

BERN TOWNSHIP



in the news.....

WINTER 2019

2018 in Review

We reflect on our 2018 accomplishments and look forward to a new year of township productivity.

This newsletter will report to you the accomplishments and activities of Bern Township during the year of 2018. There were challenges for all of us during the past year – heavy rainstorms and flooding, storm damage, the spotted lanternfly, citizen’s protests at the Berks County Residential Center, temporary structures for the Union Fire Company and Northern Berks EMS while the Wall Street Bridge is closed, proposed development concerns, a proposed transmission power line and the much anticipated Wawa opening. The year also brought many changes to staff and volunteers serving the township.

We again thank our committee / board members and paid staff for their service to our community. We thank those who volunteer their personal time to serve our community for no compensation. All of you are very important to Bern Township and we recognize your dedication to the quality of life in your community.

At Bern Township, in everything we do, we believe in providing the best service possible to our residents. We do this by continually training and learning, coming to work inspired and making our best effort. Welcome to Bern Township!!

For those of you new to Bern Township, residents and businesses, we welcome you to the community. Together, we can continue to make Bern Township a great place to be. ❖

Please help to support your newsletter by purchasing ad space. Please call 610-926-2267 for information. We thank the businesses that have supported your newsletter

Greenfields Fire Company

The all-volunteer staff of the Greenfields Fire Company responded to over 410 calls during 2018. August was the busiest month of the year with 48 calls.

The fire company responded to various calls for help, including vehicle accidents, vehicle fires, structure fires and brush fires.

The company remained vigilant with their drill practices during the year including the participation in the Reading Airport Familiarization Training.

In usual fashion, the Greenfields Fire Company gave Santa’s reindeer the day off on December 2 while they gave Santa a ride through the neighborhoods on their fire truck to the delight of all.

Finally, Greenfields Fire Company is always looking for new volunteers for the fire company. If you think you might be interested in learning how to fight fires, serve your community and join a second family, visit the fire station on Route 183 at the airport, or call 610-374-9283 and leave a message, or email the Chief at mauker@greenfields55.com ❖

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BERN TOWNSHIP

1069 Old Bernville Road
Reading, PA 19605

Hours: Mon-Thur 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Fri - 8:30 am to 12 pm

Phone: (610) 926-2267

Fax: (610) 926-9028

www.berntownship.org

TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

Lucille M. Brady	610-376-5039
James Dailey	610-926-1941
Irene Reed	610-926-7621
Jeff Thompson	610-371-9411
Boyd C. Wagner	610-372-2121

SUPERVISORS MEETING

1st Tuesday of the Month - 7:00 pm

Township Staff

Brian Potts	Manager
Diane DeJesus	Secretary / Treasurer
Wesley Waugh	Chief of Police
Steve Edwards	Assistant Road Foreman

Township Contacts

LTL Consultants 610-987-9290	Building Inspector / Zoning Officer
Lori Hozza 610-916-9919	Municipal Authority
Jamie Neuin 610-916-8955	Tax Collector
Berks Envirotech 610-375-7640	Sewage Officer
Kevin Hinkle 484-335-3289	Emergency Management

Non-Emergency for Police, Fire, Rescue & Medical
610-655-4911

Township Monthly Meetings

Planning Commission	2nd Tuesday at 7:30 pm
Municipal Authority	4th Wed. at 11:00 am
Solid Waste Commission	2nd Wednesday in Mar. & Sept. at 7:00 pm
Zoning Hearing Board	Meeting dates as needed
Recreation Board	Meeting dates as needed

POLLING PLACES

1st Precinct	Bern Township Municipal Building
2nd Precinct	Ontelaunee Grange Hall
3rd Precinct	Greenfields Fire Co. Social Hall

TRASH COLLECTION INFO

Bern Township Trash Collection Districts:
Greenfields / Riveredge Acres

Orchard Hill Area

(West Leesport & Rick Road)

Bern Manor Area

(Prison Road, Kercher & Mull Ave, Burdan Drive)

Willows Area

(Cathy & Christina Drive, Almark Way)

Northwest Area

(Ziegler, Park Roads, Brossman Court)

About Bern Trash Collections:

Every week - six (6) 35 gallon bags or cans per household, one (1) bulk item per week allowed

NO items containing Freon, automotive tires, hazardous waste or construction material

Collection Dates:

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; April 5, 12, 19, 26;

May 3, 10, 17, 24; June 1, 7, 14, 21, 28;

July 6, 12, 19, 26; Aug. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30;

Sept. 7, 13, 20, 27; Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25

Visit www.berntownship.org to view the 2019 trash flyer

CALL 610-926-2267 the day of collection to report a missed trash collection - messages can be left on the answering machine until midnight

RECYCLING COLLECTION INFO

About Bern Recycling Collections:

Every other week

DO NOT USE PLASTIC BAGS!

*Place clear, brown and green glass containers, plastic, tin, Bi-metal and aluminum cans in recycling container. Place newspapers in paper bags or bundle. Cut cardboard and place in paper bags or bundle. **Items NOT collected for recycling:** paint cans, tires, batteries or large appliances.*

Collection Dates:

March 14, 28; April 11, 25; May 9, 23;

June 6, 20; July 5, 18; Aug. 1, 15, 29;

Sept. 12, 26; Oct. 10, 24

Visit www.berntownship.org to view the 2019 recycling flyer

CALL 610-926-2267 the day of collection to report a missed recycling collection - messages can be left on the answering machine until midnight

Visit www.berntownship.org to view the 2019 leaf and yard waste flyer

2018 in Review

Bern Township Committees

The various Bern Township Committees met during the year to conduct business on behalf of the township.

Zoning Hearing Board

The Zoning Hearing Board reviewed three projects / issues during 2018. The Board rendered decisions on a residential driveway application, a commercial parking lot application and ruled on the appeal of the zoning officer's determination that the Reading Behavioral Health facility use meets the zoning of the land.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission met 11 times through the year to review Land Development and Subdivision Plans to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

The Commission reviewed two minor residential property annexation projects. The commercial projects receiving a recommendation of approval were Berks Agricultural Building vestibule addition, Reading Behavioral Health Land Development Plan, Teleflex Annexation Plan and the Berks County Industrial Development Authority (Berks Park 183) Phase 1 Preliminary Land Development Plan. The Commission also reviewed plans for Berks Park 183 Building E, a residential subdivision on West Leesport Road, Classic Harley Davidson addition and the Reitnauer Trailer Manufacturing Preliminary Plan.

Solid Waste Advisory Commission

The Solid Waste Advisory Commission met three times through the year to discuss methods of educating residents on the benefits and requirements of recycling and how to restrict the yard waste center to only Bern Township residents.

The township received a DEP Recycling Performance Grant award of \$15,042.00 for our 2016 recycling efforts. This was \$922.00 less than our 2015 grant award. The township completed and submitted the 2017 Recycling Performance Grant application to DEP for 1,577 tons of recycled material. This amount is 505 tons less than 2016. We received our 2017 Recycling Performance Grant award of \$11,217.00, a significant drop from 2016.

The township curbside recycling program collected a total of 262.69 tons of material in 2018. This was approximately 60 tons less than 2017's amount (322.93 tons).

The township continues to participate in the Berks County Cooperative Purchasing Contract for leaf and yard waste removal. The contract was



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renewed for another two-year period. The cost of dumpster removal is escalating by \$40 per year which could potentially double our 2015 service costs by 2020.

DEP awarded an equipment grant to us for \$239,292.00 to make future purchases of a 5 ton dump truck, a backhoe, a leaf vacuum and for reimbursement of a portion of costs of a ten ton dump truck we purchased in 2017.

Ag Security Commission

The Agricultural Security Commission did not meet in 2018 as there were no applications submitted for their review and recommendation.

We thank all of the committee members for devoting their time on behalf of the township. ❖

Berks County Recycling News:

www.co.berks.pa.us/swa

Electronic Waste & Tire Recycling:

Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays

8:00 am to Noon

Fees apply for tires

County Recycling Center

1316 Hilltop Road, Bern Township

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Dates:

8:00 am to 2:00 pm rain or shine

April 13, 2019

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

October 19, 2019

Berks County Agricultural Center

Paper Shredding:

8:00 am to 2:00 pm rain or shine

April 20, 2019

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

October 12, 2019

Berks County Agricultural Center

2018 in Review

2018 Finances

The township's General Fund income for the year totaled \$3,656,272.00. This amount is \$260,300.90 (7.6%) more than 2017. The following is a breakdown of the General Fund revenue amounts for 2018:

Real Estate Tax	\$1,442,933	39%
Act 511 Tax	\$1,471,278	40%
Permits & Licenses	\$186,479	5%
Fines	\$47,021	1%
Charges for Service	\$146,318	4%
State Pension Aid	\$140,532	4%
Gov't Revenue	\$88,408	3%
Reimbursements	\$82,623	3%
Police Services	\$50,680	1%
Total Revenue	\$3,656,272	

The General Fund expenses for the year came in at \$3,603,102.00. This amount is \$236,331.78 (7%) more than the expenses for 2017. The following is a breakdown of the township's General Fund expenses for 2018:

General Government	\$371,428	10%
Debt Service	\$4,336	0%
Fire Companies	\$38,744	1%
Police Protection	\$1,235,594	34%
Building Inspections	\$82,571	2%
Roads & Highways	\$644,734	18%
Recycling Center	\$36,086	1%
Pensions	\$328,370	9%
Insurances	\$810,789	23%
Equipment Escrow	\$50,450	2%
Total Expenses	\$3,603,102	

The general fund tax amount will remain at 2018 levels. The breakdown of the total 3.936 mill tax is:

General Fund	3.67 Mills
Capital Improvement	0.116 Mills
Fire Protection	0.15 Mills
TOTAL	3.936 Mills

How do we compare with our neighbor's tax rates? The City of Reading (17.689 mills), Muhlenberg (5 mills), Ontelaunee (4.05 mills), Leesport (5.72), Lower Heidelberg (5.536 mills) and Spring (3.95 mills) are higher. Penn (1.5 mills) and Centre (0.36) are lower. ❖

2018 Staff Changes

The year 2018 was the year of transition for many of our team members. Some of our staff called it a career and moved on and as a result we have some new faces on the team.

Kurt Lowther ended his 15 year term with the Bern Township Municipal Authority due to work requirements and Frederick Gurman was appointed to the open position. We thank Kurt for serving his community and wish him the best in his future endeavors. Marianne Sammel retired as the part time BTMA staff and Annette Schaeffer was hired to fill the position. We thank Marianne for her 15+ years of service.

Joe Krezdorn resigned from the Solid Waste Advisory Commission after 8+ years and we wish him the best in his future endeavors. His position remains unfilled at this time.

Megan Young joined the emergency management staff as the Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator. We welcome Megan to the team and look forward to working with her.

Brian Fisher retired as the Greenfields Fire Company Fire Chief after 7+ years and Mahlon Auker has been appointed to the Chief position. We thank Brian for his years of service to the community and wish him the best in his future endeavors. We welcome Chief Auker to the team and look forward to working with him.

Craig Priebe stepped down from the Planning Commission panel but remains involved as an Alternate Planning member. Other newly appointed Alternate Planning members are Kelly Wickersham and Jim Colflesh. We welcome Kelly and Jim to the team and look forward to working with both of you. Janice Eickhoff retired as the Planning Commission Secretary and Lori Hozza / Diane DeJesus were appointed to fill the position. We thank Janice for her 18+ years of service to the Planning Commission.

A vacant one year Alternate Zoning Hearing Board member position was filled when Mike McDermott was appointed to the position. We welcome Mike to the team and look forward to working with him.

Sergeant Strand and Sergeant Hoffert retired from the Police Department and we wish them the best in their future endeavors. Sergeant Strand served the community for 29 years and Sergeant Hoffert served the community for 30 years. We thank both men for their long tenures of service to the township. With the retirements and vacancy, Officers Joshua Santos, Mike Archutowski and Angela Seyler were hired to the Bern Township Police Department. We welcome all of you to the team and look forward to working with you. ❖

2018 in Review

Emergency Management Committee

The Emergency Management Committee was pleasantly surprised when we received notice from the Commonwealth of PA that our \$15,000 grant application was approved to fund the temporary structures to house equipment for the Union Fire Company and Northern Berks EMS while the Wall Street Bridge is closed for reconstruction. We received the payment and provided \$7,500 to both organizations.

Exercises and training opportunities were offered during the year. Staff participated in the monthly Berks County Emergency Services meetings, FEMA training, traffic incident management, Emergency Communications Planning, Hazard Mitigation Plans and Disaster Management training. Staff also attended the Reading Airport Familiarization Training Program.

Staff attended the planning / preparation meetings for the World War II Weekend and staffed the Emergency Operations Center during the show.

Staff conducted drive-by evaluations of flooding damages to properties and reported their findings to Berks Emergency Services.

The township Emergency Operations Plan, including the Notification and Resource Manual, was updated during the year. The Continuity of Operations Plan was also updated for all township departments. This plan guides us in how we continue to provide our services to the community even if we lose our township building, staff or other vital equipment or infrastructure.

Please remember the "Bern Township Guide to Emergency Preparedness" guide is available on our website. We encourage you to print or save a copy of the guide for yourself.

The 2019 goals of the emergency management staff is to work on social media platforms, make minor improvements to the emergency operations center, have copies of the emergency preparedness guide available at the township building and to complete a 10 year Strategic Plan for the department. ❖

Board of Supervisors / Administration

The Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to give the residents of Bern Township a tax break for 2019 by repealing the Per Capita Tax. The Board of Supervisors also unanimously voted to approve a balanced budget for 2019 that does not include any tax increases or fee increases.

(Continued on Page 6)

Road Department

The road department was active in 2018 by completing road renovation projects, replacing storm pipes, attending training classes, repairing the Mill Road culvert and making roadway changes to improve traffic flow. This work is in addition to their usual responsibilities, including leaf and yard waste collection, drop-off center material management, respond to PA One Call markings, patch potholes, mow vegetation along roadways, maintain the township lawn and soccer field, general facility building repairs, street sweeping, clean storm drains, plow snow and salt, repair signage, trim trees, paint lane lines, arrows and stop bars at intersection and service the road and police department equipment.

Portions of Van Reed, Ziegler, West Leesport, North Tulpehocken, South Tulpehocken, Golf, Meadowview, Stinson, MacArthur, White Oak and Palisades roadways were repaired / resurfaced by the road department and their paving machine.

The 2018 Road Project was successfully completed \$11,445.00 under budget at a total cost of \$311,499. The project included repaving West Leesport Road between Cross Keys Road and Peach Blossom Lane, repaving the township facility parking lot and seal coating the entire length of Palisades Drive. Since 2008, we have now repaved a total of 33 road sections involving over 15 miles of roadway, not including seal coat applications.

The road department discovered a failing township stormwater pipe within a residential property on Lahoma Lane. The road department worked with the landowner to develop a plan to replace the failed piping that worked for both parties. We thank the landowner for their patience while we dug up the driveway and yard to replace

(Continued on Page 8)

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2018 in Review

(Supervisors / Admin. (Continued from Page 5))

The Board also approved the agreement renewal for township participation in the Berks County MS4 Steering Committee stormwater program, re-establishing the transportation committee to update the township's traffic plan, a Route 183 detour route agreement with the BCIDA to allow public traffic to detour over the private roadways if Route 183 is closed for an emergency and approved the Berks County Municipal Hazard Mitigation Plan that recognizes manmade and natural hazards and how we might deal with them.

The township recognized savings to residents during 2018 in the amount of \$604,277.91 by securing grant funding, completing certain work in-house instead of paying consultants, bulk purchasing, staffing economies, working safely, quoting services for savings and repealing the Per Capita Tax. The total dollars saved since 2006 is now at \$4,273,780.00. We continue to prepare five year financial plans to maximize the power of your tax dollars. We analyze our budget-to-actual revenues & expenditures on a monthly basis. We engage these practices because our non-taxable land value remains at 32%, causing a real estate tax loss of \$778,608.00.

You may have noticed the township has embarked on a Capital Improvement program for our campus. We sacrificed improvements to our physical plant during and after the Great Recession in order to maintain funding for services to residents. We are now at the point where we really need to make improvements and we have identified a funding stream to accomplish this. The 2018 projects included resurfacing the parking lot, repainting the parking lot lines, repairing the safe door, replacement of roofing shingles on the salt shed, replacement of the township building entry doors and replacement of the garage storage building man doors. More projects are scheduled for 2019 that include painting, door replacements, electrical revisions, fire alarms and tennis court resurfacing.

Administrative staff attended a total of 27 webinars / seminars on subjects including stormwater program, Affordable Care Act regulations, human resource policies, long range weather forecasting, FEMA training, economic forecasts, retail development forecasts, municipal law, municipal budgeting and finance and received training to be a trainer in the spotted lanternfly. Staff also participated in the county stormwater steering

committee, the county cooperative purchasing council, the Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association and the Reading Behavioral Health Community Advisory Council. Four Bern Township residents were appointed to the community advisory council and also attended the first meeting.

Township staff also provided training to other entities and municipalities. Staff partnered with the Berks County CFO to provide training to 17 other municipalities on how to create long range financial budget plans. Staff also provided training to the Reading Airport staff and tenants on the spotted lanternfly. We also received a feather in our hat when county planning staff recognized our stormwater program narratives as one of the best in the county.

The township received a five year stormwater permit from DEP. We also received our spotted lanternfly permit from the PA Department of Ag. Staff also completed an in-depth submission and testing process to renew our Notary License.

The township communicated to residents via email blasts on topics such as trash and recycling collection schedule changes, newsletters, leaf vacuum issues, spotted lanternfly information, parking lot and road projects information and detour routes, Reading Behavioral Health Community Advisory Council application, dog canvassing, drug awareness programs, Schuylkill Valley Library request for donations to businesses and the Citizen Police Academy notice.

Please contact the township office if you would like to be added to our email address list. All email addresses are kept confidential.

Efforts to study, design and develop a walking trail behind the Reading Airport along the Schuylkill River continued. A sketch drawing of the trail has been prepared, material quantities and estimate of costs have been established. Old paved roadbeds have been found to use for the walking trail. The development of this trail is through a cooperative effort between the Berks County Industrial Development Authority and Bern Township.

Staff projects for 2019 include the continued work to create the walking trail, facilitating the recycling grant program, preparing bid documents for our next trash and recycling collection contract, maintaining our stormwater program, continue our capital improvement program for our physical plant and continue our financial planning and monitor our revenues and expenses. ❖

2018 in Review

Police Department

The Bern Township Police Department was very active in 2018. The department continued to provide training opportunities to the public, institutions and businesses during the year. An active shooter presentation was delivered to the Parent Trainers of Partners in Parenting in Reading. Department personnel also met several times over the year with senior staff at the Berks Career and Technology Center, West Campus, to discuss security plans and best safety practices for BCTC West. Training drills were conducted at the BCTC West and East campuses jointly with Central Berks Regional Police Department. Department personnel prepared and presented a drug awareness program for the teachers at BCTC West and will offer this training to businesses and the public in 2019. The department also presented an Active Assault program to the BCTC West Transportation Committee.

The department continued its *Operation School's In* school bus and bus stop safety program. Efforts of patrol enforcement activities continue to be based on the monthly crash analysis program.

Staff was also busy catching the bad guys. The department used social media to post a video of a suspect who was engaged in thefts from vehicles in the Greenfields area. The suspect was identified by another area police department and has been arrested. Patrols also apprehended a man carrying stolen tools through Greenfields during an overnight shift. The tools were returned to their owner and the suspect was charged with theft.

The department also continued with internal training practices. Three new police officers were hired and successfully completed their field training periods. Promotions were also given to veteran officers to the positions of Detective Sergeant and Patrol Sergeant.

Finally, the department staff continued the Citizen Police Academy program with Muhlenberg Township, Northern Berks and Laureldale Borough Police Departments. The program provides community residents with an opportunity to learn about the jobs of local police officers and share some of their experiences in an informative, interesting, thought-provoking, and fun environment. There is no cost to attend the Citizen Police Academy. ❖

BTMA NEWS

MAJOR SEWER PROBLEMS

In January we encountered a big, expensive problem at the BTMA's Pump Station on Schifferstein Lane in Greenfields.

Rags, grease and other "flushable" debris formed a clump, that continued to grow as it moved through the sewer pipes. By the time it reached our pump station, it completely blocked the sewer pipe. The clog was nearly the size of a watermelon and it was as hard as cement!

It took more than 7 hours just to clear the blocked sewer pipe. Then clogged valves had to be cleaned before pumps could be run again. Removing the clog and fixing damaged equipment has cost BTMA thousands of dollars.

Clogs cause our pumps to malfunction, and grease corrodes our equipment, which is expensive to clean and repair. For example, one pump costs \$6,000 to \$8,000 and we have 12 pumps.

The clog was completely avoidable. Grease and fat should never be poured down a drain.

- Remember only human waste and toilet paper should go in a toilet.
- Nothing else is "flushable," no matter what it says on the package!

We are asking all our customers to please be considerate of your neighbors by helping us keep costs down. Take a moment to think about what gets flushed in your toilets or poured down your drains.

By taking care of our sanitary sewer lines and other sewage equipment we can control the cost of our service to you.

The alternative we want to avoid is the never-ending sewer rate increases to cover the cost of expensive but necessary repairs.

ACH CUSTOMERS

A reminder for customers who pay by ACH transfers each month, if you close the bank account associated with payment of your BTMA bill, please notify the office (610-916-9919) as soon as possible. Neglecting to notify us results in fees and penalties being added to your account. ❖

Road Dept. (Continued from Page 5)

the piping. Also, a total of eight storm drain pipes were removed and replaced on West Leesport Road in preparation for the 2018 road project.

The department continued to receive training during the year for their profession. Classes included traffic calming, equipment and worker safety, stormwater programming, sign reflectivity, trench excavation / shoring, rescue techniques, flagger operations, stop sign and intersection treatments and managing utility cuts. The department members continued to participate in the Berks County Public Works Association.

The July and August rainstorms brought damages to private residences and the township roadways. The Mill Road culvert, constructed in-house by the road department in 2016, was damaged as water came over the concrete walls and completely submerged the roadway. The force of the water eroded the embankments on the downstream side of the culvert. The road department placed wire baskets filled with stone to re-stabilize the banks and repaired the paved roadway surface.

The road department finally received a permit

from DEP to repair the Palisades Bridge. The project involves installing stone in the stream bed before and after the concrete bridge culvert.

Roadway changes implemented during the year include the removal of passing lanes on Palisades Drive, installing 25 MPH speed limit signs on Washington Road and revising the traffic light controller at Route 183 and MacArthur Road to eliminate false tripping of the light by vehicles making left turns into the business park.

The road department prepared bid specs in-house for the 2019 road project to repave Egle Road, a portion of North Tulpehocken and South Tulpehocken Roads, Sunshine Road, Golf Road, Green Lane, Kercher Avenue, Mull Avenue and Burdan Avenue.

The yearly road inspection was conducted and the road inventory catalog was updated. We also revised and updated the 10 year road improvement plan.

The road department will continue to replace storm pipes, repave roads, construct stormwater facilities and make repairs to the Palisades Road bridge in 2019. We will also investigate options for resolving flooding issues on Washington Road. ❖

Important news inside that affects YOU!



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