

Push for civilian flagmen

The Berkshire Eagle - Editorial

Article Last Updated: 08/11/2008 06:38:25 AM EDT

Monday, August 11

We're encouraged by Governor Patrick's determination to eventually replace state police with civilian flagmen at construction sites and hope the Legislature will support him in this effort. When this idea was floated several months ago, the police unions sank it with a well-orchestrated assault, but it has bobbed back to the surface. The unions argue that this is a safety issue, but just about every other state in the country uses civilian flagmen, undermining that argument, and it is more likely the unions want to protect what is no more than a nice perk. Many communities in the state are bound contractually to hire police to monitor construction sites, but if the state takes the lead by hiring and training civilian flagmen, cities and towns will follow when those contracts expire. The legislative leadership believes \$5 million could be saved annually, and towns could save money as well. With money scarce to fund government programs, this money is needed, and needed soon.

Painful losses in Dalton

When Dalton's \$6.6 million South Street reconstruction project is completed, with its sidewalk and bike lane, residents may feel the devastation was worth it, but at this point the losses overwhelm the potential gains. The project has cost the street gorgeous trees that have been there for decades, and aesthetically, this picturesque road is never going to be the same. The road was in major need of repair, and the bike lane and sidewalk will have benefits, but widening the road will encourage speeding, and may generate truck traffic that belongs on Merrill Road. Road reconstruction projects, even if beneficial, have drawbacks that have to be factored into the equation.