

Upper Paxton Township Newsletter

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Upper Paxton Township, Dauphin County

506 Berrysburg Road, Millersburg, PA 17061

Phone: (717) 692-4655 Fax: (717) 692-7031

Email: bawarfel.upperpaxtontwp@comcast.net

Website: upperpaxtontwp.org

Something New!!!

To most of the residents of Upper Paxton Township, it may appear that the operation of the Township moves along with little or no change. For the most part, this may be true, but there are subtle changes that are occurring. This newsletter, for one thing, is 'Something New.' The Township Supervisors and Staff are experimenting with this newsletter in an effort to better inform the residents of Upper Paxton Twp. as to what is happening in the Township.

One big change in the Township occurred in January 2012 when Tom Shaffer retired from the Board of Supervisors. Tom served as a Supervisor for 30 years, 26 of those as Chairman. His leadership called on the 30 years of cumulative knowledge and a hands-on approach in establishing direction for the Township. No-one knew more about Upper Paxton Township than Tom. Although Ron 'Pickle' Hepner and Joe Snyder remain as Supervisors, 2012 was a year of adjustment and change. John Orr replaced Tom on the Board. The Supervisors assumed roles and responsibilities once assumed by Tom, the staff adjusted to a new leadership team, and the current team of Supervisors began to establish their own sense of direction for the Township.

Most of the changes made to date are subtle. However, two significant changes are the initiation of a new detailed budget process and a fresh look at how we approach our road maintenance and construction. The new budget process was initiated with the 2013 budget, and it will allow a more in-depth review and analysis of all income and expenditures. As we move forward, we will better be able to identify where we can make better use of the limited resources of the Township. Changes to our road program is a work-in-progress. A significant amount of time has been spent educating both supervisors and staff by attending workshops to allow the Township to make wise decisions in relation to our road program. The goal is to develop a 3 – 5 year plan for our roads.

In conclusion, this newsletter is an outreach to the citizens of Upper Paxton Twp. to better inform you about your township. We will be interested in hearing from you as to whether you find the information herein of value, and if and how often we should do future newsletters.

ROAD MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS

As with most small townships, keeping our roads in good condition is the single largest budget item and requires the most attention. Upper Paxton Township has approximately 50 miles of roads, 38 miles are paved and 12 are unpaved. We can all relate to the dramatic increase in the price of gasoline over the past several years. The asphalt used in our road surfaces is also a product of oil, and the costs for a ton of asphalt has seen the same dramatic increase. Our challenge is to use our limited road funding to achieve the maximum benefit in maintenance and improvement projects. The township road crew and the supervisors have been attending various training sessions to learn how to extend the life of a road, what causes roads to deteriorate and how to determine if a road can be repaired or if total reconstruction is required.

Our goal is to develop a 3 to 5 year maintenance and improvement plan. With 50 miles of roads, this is proving to be a challenging task. It would seem logical to determine the worst roads, and do those roads first. That approach may not make the most beneficial use of the funds available; however, for example, we may be able to repave or extend the life of many miles of roads for the same cost of reconstructing one mile of badly deteriorated road. Once a road reaches a certain point of deterioration, the only option is to reconstruct the road by removing the deteriorated asphalt surface, refurbish or construct a new base, improve the subsurface drainage and install new asphalt surfacing. To place a new surface over a deteriorated road is not an option because the cracks in the road surface will travel up through the new surface within a relatively short time. In the coming year, you will see an increased effort to seal cracks and extend the life span of many roads; you will see some roads resurfaced that may not be badly deteriorated to save these roads from a costly total reconstruction, and you will see some total road reconstruction projects. Our approach to road maintenance and repairs is to apply the best practices available to each individual road. By doing so, we trust that the maintenance and improvement plan that we develop will reap cost benefits for the residents not only now, but in the future, by extending the life expectancy of our roads.

2013 ROAD PROJECTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Lincoln Drive/Fairlane Drive/Parklane Drive – Wearing Course - \$63,798.00

Lenker Drive/Ruby Road – Leveling & Wearing Course - \$13,338.00

Third Street/CenterStreet/Berry Mountain Road – Wearing Course - \$57,571.80

St. David Drive – Base Coat & Single Seal Coat - \$49,402.65

Kahler Road – Primer & Triple Application - \$15,120.60

Berry Mountain Road – Double Seal Coat, Primer, Triple Application - \$19,076.24

Snow Removal: Snow removal may not be on our minds right now, but in a few months it will be of prime importance to all of us. Our road crew takes pride in keeping our roads in good condition during and after snow and ice storms. The Township is prepared to have as many as five snow plows on the road during significant storms. You can assist the road crew by removing all basketball hoops, recreation vehicles or others vehicles from the street during the winter season so they do not interfere with snow plowing.

A LOOK AT OUR TOWNSHIP TAXES

Local taxes are used to support the operation of Dauphin County Government, the Millersburg Area School District, the Millersburg Fire Company, and Upper Paxton Township. A breakdown of these taxes reveals that a relatively small amount goes to support our township budget.

First, it is important for Upper Paxton Township residents to understand that currently they pay no real estate taxes to the township. Unlike most municipal governments, our real estate millage rate is 0%. Approximately 10 years ago, the township did have a real estate tax. At that time, the township was paid a fee for each ton of solid waste that entered the Dauphin Meadows Landfill, and this tonnage fee was adequate to allow the elimination of the real estate tax. Although the land fill is now closed and no tonnage fee is received, the township has not reinstated a real estate tax.

In February and July we receive tax notices. A review of each of these notices shows that only a very small percentage of these taxes go toward the operation of our township government. In the February Real Estate Tax Notice for Upper Paxton Twp. and Dauphin County, you will find 3 categories with millage rates, and some will have a special assessment for street lights. The large portion of these taxes are the County Real Estate and the County Library Taxes, that go directly to the County. The third tax is for Municipal Fire Protection. This is largely pass-thru money that comes to the township with 97% going directly to the Millersburg Fire Company, which also provides fire protection for Upper Paxton Township. The Township retains 3% for administration of this tax. If your neighborhood has Municipal Street Lights, there will be a special assessment amount shown which is based on the road frontage of your property. This also is pass-thru money with 100% going to PPL to cover the cost of the street lights. The July tax bill contains 2 separate notices. The first and generally the larger one is the Millersburg Area School District Real Estate Tax Notice. None of this money comes to the Township. The second notice reflects individual per capita taxes. The \$250 Occupation tax, the \$5.00 Act 511 tax and the \$5.00 Section 679 tax all go to the school district for its use. The only funds on this bill that come to the township are the \$3.50 Township Road tax and the \$5.00 Township per capita tax.

The primary tax that supports township government is the Earned Income Tax. This 1% tax is equally split between the township and the school district. This ½ of 1% tax is our biggest source of income.

Residents in many municipalities that are connected to cable for their television are also charged a franchise tax. This is a tax charged on the cable bill that is paid to the municipality for the right to install cable within the municipal street right of way. These taxes can range for 0% to 5% of your cable bill. Although this would generate additional revenue for the Township, the Township Supervisors view this as an additional burden and an unequal tax on residents that subscribe to cable. Therefore, Upper Paxton has no franchise tax in their agreement with Comcast. This explains why the cost of cable in many other municipalities is higher than in our Township.

We hope that this review of our local taxes will help our residents to understand that the township operates on very limited income from our residents. The Supervisors are very aware of the need to operate our government in a cost effective manner in order to maintain the tax base as low as possible.

The Upper Paxton Township Income Tax Office is no longer in existence. Township residents should continue to remit current year school real estate and school personal tax payments to Luanna Zimmerman at 506 Berrysburg Road. Delinquent school personal tax payments must be mailed to J.P. Harris Associates, P.O. Box 226 Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. The earned income tax collector for all of Dauphin County is Keystone Collections Group. All tax bills for Millersburg Borough residents must be paid directly to J.P. Harris Associates and cannot be paid at the Township Office.

Tax Collection Information

Current Year Real Estate & Per Capita Tax Bills:

Luanna Zimmerman, 506 Berrysburg Road, Millersburg, PA 17061

Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays – 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

(Open by appointment only in January; closed all holidays & Election Day)

Phone: (717) 692-3324

Delinquent Per Capita Bills:

J. P. Harris Associates, P.O. Box 226, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Phone (717) 766-4099, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Earned Income Tax (Dauphin County):

Keystone Collections Group, 546 Wendel Road, Irwin, PA 15642

Phone: (724) 978-0300 Fax (724) 978-0039

NOTE: Township residents requesting exoneration from the \$250 Occupational Privilege Tax must complete the request annually until age 70. The guidelines for the exoneration are established by the Millersburg School District – not by the Supervisors or the Tax Collector.

Animal Control and State Dog Law: It is unlawful to allow dogs, cats, and other pets to run at large. This means that when your pet is not on your own property it must be under direct control. The best way to control your pet is on a leash. All dogs over six months of age must be licensed. To register a dog complaint with the Bureau of Dog Enforcement online go to www.agriculture.state.pa.us website and fill out a dog complaint form. **The State Dog Warden currently assigned to Dauphin County is Mike Zeigler, who can be contacted at 717-480-9737.**

Township’s Cost to Surrender an Animal at the Humane Society:

Fee per dog:	\$122.00
Fee per pitbull:	\$265.70
Fee per cat:	\$135.70

What is the Humane Society's policy on feral cats?

HSHA does not accept feral cats to be euthanized. The organization only accepts feral cats to be altered and returned to the place from which they came (known as “Trap-Neuter-Return” or “TNR”). In order to receive a FREE Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) surgery for a feral cat, you must obtain a TNR Voucher from the municipality in which you reside. Only municipalities that contract with HSHA for services will have these vouchers to distribute. Each municipality will also determine how many vouchers may be distributed per individual. To find out if your municipality contracts with HSHA for services and if they are distributing TNR vouchers, contact your municipal building directly after January 1, 2012. Citizens who do not have access to TNR Vouchers may continue to participate in HSHA’s TNR Program on a paid basis. Costs are \$40 for a neuter and \$60 for a spay, plus additional costs for FeLV/FIV testing and basic vaccinations. An appointment is required for TNR services (regardless of whether you have a voucher). To schedule an appointment, please call HSHA at (717) 564-3320 and follow the recorded prompts.

Compost Center

The township operates a composting center on Isle of Q Road for the exclusive use of township residents. Branches, brush, leaves and grass are accepted at the site. Two years ago, the company that hauls the materials away for composting indicated that their expenses exceeded the revenue generated and the township was charged for their service. In 2012, the cost was \$2,750. Some individuals have chosen to use the site for disposal of materials such as bricks, tree stumps, trees, landscape materials, concrete etc. The township is incurring additional costs for the removal of these materials that cannot be processed as compost. Each year, a very large chipper is brought to the site. The compost materials are dumped into the bin and ground up. If the other materials were to be dumped into the chipper significant damage could occur to the equipment and the township could end up with no one to process the composting materials. Conversations with residents indicate that having the composting center available is appreciated. This past spring a new sign was erected at the site to explain what is allowed at the site. You can help us assure that the site is being used properly by being observant when using the site and reporting any violations to the township.

New Sewage Enforcement Officer:

The Township's appointed Sewage Enforcement Officer is Brian McFeaters. If you have a question regarding your on lot sewer system, you can contact Brian at 717-813-6492. If he is not available at the time of your call, please leave your name, telephone number and state that you reside in Upper Paxton Township in your message.

Uniform Construction Code Permit

Requirements: The Township has appointed the following UCC Administrator: **Light-Heigel & Associates, Inc., 906 North River Road, Halifax, PA 17032. Phone: (717) 896-8881 or 1-800-257-2190.** **Applications:** www.light-heigel.com. Information you may need to acquire a UCC permit:

- Lot or site plan showing property lines and size, setback lines, location of all the existing buildings or structures and new building or structure.
- Sewage permit and all applicable fees.
- Zoning Permit and \$10.00 fee. If it is a mobile home a County Addendum is needed
- Driveway Permit and \$25.00 fee or a Highway Occupancy Permit from PennDot if along a State Road.
- Contractors Workers Compensation Insurance Certificate.

Zoning Permit Requirements:

Zoning permits are issued by the Zoning Officer. Permits can be obtained at the Township Office or printed from the Township's website (upperpaxtontwp.org). A zoning permit is required to construct a new building or enlarge an existing one. Zoning permits are also required for pools, sheds, decks, signs and temporary structures. Zoning permits are not required for minor repairs or alterations or normal maintenance activities that will not alter the footprint of a structure.

Grass and Weed Control: The owner or occupier of a lot must keep the vegetation cut to a height of no more than four inches. Agricultural District in annual crop rotation is specifically excluded.

BURN ORDINANCE ADOPTED

At the request of township residents, the Township Supervisors adopted a Burning Ordinance that permits the township to have greater control over the burning of toxic materials. Most of the regulated materials noted in the ordinance are already restricted under state air quality regulations. The ordinance was primarily directed at eliminating the burning of materials such as: tires, rubber from electrical wires, household garbage that contains plastics, furniture, pressure treated wood and other similar materials that release toxic substances in the smoke. The ordinance does not prohibit the burning of papers or cardboard in a proper container. (Recycling of paper and cardboard is a much preferred alternative.) Farmers are not prohibited from the burning of brush and trees. At no time was this ordinance intended to be a ban on burning as erroneously reported. No one should be forced to stay indoors or keep their windows closed because of someone in the neighborhood is polluting the air. A complete copy of the burn ordinance can be found on the township's website: www.upperpaxtontwp.org or a copy can be picked up at the township office.

Controlled Burn Notification

When individuals smell a significant amount of smoke a 911 call often follows. The fire company is dispatched only to find a controlled burn. Farmers and landowners that plan to have a controlled burn of brush or and agricultural burn are requested to inform the county emergency management office prior to the burn. This will allow the fire company to make a proper response when a call is received reporting "smoke in the area" without knowledge of a specific fire in this area. The number to call to report a controlled burn is 800-844-9110, **do not call 911**. Your location and burn information will be recorded and you will be asked to call back when the fire is completely extinguished.

Township Information

Upper Paxton Township provides highway and street maintenance and the general welfare and safety of the public for a population of 4,161 at the 2010 census.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the township has a total area of 31.1 square miles, of which, 26.0 square miles is land and 5.1 square miles is water. Sources of funding include local taxes and grants from Liquid Fuels Funds.

TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS' MEETINGS

The question has been asked as to why both official monthly meetings are not held in the evening to permit more of the working public to attend. This is a legitimate question and there are several reasons that we do this. There is actually one Regular Township Meeting each month and one workshop session each month. At the Regular Meeting, action is taken on major items of importance such as adoption of ordinances, approval of minutes, etc. This meeting is at 7:00 pm on the second Wednesday of each month. The Workshop Meeting is intended to be more of a working meeting. The meetings are scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of each month at 9:00 am. In 2013 the exception to this will be the December meeting which would fall on Christmas Day. This meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 23 at 9 am. The reason for the daytime meeting is it allows a working session with our staff without paying them overtime or asking them to give up their evening. In addition, many individuals and businesses who do work with the township prefer the daytime meeting. The daytime meetings also allow the Supervisors and staff to make site visits or inspections to better understand points of discussion or action at the meeting. The meeting schedule for 2014 will be established at the organizational meeting that is required by law to be held on the first Monday of the new year.

Fourth Wednesday of the Month – Workshop Meeting @ 9:00 a.m.

(except workshop mtg. on Wednesday, December 23rd)

Second Wednesday of each Month - Regular Meeting @ 7:00 p.m.

Officials:

Board of Supervisors: Ronald Hepner – Chairman

John Orr – Vice-Chairman

Joseph Snyder – Supervisor

Betty Warfel – Secretary/Treasurer

Randy Witmer – Zoning Officer

Stephen Erdman – Roadmaster; Robert Coleman & Robert Hooper – Road Crew

Peter Howland, Esquire – Solicitor

Zoning Hearing Board:

Randy Feidt – Chairman, David Fralick – Secretary, S. Kirk Miller – Member,

Michael Clark - Alternate

Reminder:

VOTE

General Election

Tuesday, November 5, 2013