs, academic institutions say. Previously, graduates of air-traffic control programs that had partnerships with the FAA underwent a separate hiring process.

"I just hope the FAA just starts opening their eyes and sees the error they're committing," Scott said.

After the changes became public, many CCBC graduates later filed complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Scott said. Many feared doing so, though, thinking it could hurt their job chances with the federal government, he said.

"We're not looking to have a confrontation with the FAA but rather, we're trying to work with them to get this thing resolved," Scott said.

A February call for air-traffic controller positions drew more than 28,000 applicants for 1,700 jobs, FAA spokesman Jim Peters said.

About a month ago, Arizona attorney Michael Pearson said he also began a complaint process with the EEOC that could benefit graduates of college air-traffic controller schools who were waiting to be hired. He said federal data show students of such programs are actually more diverse than the general population.

Scott said the federal hiring changes will cost millions of dollars. As part of the financial burden, he pointed to how students who previously took the aptitude test now have results that don't matter, he said. The FAA pays \$800 per applicant to administer the test, FAA officials have shown, according to a 2006 aviation conference summary.

"They wiped out all those scores. They're no longer valid," Scott said.

According to an Ohio-based Kent State University aviation program, a federal inventory of possibly 3,000 applicants is no longer being used because of the hiring changes.

In the past, CCBC students would take an Air Traffic Selection and Training aptitude test before they graduate and then send names of graduates for an eligible-to-be-hired list, Scott said. It didn't guarantee employment, the FAA said, but if a panel selected people from the list, they'd go to the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City for additional training.

Members of the general public would take the same aptitude test, but they'd go through a hiring announcement and then be sent to the Oklahoma City academy. Other hiring avenues existed for veterans and air-traffic controllers in the private sector.

CCBC typically had 120 students take an aptitude test, where about 65 percent got jobs and many others waited for an opening in their two states of choice, Scott said. After a February job announcement, only about 25 to 30 students were invited to take an aptitude test, he said.

The FAA decided to implement the hiring changes last year, and the biographical questionnaire has puzzled many educators. CCBC educators informed students about the hiring changes in January, and about a dozen students left the program or shifted to other aviation programs at CCBC, Scott said in a previous interview.

In March, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., questioned Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx during a hearing why of 28,000 applicants, only 2,200 passed based on results of the biographical questionnaire.

Foxx suggested Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative Program schools could still be helpful.

“From a practical perspective,” Foxx said, “those who have been through the CTI program will have a leg up in the training process once they get through the first few rounds of the interview process.”

While one of the main criteria with the hiring changes outlined by the FAA was three years of full-time work experience, Scott said some people who met that requirement weren’t selected to proceed.

It’s unclear how the air-traffic control program will proceed in the future, Scott said. CCBC President Joe Forrester said in a statement there’s simply too much uncertainty in the direction the FAA will take in future hiring announcements for the college to determine long-term implications for the air-traffic control program.

But Scott said he is reviewing the program, and it could be refocused toward the private sector, which doesn’t pay as well as the public sector.

“My gut feeling is within the next year or year and a half,” Scott said, “this thing is going to reverse itself.”

After repeated inquiries in which FAA officials declined answering certain questions, a spokesman said, “We plan to make further improvements to the process before the next round of hiring.”

Local police dogs detect new opioid while federal canine training drags

While federal officials cited roadblocks in having drug-sniffing dogs detect fentanyl in the U.S., police ranging from Connecticut to Canada have shown success

By David Taube

Four days before Christmas last year, truck driver Erick Crespo-Escalante tried to deliver 25 brick-like packages of drugs in his 18-wheeler — according to police — while driving from California to Connecticut.

Police pulled the Arizona man over on Route 34 in Connecticut, noticed a large cardboard box in the front passenger seat and asked him about it. He told them what was inside: "S---," police reported him saying.

But what law enforcement did next is something that federal border agents are trying to figure out how to implement: Police had a drug dog detect fentanyl, an opioid that the DEA says can be 50 times stronger than heroin.

The drug is so powerful that DEA officials have warned it can kill people just by touching it. Todd Owen, executive assistant commissioner of the Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations, said last year during testimony to a Senate homeland security committee that synthetic variations can make the substance even more difficult to detect. According to a September 2016 Senate report on international mail security, fentanyl also can kill dogs that sniff it, even outside of a package.

But police in places ranging from Connecticut to Canada said they have successfully trained drug dogs to detect fentanyl.

On the scene, Shelton police officer Daniel Loris and his dog, Stryker, approached the truck, which police say they pulled over in Derby because the suspect failed to stay in his lane and failed to drive in the proper lane.

"Generally, the dog will hit anything similar to heroin," Loris said.

The dog alerted police to narcotics being in the front of the cab and the box in the passenger seat and also "hit" on several other areas, such as the driver's side door, police said.

Like other K-9 teams, the pair went through a state training program. Connecticut's police dog training has led the country in other areas in the past; in 1986, state police trained a black Labrador retriever named Mattie to be the first working dog in the U.S. to detect fire accelerants.

Police at the training center teach dogs to detect drugs, explosives or other materials. To reinforce a behavior, German shepherds get toys, and Labrador retrievers get food. Police said the dogs aren't specifically trained to detect fentanyl but react to heroin and related opioids.

Meanwhile, Owen told senators last year that Customs and Border Protection approximately 1,200 canine units are not trained to detect fentanyl. The canine program's director, Damian Montes, also told a House subcommittee on May 18 that research is underway for dogs to detect odors from fentanyl compounds.

Montes and Customs and Border Protection media representatives refused to answer questions about the canine program and fentanyl issues.

According to Montes' testimony, Customs and Border Protection is assessing the feasibility of safely and effectively adding fentanyl as a trained odor for canine teams that detect narcotics. He said a pilot project will continue throughout this year.

### **Canada touts new technique; US police, fire departments begin carrying backup**

In Canada, a training facility in Alberta has also trained canine teams and seized fentanyl, Royal Canadian Mounted Police said. Through their efforts, one dog team detected 12,000 tablets in British Columbia, officials announced in February.

Their breakthrough came after specialists "transformed pure fentanyl into a diluted liquid form, enabling our dogs to train with the real smell of fentanyl with no risk of inhaling it," according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The opioid epidemic has killed people across the U.S. at increasingly higher rates. In 2015 the DEA said drug overdoses have become the leading cause of injury death, surpassing the number of deaths by motor vehicles and by firearms every year since 2008. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report in December noted that while heroin death rates from 2014 to 2015 increased by nearly 21 percent, the death rate for synthetic opioids like fentanyl during that time increased by 72 percent.

Many times, addicts don't know when fentanyl is mixed with another substance. Just 2 milligrams, the equivalent of a few grains of table salt, can be deadly.

To help address the risks, several police departments across the country now have dog handlers carry a drug for their animals that helps counter the effects of opiates. The life-saving medication they carry is naloxone, more commonly known by its brand name, Narcan. Similarly, fire departments have equipped crews with the antidote.

The precaution helps reassure officers like dog handler Loris. He and Sgt. Michael Alogna of the Connecticut State Police canine training program said they've never had to use Narcan for their dogs and hope they never will.

"His life is more important than (detecting) a residue on a floor," Loris said. "If we see something, we can test it ourselves."

But local law enforcement has had setbacks. Last year, three police dogs in Florida accidentally overdosed from exposure to the substance, the Broward Sheriff's Office said, noting their dogs are not trained in fentanyl detection. Staff at an animal hospital used naloxone for one dog, Primus, and the animals returned to work the next day.

In the stop involving Crespo-Escalante in Connecticut, police said they found approximately 55 pounds of fentanyl, which the DEA recently said is the fourth-largest fentanyl seizure to date as far as it knows. He agreed on April 4 to plead guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute the substance. He is scheduled to be sentenced Sept. 21 in Hartford, Connecticut.

Stryker's reward? At the crime scene, Loris let him play with a squishy ball attached to a rope.



## Moon Township police chief, trail group look to improve bicycling safety

By David Taube

On the morning of Sept. 2, 2014, Moon Township Police Chief Leo McCarthy rode his bicycle on Route 51 for the last time.

He was almost a month away from his 60th birthday, heading south through Moon on his carbon-fiber road bike. He cruised along the road's shoulder when a woman driving a Kia Soul passed him in one of the two southbound lanes.

But when she made a right turn onto Thorn Run Road, her vehicle and his bicycle collided. The crash forced him to the ground, and he knew he broke his left arm.

With McCarthy injured, an ambulance took him to UPMC Mercy in Pittsburgh. The hospital staff also diagnosed him with a concussion and torn rotator cuff, he said. Eventually, doctors put three metal rods in his left arm.

McCarthy's crash was just one of about 1,300 incidents across Pennsylvania in 2014, according to a Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics report. Many crashes have rallied people together, but cycling advocates say much more work is needed to make cycling safer.

In January, an Ohio River Trail Council representative contacted McCarthy, noting three cyclists died on Route 51 over 25 months between July 2013 and August 2015. The organization wants to create improved cycling and pedestrian routes.

McCarthy responded with a letter, sharing details of his crash. Years ago, the Moon resident also cycled from his home to Chicago. The most dangerous portion of his trip, he said, was northbound on Route 51 from South Heights to Monaca.

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When Center Township resident Ed Quigley rides his bicycle on Route 51, he passes by three memorials where other cyclists have died.

"It's always a somber moment," Quigley said. "It's like riding past a tombstone."

The memorials each consist of a so-called "ghost bike," or bicycle painted white, often decorated with flowers. Quigley said he hopes when drivers pass them, they also remember what happened.

On July 21, 2013, 17-year-old Moon resident Emily Jancart died the morning after a car collided with her bicycle on University Boulevard near the Sewickley Bridge.

On Oct. 31, 2014, 23-year-old Braddock resident Taylor Banks was riding his bicycle from Aliquippa to Rochester when a truck hit and dragged him near the West Aliquippa Bridge, according to police.

On Aug. 6, 2015, 54-year-old Arthur Bell Jr. of Center Township died at UPMC Presbyterian after his bicycle was struck by a car in Hopewell Township near the South Heights border.

“I don’t think anybody wakes up and says, ‘I want to hurt somebody,’” said Quigley, a board member for the trail council. “But today we have issues with distracted driving. And it only takes one.”

In the crash that killed Banks, driver William D. Edenfield, 60, was charged with homicide by vehicle, causing an accident involving death, driving under the influence, careless driving, and failing to stop and give information. A trial has been postponed to Aug. 15.

All three cyclists who died on Route 51 were commuting to or from work at the time of the crashes. And that section of Route 51 is still used for a Pennsylvania bicycle route.

Bell’s brother, Brian, had gone on bike trips with him in the past, spending about a week in states like Washington, Oregon and California to bike about 30 to 100 miles each day, he said.

Bell, a Wexford area resident, now has a 12-year-old son, Parker, and 7-year-old daughter, Selina, also cyclists. But concerns for their safety and the dangers of distracted drivers talking on their phones have made his family rely on trails for biking.

On Route 51, he noticed how overpasses create issues for space with cyclists. Overpasses force traffic into narrower areas, and motorists don’t know whether to speed up and pass cyclists or not, he said.

After Bell's death, the Ohio River Trail Council sent a letter to Gov. Tom Wolf and other state officials asking to improve safety from Coraopolis to Monaca by enforcing speed limits and installing road signage, markings and arrows.

A Pedalcycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to PennDOT also heard details on Jan. 5 on the fatalities, Vincent Troia, the executive chairman, president and chief executive officer of the trail Council, said in an online message to supporters.

PennDOT spokesman Rich Kirkpatrick said committee members did not believe engineering or roadway issues caused those deaths on Route 51. He said the committee is not recommending changes there at this time.

There are cases when a state bicycling route could be changed. That could happen where there's a significant safety issue, such as an underpass with no shoulder or spot where cyclists can't ride without being in heavy traffic, Kirkpatrick said.

Still, trail council members believe state funding should be a priority so that the bicycle route can be upgraded and relocated to Woodlawn Road, which largely runs parallel to Route 51. [A petition on change.org](https://www.petitiononchange.org) asks for support to help convince committee members to prioritize funding and construction for the Ohio River greenway trail.

The group already has paid for engineering studies to develop an alternative route in that area and on other roadways. The council is also seeking grants to help improve the route. But raising money can be challenging, such as when grants need to be matched by a community.

"We're working hard, but it couldn't be fast enough," Troia said. "I would hate for someone else to get hit by a car."

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Like the Ohio River Trail Council, Moon's police department goes beyond talking about cycling safety.

The department has used federal drug forfeiture money to obtain helmets and bicycles, McCarthy said. Moon police have hundreds of helmets in storage. The department gives those away at community events.

McCarthy even has helmets in his office when people, familiar with his outreach, come and ask for them.

McCarthy has also obtained helmets thanks to the Allegheny County Health Department, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, PennDOT and others, he said.

A local sporting goods company, which wishes to remain anonymous, has even donated bikes, McCarthy said. Last year, children received bicycles at an Earth Day event at Robin Hill Park and a litter cleanup event at Mooncrest park.

At these events, McCarthy fits helmets for children. But sometimes he notices adults could use them, so a whole family can get them.

"We don't ask who you are, where you're from," he said.

While McCarthy can talk about issues from the perspective of cyclists, the police chief also knows they can create problems. Some cyclists disregard stop signs and red lights, and others ride on the wrong side of the road, against traffic.

"The most important thing," he said, "is that (cyclists) actually obey the law."

This year, McCarthy has told his officers to make traffic stops for cyclists who violate the law, he said. The intention is not to ticket people but to improve safety for everyone, so warnings can be given.

“I’m not ordering them to write every cyclist a ticket, especially children,” McCarthy said. “(But) if they have a history of doing this, I want real citations issued. Because reckless cyclists are a huge part of the problem.”

McCarthy still cycles, but since the crash he’s kept a promise with his wife, an emergency room physician, not to ride on roads.

“I only ride on trails now. And trails are great. There are so many trails in this area,” McCarthy said. “You can ride from the beginning of the Montour Trail in Moon Township all the way to Washington, D.C.”

“Ninety-nine percent of the time,” he said, “you’ll be on trails.”

State pushed as future video game mecca

By David Taube VERMONT PRESS BUREAU

MONTPELIER Some Champlain College gaming design and development majors say many of their gaming industry peers would like to stay in Vermont after graduation, but the industry in the state lacks the job opportunities that Montreal, Boston and New York City offer.

To change that, a group of legislators wants to find \$75,000 in the budget to help grow the video game development industry in Vermont in a way that's similar to how ski resorts are marketed and supported.

We want to help grow and, in fact, jump-start this industry, Sen. Anthony Pollina, a Progressive, Democrat and Working Families Party legislator from Washington County, said Wednesday at a news conference at the Statehouse.

The money could be used to advertise Vermont's game development possibilities in gaming industry publications, pay for internships, and help pay for certain private sector representatives to attend video game conferences and promote Vermont as a place to do business, according to Sam Andersen, executive director of Central Vermont Economic Development Corp.

There is already a small base of game developers in Vermont with offices in Burlington and Montpelier, for example, but there's plenty of room for growth, and legislators hope the proposed money for gaming development efforts would expand that existing base.

In the capital city, an educational technologist and a gaming industry professional have been working on their projects recently in a shared workspace called Local 64, above a downtown candy store. While they share workspace, they also share an interest in the gaming industry's future in Vermont.

Chris Hancock, the educational technologist, has been developing educational games and tools for his own business, Tertl Studos LLC. In the past when he has attempted to fill job openings, he hasn't found enough qualified applicants in the area, requiring him to train students to do the work.

Edmar Mendizabal, the professional video game developer and adjunct professor in the Champlain College Division of Communication and Creative Media, has been doing

work for GameBlocks, a firm based in South Pasadena, Calif., that provides online services to gaming companies. He also works on his own business, an independent game development company he co-founded, called 2Dawn Games, Inc.

Mendizabal also founded the Vermont Game Developers Association last year, and hes hoping to promote the state to grow a talent pool of around 100 people. Such a base of talent, the thinking goes, could be an effective incentive for existing out-of-state gaming companies to come set up shop here in Vermont.

Mendizabal knows how tough the game industry can be. He has traveled to major conferences in the past, like the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, but even though he networks and finds himself with business cards galore, he feels like an ant in an ocean of competitors, just one of hundreds and thousands who are looking for talent and ideas.

Advocates of the proposed funding, like Andersen of the CVEDC, suggest that financial stipends of around \$500 could make it possible for more gamers and game developers to attend similar conferences, professional journeys that they might otherwise not be able to afford. These individuals would be networking across the country and helping get the word out about Vermont as a good place to be for the gaming industry.

Although recent market research studies have indicated that U.S. sales for video games and gaming hardware declined in 2012, the global gaming industry was reported to be worth \$70.5 billion in 2011 and is expected to grow to \$117.9 billion in 2015 that's according to a report by Albany, N.Y.-based Transparency Market Research.

We want to make the buzz, create the buzz, that is going to continue to make Vermont the destination for these young professionals (as they) engage in this industry, Pollina said at Wednesday's news conference. He later suggested that some of the money might even be directed to Vermont hosting a major gaming conference of its own.

Officials yesterday also suggested that, if appropriated, the money would likely be administered by the state's Agency of Commerce & Community Development.

East Calais resident Jackie Weyrauch is a veteran of the gaming industry. After working in the business in Los Angeles, she relocated to Montreal to follow the industry there before landing in Vermont. Weyrauch has been involved with casting theatrical parts for video games, which has included audio work with Insomniac Games, Inc. titles, such as the Ratchet and Clank and Resistance series.

In underscoring the industry's economic implications, Weyrauch said the reach of the industry spans across numerous sectors beyond just entertainment.

It's encompassed a vibrant dynamic range of entertainment, education, social, medical and business applications, from massively successful multiplayer games, such as World of Warcraft and Minecraft, to social phenomena, such as FarmVille (on Facebook) and Words With Friends, Weyrauch said.

They're making our way into how we live our lives, she said, into how we spend our free time, how we learn, how we do business.

County waiting for death-related earnings after pumping money in  
By David Taube

BEAVER — Beaver County is still waiting for results after it financially resuscitated an insurance-related investment in 2011 that relies on rich people dying.

A \$15 million Beaver County pension investment basically yields money when rich people die because their life insurance policies were taken over.

But scores of wealthy, apparently healthy, people keep living, county financial adviser Frank Burnette said, ultimately delaying payments. And a recent payment has stalled for more than a year.

"I'm not wanting them to pass away quickly, but that's the nature of the plan," Commissioner Joe Spanik said.

A limited partnership called the Attilanus Fund I previously bought a collection of wealthy people's life insurance policies, so when a person dies, the fund gets money. But people haven't been dying, county officials say.

Burnette, the financial adviser for the county's retirement board, said Attilanus owns 87 life insurance policies, and 85 percent of those policies involve people who are 80 years or older.

"(It's) a statistical anomaly," he said during the retirement board's December meeting. On top of that, the county has been working for more than a year to try to get a recent payment, which has yet to happen.

In January, the county expected to get a payout of about \$842,000, but the payout came with \$271,000 in fees, county Treasurer Connie Javens, a retirement board member, said at the time.

Chief county Solicitor Joe Askar said the solicitor's office has been reviewing the amount in fees due. Askar said that payment was available because of an option to buy back one's investments.

Attilanus began in 2004 when it received its first investment, according to a quarterly report. To buy life insurance policies from wealthy people, the partnership picked



people who had previous, extenuating circumstances, which was verified by a doctor's exam, Spanik said.

Robert Davey, who has been listed as the chief financial officer of Attilanus, did not respond to requests for interviews last week and this week.

In 2005, the county's retirement board initially invested \$5 million when it was called the Atticus Fund. The county paid another \$5 million that year.

At the time, the actuary estimated payouts would come in three to seven years, Controller David Rossi said, noting he wasn't a county officeholder at the time. He said he probably wouldn't have made the original investment.

The retirement board consists of the three county commissioners, the controller and the treasurer. Only Javens and Spanik have been on the board for all of the county's investments with the fund.

In 2011, the county essentially increased its investment to \$15 million, Rossi said. The total amount invested so far is \$15.4 million, he said. A contract stated the total assets purchased were worth \$18.8 million due to accrued interest at the time of the acquisition.

"If we got out, we would have lost everything we had in it," Spanik said.

Because many former policy holders were surpassing their life expectancy even in 2011, Attilanus was underfunded and needed to pay some premiums, so the partnership went back to investors to see if they wanted to "maintain the policies," Spanik said.

Because life insurance policies were lapsing, those policies would expire if premiums weren't paid, county officials said. Around \$5.6 million, the vast majority of an even higher purchase price for the county was used to cover life insurance premiums, according to the agreement.

County officials also said the last investment increase allowed the county to become a note holder, so it's higher up on the priority list of payouts.

The contract also noted that due to the deal, Beaver County would own most of a then-\$24 million note, where the remaining \$9 million would be owned by Attilanus. Burnette, the financial adviser, said the company isn't buying any more policies.

Commissioners Chairman Tony Amadio and Rossi were in office for that updated contract in 2011. Commissioner Dennis Nichols was elected that year and began serving in 2012.

"We're 100 percent funded, and we diversified in different sectors," Rossi said of the county's pension system as a whole. "You have to make different decisions, and you hope they pan out."

Regarding the \$15 million investment overall, Burnette said he thinks some portion of the total value of the life policies could ultimately be distributed to the county.

"I'm not sure if we're going to get all of the money back," he said at the December retirement board meeting.

The 87 life insurance policies the fund has are worth \$198 million, Burnette said, and he added they should be able to deliver at least \$40 million in cash flow, which would give \$8 million or \$9 million to the county.

The county has been paid three times, which happened seven, five and four years ago, Burnette said after the meeting. The county received \$1.75 million prior to the 2011 updated contract, according to the county. No payments have occurred in the last three years, Burnette said.

While the county notes it's an alternative investment, the county has switched how it lists the money. The county used to note it had \$15 million with Attilanus, but now financial reports for the county's pension simply list the investment and return as \$0 each month.

"We have no options to get out," Burnette said at the December retirement board meeting. "We are completely obligated under a contractual agreement."

Rossi said the investment could be sold, though, and the note will mature in 2018, meaning the county will get the \$15 million back minus costs like the expected \$616,000 payout.

But life events in the policies could also mean earlier payments.