

BERN TOWNSHIP



in the news.....

WINTER 2023

2022 in Review

Time continues to zip along for us and we now say hello to 2023. To all of you, Bern Township sincerely hopes 2023 is happy and healthy for you. Make it a year to remember!

2022 was a year filled with some interesting issues and events. Hurricane Ian just devastated Florida and some folks no longer have homes, businesses or their personal belongings. Events like that can show you how precious life can be for us. The war in Ukraine is another example of how life can be fragile and how fortunate we are that we do not live in a war zone. Covid may have eased somewhat, but the virus just refuses to go away completely and folks are still getting sick. Inflation reared it's ugly head in 2022 and increased the cost of goods for everyone. A trip to the supermarket in 2022 became an exercise in cost control. There was good news as the unemployment rate dropped to pre-pandemic levels.

Locally, we learned that the proposed route of the Schuylkill River Greenway Association's 120 mile trail, that connects Philadelphia to Frackville in Schuylkill County, will go through Bern Township. The association is still fine tuning the route.

First Energy continues to work on the proposed transmission line. As far as we know, the route for the line will still be the "county route", going over Route 183 and along Hilltop Road and County Road to cross Route 183 again to get over to Leisch's Bridge Road.

The Berks County Residential Center has been closed and migrants will no longer be kept there. The county is exploring other potential uses for the facility.

The township spent \$66,695 more than we budgeted in 2022. Our Achilles Heel has been the yard waste center costs, which came in at \$29,045 over budget. Please see the Solid Waste Advisory

Commission article for more information on this issue. Bern Township continues in our effort to be a high-quality municipality for our constituents. We did our best to continue to provide quality service at a decent cost to you. This newsletter will report to you some of the accomplishments and activities of our organization during 2022.

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 / learning, coming to work inspired and making our best effort.

For those of you who are 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. ❖

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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

Brian S. Eveland	610-587-0077
Irene Reed	610-926-7621
Jeff Thompson	610-371-9411
Dan Tobias	610-375-1664
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
Kevin Cogan	Assistant Road Foreman

Township Contacts

LTL Consultants 610-987-9290	Building Inspector / Zoning Officer
Lori Hozza 610-916-9919	Municipal Authority
Jamie Jamison 610-916-8955	Tax Collector
Berks Envirotech 610-375-7640	Sewage Officer
Kevin Hinkle For emergencies call 911	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	Meeting dates as needed
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,
Robby Drive)

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, oil or epoxy paint cans or construction material. Please use lids on cans.*

Collection Dates:

Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27; Apr. 3, 10, 17, 24;

May 1, 8, 15, 22, 30; June 5, 12, 19, 26;

July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28;

Sept. 5, 11, 18, 25; Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

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. Please use lids on cans.

DO NOT USE PLASTIC BAGS!

Place #1 and #2 plastics, tin, Bi-metal and aluminum cans in your recycling container.

NO GLASS. *Place newspapers in paper bags or bundle. Cut cardboard and place in paper bags or bundle. Items NOT collected for recycling: glass, paint cans, tires, styrofoam, plastics #3 thru #7, batteries or large appliances.*

Collection Dates:

District #1:

Mar. 9, 23; Apr. 6, 20; May 4, 18;

June 2, 15, 29; July 13, 27; Aug. 10, 24;

Sept. 8, 21; Oct. 5, 19

District #2:

Mar. 2, 16, 30; Apr. 13, 27; May 11, 25;

June 8, 22; July 7, 20; Aug. 3, 17, 31;

Sept. 14, 28; Oct. 12, 26

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

2022 in Review

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 Date:

Pre-Registration Required

April 15, 2023

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

600 Governor Drive

Paper Shredding:

Pre-Registration Required

April 22, 2023

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

600 Governor Drive

Visit www.co.berks.pa.us/swa for more information.



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Justin Eisenhofer
PT, DPT, CSCS

Bern Township Committees

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

Zoning Hearing Board

The Zoning Hearing Board met to consider variance applications for the Reitnauer Riparian Buffer area, the Lords and Ladies Salon and Medical Spa, Garage Strength gym, a short-term rental property, a residential pool installation and a residential garage addition.

There were many zoning matters that the township worked to address during the year, including short term rental complaints, public gatherings and trash, Berks County Recreational Facility lighting complaints, neighbor disputes, property maintenance matters and exotic bird complaints.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission met in person 12 times through the year to review Land Development and Subdivision Plans to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

The commission reviewed and recommended approval of the Misco Land Development Plan, the Stinson Drive two lot subdivision, the Leisz's Bridge Road two lot subdivision, the UGI Data Center Land Development Plan, the BCIDA Building H Land Development Plan, the Penske Subdivision at the Hartman Farm, two residential annexation plans and two residential subdivision plans.

The planning commission reviewed other projects including the Lords and Ladies Salon and the Penske Collision and Repair Center.

Michael Werley has been appointed to the planning commission panel and Beth Burkovich has been appointed to the alternate position. Jeff Piccioni has also been appointed to the Code Appeals Board during 2022.

Solid Waste Advisory Commission

The Solid Waste Advisory Commission met twice in 2022 to review and discuss the bid specifications and proposals received for the next three-year recycling and trash collection and processing contracts. Republic Industries continues with trash collection, AJ Blosenski continues with recycling collection and JP Mascaro continues with recycling processing. Their new contracts started January 2, 2023 and end on December 31, 2025. The commission also discussed the cost of recycling of glass, an additional \$3.00 per household, while realizing it was still going to a landfill. For this reason, the committee recommended against recycling glass.

Recycling collections continue on Thursdays and collection of trash in the trash districts continue on Mondays. Glass and plastics 3 through 7 are not recyclable for this contract period. The hauler will not collect your recyclables if these materials are amongst them. Robby Drive residents have been added to the trash district as of January 2, 2023.

The township completed and submitted the 2021 Recycling Performance Grant application to DEP for 1,487 tons of recycled material and received an award of \$17,718.00 for our recycling efforts. We recycled 538 tons less than we did in 2020 and our grant award was \$2,009 lower as a result.

(Continued on Page 4)

2022 in Review

2022 Finances

The township's General Fund revenue / income for the year totaled \$4,425,769. This amount is \$433,095 (11%) more than 2021. The following is a breakdown of the General Fund revenue amounts for 2022:

Real Estate Tax	\$1,704,264	38%
Act 511 Tax	\$1,776,823	40%
Permits & Licenses	\$212,776	5%
Fines	\$45,209	1%
Charges for Service	\$111,932	3%
State Pension Aid	\$165,774	4%
Gov't Revenue	\$138,315	3%
Reimbursements	\$214,921	5%
Police Services	\$55,755	1%

The General Fund expenses for the year came in at \$4,122,699. This amount is \$294,252 (8%) more than the expenses for 2021. The following is a breakdown of the township's General Fund expenses for 2022:

General Government	\$421,829	10%
Debt Service	\$0	0%
Fire Companies	\$49,616	1%
Police Protection	\$1,337,945	33%
Building Inspections	\$98,628	2%
Roads & Highways	\$687,800	17%
Recycling Center	\$86,145	2%
Pensions	\$487,638	12%
Insurances	\$900,373	22%
Equipment Escrow	\$52,725	1%

The general fund tax amount will remain at 2022 levels for 2023. The breakdown of the total 4.186 mill tax is:

General Fund	3.92 Mills
Capital Improvement	0.116 Mills
Fire Protection	0.15 Mills

The township's current five-year financial, capital improvement and strategic plan continues to be refined and updated. ❖

***Bern Township wishes for you
a
happy and healthy 2023!***

Committees (Continued From Page 3)

Changes may be coming at the yard waste site on Hilltop Road. The cost of brush removal has significantly increased over the last few years, from \$38,621 in 2019 to \$86,145 in 2022 due to illegal dumping. The township has submitted to DEP a grant request of \$310,249.00 to expand the yard waste site, to enclose the site with fencing and gates, to implement an access card system to enter and exit the site, the installation of security cameras and a computer system with software to manage the access system and monitor the camera views. If this grant is approved, DEP will fund \$279,224 and Bern Township will fund \$31,025. We should hopefully know by May of this year if we are awarded the grant. If we are successful, we will make improvements to the site this year and implement the card access system. Letters will be sent to residents explaining how the system will work. Residents will need to pay a small fee for the access cards. We would have liked to leave the yard waste center as it is, however we need to mitigate the alarming increases in yard waste processing and restricting it only to Bern Township residents.

We thank all of the committee members for devoting their time on behalf of the township. We welcome the new members of the committees and hope all of you enjoy your service to our community. ❖

Emergency Management Committee

Congratulations are due to Kevin Hinkle for receiving the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator Award from the Keystone Emergency Management Association! We are thankful to have Kevin on our team.

Kevin continued to be active during the year as he attended the monthly Berks Department of Emergency Services training meetings. He attended the pre-planning meetings for the World War II Weekend event and staffed the Emergency Operations Center during the three-day event. He also reviewed the township's municipal action plan and made recommendations for the update that was submitted to Berks County to be included in their Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The township continued to update and tabulate

2022 in Review

sub-addresses in the township with the Berks Department of Emergency Services. Redundancies, property number sequence issues, street name structures and conflicting addresses were reviewed and corrected. This effort is to reduce confusion and enable first responders to find everyone's address as fast as possible in an emergency. Kevin conducted a hazard vulnerability assessment for the township which identifies the most likely of man made and natural hazards that could happen to us. This allows us to be more aware and to plan for what our response would be for these potential hazards.

Kevin also got involved to provide support to first responder's needs during storm events locating owners of the property. He surveyed storm damage and reported his findings to the township and county emergency services department.

The township completed their annual update of the emergency operations plan including the Notification and Resource Manual and the Continuity of Operations Plan. 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. These updates were provided to Berks Department of Emergency Services.

A job description has been created for the emergency management coordinator position. This document sets the standards for the position and clarifies the responsibilities of the position. Please check the township website www.berntownship.org as Kevin continues to provide material for posting on the site. You will also find the "Bern Township Guide to Emergency Preparedness" on our website. This explains the things that you can do to be prepared for certain kinds of disasters ahead of time.

Thanks to our volunteer EMC, Kevin Hinkle, the township has saved \$20,026.00 in EMC labor costs during the year.

The 2023 goals of the emergency management staff includes initiation of the new PA Emergency Management Agency 5-year Certification process, obtain facility emergency response plans from additional institutions in the township to coordinate any emergency response, secure a vehicle for the emergency management department and to continue to evaluate any potential threats to the safety of those within the township. ❖

Road Department

The road crew was busy with a large project on Washington Road during the summer. The project was funded mostly through a \$47,010 Low Volume Road grant the township was awarded by the Berks County Conservation District. We thank the conservation district for their assistance on this project. The road crew members excavated the earth and installed catch basins, storm piping with a rock outfall in the woods, shoulder drainage piping along the road and placed an asphalt overlay on the road to mitigate future flooding in the area.

The road crew and the township engineer began to design the last stormwater management facility to be installed at Mayo Drive in Greenfields. This facility will help to manage the rainfall and be equipped with a rain garden type feature. The township road crew should be working on this installation sometime this year if all goes according to plan.

The township reached out to PennDOT and requested a traffic study be done at the West Leesport Road and Route 183 intersection to verify if a left-hand turn arrow is warranted for southbound Route 183 traffic. We are pleased to announce that PennDOT determined that the arrow is warranted, and the Wawa developer hired Telco to make the changes. We thank Wawa and Telco for responding to the report so quickly and having the improvements installed in such a short period of time.

The 2022 road project was postponed until 2023 due to the high prices of asphalt. The 2023 road project will now include the resurfacing of Rickenbach Road, Homestead Drive, Possum Lane between White Oak Lane and Grange Road, White Oak Lane between Possum Lane and Old Bernville Road, Shurr Road and the milling / resurfacing of Barlow Avenue, Lockheed Avenue, Martin Avenue and Peters Road. The street improvements in Greenfields may be postponed until 2024 if the bids come in higher than expected.

The road crew members replaced a failing storm pipe at Rick Road and West Leesport Road during the year. The top of the pipe had failed at a few locations. They also replaced deteriorating storm piping under Possum Lane and Shurr Road and repaired road base on Homestead Drive and Possum Lane in preparation for the 2023 road project.

Projects for 2023 include the construction of the last stormwater facility, stormwater projects, piping replacements, road repairs and increasing the size of the yard waste facility. ❖

2022 in Review

Board of Supervisors

The township recognized savings to residents during 2022 in the amount of \$657,302.10 by securing grant funding, completing certain work in-house instead of paying consultants, bulk purchasing, renegotiating service agreements, staffing economies, engaging volunteer residents, selling equipment, working safely (our Experience Modification Rate is 0.924) and re quoting services for savings. The total dollars saved since 2006 is now at \$6,895,924.00. We continue to prepare five-year financial plans to maximize the power of your tax dollars. Our non-taxable land value is at 33%, causing a real estate tax loss of \$912,861.00. We continue to closely monitor our revenue and expenses on a monthly basis and conduct annual fiscal monitoring exercises to verify that our community is financially healthy.

We had another busy year in 2022. The board approved a balanced budget of \$5,053,095 for 2023 that does not include a tax increase. The budgeted expenses for 2023 are \$397,200 higher than 2022. Trash (\$280 per unit) and recycling (\$92 per unit) fees are increased based on the new collection and processing contracts. The light district (\$0.50 per front foot) fee remains at the 2022 level. The board approved the Act 57 resolution which waives real estate penalties under certain conditions for first time homebuyers that do not receive their tax bill in the mail.

The board completed negotiations with the road crew on a five-year contract and Comcast on a new cable franchise agreement, and approved the renewal of the contract with the Animal Rescue League. The board also approved a side agreement with the police association to establish a committee to embark on a police shower and locker room

addition to the township building. The hiring of a police officer was approved to fill a vacancy.

The following pieces of legislation were approved: the solid waste ordinance amendment to allow haulers to start earlier for safety purposes, resolutions to re-name Meadow View Drive and Homestead Drive to resolve local and county discrepancies in addresses, the placement of stop signs at Mull Avenue and Kercher Avenue and the placement of yield signs at North Tulpehocken and Jeffrey Road to resolve unregulated intersections.

The board provided support and contributed to the Bern Township Police National Night Out event at the Bern Pool. The Schuylkill River Greenway Association, Run4Sam nonprofit, Western Berks Ambulance and Mid-Atlantic Air Museum received the township's support in their effort to secure American Rescue Plan funding from Berks County. ❖

Administration

Administrative staff attended over 51 training events and remained involved with the county stormwater steering committee, the county cooperative purchasing council, the Center for Excellence in Local Government community advisory council, the Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association, the county solid waste committee and the Reading Behavioral Health community advisory council.

Staff assisted the police department with their National Night Out at Bern Pool. The township went through audits by the township auditor, state pension auditor and the Teamsters Union auditor to the result of no findings.

The township received a notice from DEP that our 2021 and 2022 annual stormwater reports were complete and acceptable. Staff was recorded while conducting inspections of stormwater outfalls to create a training video for other municipalities on how to conduct inspections and respond to illegal discharges. Staff also gave a speech to the Tulpehocken Watershed Association on how to assist regulated municipalities with their DEP compliance requirements. Please contact the township office if you would like to become a member of the watershed association.

Staff participated on a three-member panel to present a financial training class to newly elected officials through the Center for Excellence in Local Government.

The township participated on a panel of officials

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2022 in Review

to discuss the traffic issues involved with Route 183 from Bern Township to Route 78 and to analyze potential solutions to the safety concerns.

The township embarked on a building addition project by working with designers to create building plans and specifications for the police department shower and locker room.

The township communicated to residents via email blasts on a range of topics including information related to county ARP grant funding opportunities, PA Career Link job fair opportunities, road closures, watershed steward walk, Bern Township Police National Night Out, mosquito sample testing positive and trash / recycling schedule changes.

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

Staff projects for 2023 include continuing the process of the police department locker / shower room addition and investigating financing options, managing the grant for the yard waste facility expansion, updating our stormwater ordinance, continue our financial planning and monitor our revenues and expenses. ❖

BERN TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY NEWS

BTMA's Forms of Payment – BTMA has several forms of payment. The newest form is paying thru a third party payment company called DOXO. The website to directly pay your bill with DOXO is www.townshipofbernmuni.com. You can pay your BTMA bill by credit card using this website which was totally designed and continues to be maintained by DOXO. Please refer to the fees mentioned on the website, there is a minimum fee and a percentage of the bill fee if over the minimum. ***BTMA has nothing to do with setting or collecting the fees, this is a third party collection company and they keep the fees charged.***

The other forms of payment are ACH payments (please call for an application), cash/check payments either mailed or dropped off in the convenient drop box outside the Bern Township Municipal Building which is available 24/7 or come into the office during business hours.

You can also make a payment at the Tompkins Community Bank on Rt 183 and West Leesport Rd. The customer must have their bill with them and pay the amount on the bill. The bank has no idea what the

balance on your account might be. Please call the office at 610-916-9919 if you need any info on your account.

HOW TO AVOID COSTLY CLOGS – Many blockages occur in the sewer pipes between the house/business and the utility's sewer main, where the home/business owner is responsible for fixing the problem. Sewer blockages mean costly plumbing bills. Many hygiene products and wipes (even those that are labeled flushable) do not break down like toilet paper once they are flushed. Flushing these items can block your sewer pipes.

12 Things that Should Never Go Down Your Drain: "Flushable Wipes" are one of the leading causes of clogged pipes. Dental Floss, cotton swabs and hair can cause stringy clogs in your plumbing. Other paper products such as paper towels, tissues and cotton balls. Fats, oils and grease can solidify in your pipes which can slow the flow through your pipes. Finally, never flush contact lenses or medication (there is a medication drop off box inside the Bern Township Municipal Building).

ATTENTION LANDLORDS – All properties in the BTMA service area that are rentals must have the name of the owner on the water/sewer account. If your tenant needs to receive a copy of the bill, you as the owner must notify the BTMA office of the name of the tenant.

If a tenant moves, the owner is responsible for letting the office know and provide the name of the new tenant. The office cannot split bills between the owner and the tenant, the owner of the property is ultimately responsible for any outstanding amounts due. If you are planning to sell the property, please notify the office when the property is advertised for sale and when under contract please inform the office of the settlement date. ❖

Police Department

The Bern Township Police Department handled 7809 events and requests for service during 2022. Ninety-seven bookings were made by department members for various offenses including one apprehension of a fugitive from justice. Department members issued 1287 traffic citations and warnings during 2022. The department applied for and was awarded a \$122,461.00 grant from the Philadelphia Foundation for replacement of the department's 26-year-old special services vehicle. Special recognition was given to the sergeants and patrol officers for

(Continued on Page 8)

Police Department (Continued from Page 7)

their work in connection with this project.

Investigated, identified, and arrested the perpetrator who stole a check from a residential mailbox in the Greenfields area, bleached the check, raised it to \$7800, and then cashed it. The perpetrator was charged with forgery and other charges.

The Berks County District Attorney's Office, County Detectives, and Forensics Unit; Reading Police; PSP Crime Laboratory; and Bern Township Police Department obtained the conviction of Raphael Perez-Rodriguez on charges of first, second, and third degree murder in connection with the death of Dennis Fink of Tully Lane in Bern Township.

The department continued to host Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspection details in Bern Township to encourage safety of vehicles passing through the township. A truck detail in April 2022 resulted in 45 inspections with four trucks and one driver being taken out of service, and 18 citations and 34 warnings issued.

The department hired and welcomed Officer Brett Boyer to fill a vacant position on the department.

National Night Out was held on Tuesday, August 2, 2022, at the Bern Pool. The event was a well-supported and well-attended success.

Department personnel continued emergency preparedness activities by participating in a round table discussion, an active shooter exercise development, and active threat training with Bern Township businesses.

Department members attended Coffee with a Cop at Wawa in October 2022.

Charges have been filed in connection with the December 2022 smash-and-grab burglary at Top Star involving a multi-state investigation. The arrest was made as a result of the effort and cooperation of several other departments.

The department continues its focus on discouraging criminal conduct in Bern Township by vigorously exploring all solvability indicators in investigations and being public about its identifications and arrests of perpetrators. We continue to appreciate the public's support and assistance in providing information to solve crimes. ❖

Important news inside that affects YOU!



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