

BERN TOWNSHIP



in the news.....

WINTER 2025

2024 in Review

Hello and welcome to the year 2025. Every New Year brings a refreshing start with a new outlook and the hope for good things to happen.

Bern Township wishes for you a happy, healthy and pleasantly memorable 2025.

This newsletter will explain the township's productivity and accomplishments during 2024. We remain committed to serve and protect the community in the most economical fashion. The Police Department, Road Department, Emergency Management Committee, Solid Waste Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Municipal Authority and the Board of Supervisors made accomplishments in 2024 to serve you. We thank those who volunteer their personal time for the benefit of our community. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

We traveled through challenges during the year and also had some successful experiences.

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 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. ❖

Fire Protection Services

There has been a serious decline in the number of active firefighters in volunteer fire companies, so in 2019 the Board of Supervisors commissioned the Center for Excellence in Local Government at Albright College to analyze Greenfields Fire Company (GFC) and its operations. Every component from membership to finances was examined. Current and

former GFC leadership, elected officials, professional EMS personnel and officials on both the county and state levels were involved in the analysis.

Since 2019 the Township has met regularly with GFC leadership and asked for a workable plan to increase the number of firefighters and improve efficiency. The Township has provided GFC with thousands of dollars annually, paid for advice from outside experts, new software and equipment to increase efficiency, but GFC's numbers failed to improve. There were still too few active firefighters, so some incidents were "scratched" or not answered.

By November 2024 GFC still hadn't come up with a workable plan for their future, so in December 2024 the Supervisors held a public meeting to discuss decertifying GFC. After lengthy discussion at a well-attended meeting, the Township agreed to give GFC up to a three-month trial period starting January 2025 and to provide funds to pay certified firefighters to cover daily shifts and respond to incidents for GFC.

Please contact the Greenfields Fire Company if you would like more information on this topic. ❖

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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
Brett Forry	Chief of Police
Bobby Turner	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
Systems Design 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 Twp. 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, oil or epoxy paint cans or construction material. Please use lids on cans.*

Collection Dates:

Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; Apr. 7, 14, 21, 28;

May 5, 12, 19, 27; June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30;

July 7, 14, 21, 28; Aug. 4, 11, 18, 25;

Sept. 2, 8, 15, 22, 29; Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27

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. 6, 20; April 3, 17; May 1, 15, 30;

June 12, 26; July 10, 24; Aug. 7, 21;

Sept. 5, 18; Oct. 2, 16, 30

District #2:

Mar. 13, 27; April 10, 24; May 8, 22;

June 5, 19; July 3, 17, 31; Aug. 14, 28;

Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 9, 23

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

2024 in Review

Road Department

The road crew was busy in 2024 with replacing storm water piping. Corrugated metal piping was commonly used back in the 70's and 80's but unfortunately most of these pipes are rusting away. Today we use plastic piping that hopefully will last much longer. The crew replaced 265 feet including a failed arch pipe at Rick Road, a 48" diameter pipe at Old Bernville Road, two pipes on Upper Van Reed Road, a pipe on Chestnut Street, a pipe on West Leesport Road, extended a pipe on Seidels Run and installed a new storm drain and piping on McCoy Lane to replace a failed system. The road crew also repaired and resurfaced a portion of Mill Road.

The road crew was instrumental in upgrading the recycling center on Hilltop Road. The project included significant expansion and, regrading, excavation and backfill for power and low voltage wiring, placement of pipe bollards and the installation of a pre-cast concrete block wall.

Bobby Turner was hired to the position of road foreman and Kevin Gray was hired to the position of equipment operator.

The 2024 township road project included Mayo Drive, Fisher Road, Dennis Drive and portions of South Tulpehocken and Egle Roads. The project came in slightly over our estimated cost by \$6,042. Over the last 17 years, the township has resurfaced 25 ¼ miles of roadway with asphalt encompassing 55 roads. West Leesport Road is scheduled to be resurfaced in 2025 from Peach Blossum Lane to County Road.

You may not realize it, but there is a rather large bridge on Palisades Drive near Scenic Drive. PennDOT hires engineers every two years to inspect the bridge. The bridge rating continues to remain at 5, which is considered fair.

PennDOT representatives visited with township officials to discuss planned improvements to Route 183 between West Leesport Road and the 183 / 222 interchange. PennDOT plans to widen this area of roadway to four lanes with a center turning lane. The Route 183 southbound turning lane for northbound 222 will also be lengthened. Construction is expected to start in 2029.

Two grant applications were submitted to the state for funding to purchase a motor grader.

The road crew continued to attend learning opportunities for PA 1 Call safety, flagger training and other safety training classes.

The road crew will be busy in 2025. Projects include more metal piping replacements, the finishing of Mill Road, paving Seifrit Road, installation of a rain garden at Mayo Drive and preparation work for the West Leesport Road project. ❖

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:

Pre-Registration Required

8:00 am to Noon

April 12, 2025

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

Paper Shredding:

Pre-Registration Required

8:00 am to Noon

April 19, 2025

Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

Register at www.co.berks.pa.us/swa

Police Department

The Bern Township Police Department responded to 7,801 events and requests during 2024.

In 2024, the Bern Township Police Station underwent some changes and renovations. We added a locker room, a shower, an interview room, an armory, and completely renovated our squad room as well as other office space. These were long overdue changes, and we thank the Board of Supervisors for their support with this project.

(Continued on Page 4)

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2024 in Review

Police Department (Continued from Page 3)

Along with renovations, we were able to hire new officers to get our compliment up to a total of 13 in the department. In January 2024, Bern Township hired Brian Johnson who brought a wealth of knowledge and experience from his previous police positions, such as Certified Taser Instructor, Police Supervisory Training, Standardized Field Sobriety Instructor, and Evidence Technician. In April of 2024, Bern Township hired Lance Lillis who also brought extensive experience and knowledge from his previous police positions. Lillis brought with him Police Supervisory Training, Incident Command Training, Pennsylvania State Police Leadership Training, and Active Shooter Training. In September of 2024, Bern Township hired Jordan Heckman who is a certified First Aid, CPR, and AED Instructor, Stop the Bleed Instructor, Car Seat Certified Technician, and an Emergency Medical Technician as well as a Volunteer Fire Fighter.

The Bern Township Police Department was given a gracious donation to purchase a new Alco-Sensor for enforcement. The donation was provided by Sean Reali from State Farm on SR 183. The funds to purchase that valuable breathalyzing tool will be extremely beneficial and helpful to us roadside. The timing of this donation was very appreciated because the department had two Alco-Sensors taken out of service due to age. We are truly grateful to Sean Reali's donation and ongoing support of department activities.

The Bern Township Police Department was also fortunate to be provided a donation from Berks County District Attorney John Adams to purchase a new state of the art Interview Camera System for our newly built interview room. DA Adams has been and continues to be a great supporter of not just the Bern Township Police Department, but all law enforcement in Berks County. The Bern Township Police and the Bern Township Community thank District Attorney John Adams for his relentless commitment and dedication to public safety throughout Bern Township and Berks County.

The Department continues to contribute to the Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT) with one deputy commander, one tactical operator and one negotiator. Additionally, the department continues to contribute one officer to the Berks County District Attorney's Office Drug Task Force,

the Berks County High Crimes Task Force, and the Berks County Accident Reconstruction Team.

The Department continues to organize and host at least one County-Wide Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement Detail a year. The goal is to ensure Commercial Motor Vehicle compliance with the latest standards, as well as enforcement and education to keep the motoring public safe as they transverse through the township.

The Police Department continues to support the Berks Career and Technology Center with the presence of a police officer most days at the school. The relationship with the school and the police department continues to be a positive collaboration to work as a team to support a safe school environment.

The department wants to thank the residents it serves for their continued support. The department understands that there needs to be a collaborative partnership between the department and the community it serves. We continue to strive to serve the residents of Bern Township as it states in our Core Values through Benevolence, Teamwork, Professionalism, and Dedication. ❖

Emergency Management Committee

Despite weather alerts, watches and warnings, we were able to make it through the year without any major weather events. Some other parts of the country were not so fortunate.

October was the busiest month of the year for Bern Township Emergency Management and the Bern Township Police Department. Our area was the hotbed for the political winds associated with the Presidential election. The campaign visits started with Senator Vance to the Berks Fairgrounds on September 21, followed by Governor Walz's visit through the Reading Airport on September 25, President Trump's visit to the county on October 9, Senator Vance's second visit on October 12 to the Reading Airport, and President Trump and Vice-President Harris both visiting on November 4 at the same time through the Reading Airport. Police and emergency management were involved with pre-planning security for the events, arranging traffic control measures and participating in motorcade routes. Many agencies were involved with this effort including the State Police, Berks County Sheriff's Department, Berks County Emergency Response Team, Muhlenberg Township, Spring

2024 in Review

Township, Lower Heidelberg and Northern Berks Police Departments. We thank all of these agencies for their assistance in keeping our community safe and for their contribution of overtime labor costs.

Do you know that Secret Service only protects the candidates or VIP's, and the local authorities are responsible to protect everyone else at these events? This leads to a financial burden in the tens of thousands of dollars to the local agencies for paying overtime for the appropriate staffing to be at these events, which is paid by your tax dollars. We made every effort to communicate to both campaigns the need for a financial reimbursement for manhours, however they refused to provide anything to us.

Kevin Hinkle, the Bern Township Emergency Management Coordinator, continued as the emergency coordinator of the Blue Marsh Regional Emergency Management Agency. The agency includes Bern Township, Jefferson Township, North Heidelberg Township and the Borough of Bernville. He is working on creating emergency operations plans for the entire agency. Kevin also remained as the Chairman of the Berks County Emergency Management working group. This group provides emergency planning support to other municipalities in Berks County.

Kevin was also selected to present a lecture at the state association of township officials on the future of emergency management during the year.

The township continues to annually update our various emergency plans: the notification and resource manual which lists available resources and staff assignments for emergencies, the continuity of operations plan that lists alternative staffing, equipment and facilities to be used in the event of losing any of those resources & the hazard vulnerability assessment that lists potential man made or natural threats to our community.

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 now to be prepared for certain kinds of disasters ahead of time.

We thank Kevin Hinkle for his volunteer hours and greatly appreciate the professionalism that he brings to the Bern Township Emergency Management Coordinator position. The township would have

faced a 2024 labor cost of \$31,518.00 if the emergency management coordinator was a paid position. ❖

2024 Finances

The township's General Fund revenue / income for the year totaled \$5,150,462. This amount is \$ 356,118 (14%) more than 2023. The following is a breakdown of the General Fund revenue amounts for 2024:

Real Estate Tax	\$1,951,739	38%
Act 511 Tax	\$2,215,025	43%
Permits & Licenses	\$211,950	4%
Fines	\$51,549	1%
Charges for Service	\$156,536	3%
State Pension Aid	\$169,872	3%
Gov't Revenue	\$92,653	2%
Reimbursements	\$249,715	5%
Police Services	\$51,423	1%

The General Fund expenses for the year came in at \$4,900,403. This amount is \$465,187 (10%) more than the expenses for 2023. The following is a breakdown of the township's General Fund expenses for 2024:

General Government	\$545,799	11%
Debt Service	\$0	0%
Fire Companies	\$51,766	1%
Police Protection	\$1,661,705	34%
Building Inspections	\$95,284	2%
Roads & Highways	\$655,365	13%
Recycling Center	\$77,158	2%
Pensions	\$483,415	10%
Insurances	\$1,216,509	25%
Equipment Escrow	\$113,402	2%

The general fund tax amount will slightly increase for 2025 by an additional 0.25 mills and the fire protection tax will increase by 0.55 mills. For a property assessed at \$100,000, the additional tax will be \$80.00. The breakdown of the total 5.36 mill tax is:

General Fund	4.45 Mills
Capital Improvement	0.21 Mills
Fire Protection	0.70 Mills

How do we compare with our neighbor's tax rates? The City of Reading (18.129 mills), Muhlenberg (6.0 mills), Leesport (8.72 mills), Lower Heidelberg (6.75 mills) and Spring (5.75 mills) are higher. Ontelaunee (4.05 mills), Penn (1.5 mills) and Centre (0.54 mills) are lower. ❖

Bern Township wishes you a happy and healthy 2025!

2024 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 met to consider a variance application for a short-term rental facility on Prison Road. The township received a variance application from a prospective purchaser of the Carriage House, but the variance application was withdrawn later. A community center was proposed on Cross Keys Road, but the developer withdrew their plans.

Planning Commission

The commission recommended approval of three residential subdivisions, two property boundary revisions, a commercial subdivision plan at Stinson Drive and West Leesport Road, a commercial landscape plan revision, a preliminary land development plan for a warehouse at Leiszcz's Bridge Road and a land development plan for Reading Behavioral Health. The commission is in the process of reviewing the Penske Truck and Collision Repair facility land development plan to be near Stinson Drive. Near the end of 2024, the township received land development plans for two warehouses, one at West Leesport Road and the other to be located behind Dubbles Motors on Reading Airport land. The township also received an application for a traffic review involved with the proposed development of the Hartman Farm. The developer proposes to build a Wawa, 124 room hotel, fast food restaurant, grocery store and 14,000 square feet of retail space. Both the township and PennDOT gave input on our concerns for traffic flow and entrance locations to the proposed development.

The township approved a stormwater agreement with the Greater Berks Development Fund for the installation of stormwater facilities on an undeveloped lot next to Route 222 and Leiszcz's Bridge Road. The stormwater facilities were installed in an effort to make the property more attractive for potential buyers.

Solid Waste Advisory Commission

The Solid Waste Advisory Commission did not have to meet during the year. They will be meeting in 2025 to develop the specifications for the next three year trash and recycling collection contract.

The township upgraded the yard waste site by increasing the capacity of the site, installed a computer

system and billing software to enable the creation of an access system for residents. The township is currently preparing to implement the card access system. Residents will soon receive information in the mail on how to sign up for the program.

We are pleased to note that the recycling hauler has greatly improved their collection service in 2024 and the amount of missed collection complaints have been greatly reduced.

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 may not collect your recyclables if these materials are amongst them. The collection days may change in 2026 as we will be starting another new contract at that time.

The township curbside recycling program collected a total of 179 tons of material in 2024 at a cost of \$17,954 to the township.

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

BTMA REMINDERS

One of BTMA's payment methods is paying at the Tompkins Bank on Bernville Rd. This is a courtesy Tompkins provides to BTMA's customers. Tompkins DOES NOT know your account number or the balance on your account. You must have your bill with you to make payment at the bank. The BTMA office staff is given the right side of the bill stub along with the deposit slip by the bank. The BTMA office then inputs the payment to the account in the BTMA system. You may call the office during business hours to find out your account balance.

The office staff has noticed an increase in calls from customers saying they have not received their monthly bill. BTMA customers might consider having your monthly bill emailed to your inbox. Depending on your computer security the first month's bill may go to spam or junk, you just need to let your security system know to allow emails from the BTMA billing email address which is a Gmail account. No matter how you receive the BTMA bill, if it is not received it does not constitute you not paying. If you do not receive your bill by the 5th of any month, please contact the office. We can email you another copy or tell you the amount due. All payments are due by the 25th of the month. Please call the office if you would

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like an application to have your bill emailed to you.

HOW TO AVOID A SEWER CLOG!

The main source of many sewer clogs is FOG (Fats, Oils, and Grease). These are unwanted byproducts of food preparation and comes from a variety of food sources such as, meats, butter, plant oils, gravies and dressings. When these products go down your drain they eventually harden and attach to your pipes. Over time the pipes will eventually clog and back up which can result in a costly and messy cleanup.

If we all do our part, we can battle against FOG. Here are some suggestions to avoid adding FOG to your pipes:

Deposit your excess food grease in a container to cool and harden, to be thrown in the trash or reused for cooking.

Use paper towels to absorb grease and put it in the trash.

Grease can be used for oil lamp fuel.

A mixture of used cooking oil and vinegar can be used to restore wood.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SEWER IS CLOGGED!

If you experience a sewer backup at your residence or business, your first call should be to a plumber. Please do not call the BTMA or Township first. BTMA is only responsible for the sewer main in the street and the lateral from the main line to the curb. Your plumber can determine if there is an issue with the sewer main and then contact the BTMA office. Calling your professional plumber first will expedite how to resolve your problem.

BTMA also offers ACH payment either from a checking or savings account. Your payment comes out of your account on the 25th of each month. This is a great option for those who lose their bills or have not received them in the mail and those who don't want to be bothered to remember to make a payment during the month. Please call the office for an application. ❖

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.

Board of Supervisors / Administration

The Board of Supervisors voted on various legislative items, including the Rural Residential Conditional Use Ordinance, the Organic Yard Waste Collection Facility Ordinance, assigning the remaining American Rescue Plan funds to the police department addition and renovations, supporting various grants for equipment and rain gardens, approved to have the township engineer investigate and design a solution to flooding along North Tulpehocken Road, approved a renewal contract with the Animal Rescue League, memorandums of understanding with Schuylkill Valley Schools, Berks Career and Technology and the Berks County Youth Center and a balanced budget for 2025 that includes an increase for fire protection costs. The Supervisors also continued to work on the fire protection study for the Greenfields Fire Company.

The township recognized savings to residents during 2024 in the amount of \$142,205 by securing grant funding, insurance rebates, completing certain work in-house instead of paying consultants, selling equipment, engaging volunteer residents, bulk purchasing and working safely (our Experience Modification Rate is 0.701) and re quoting services for savings. The total dollars saved since 2006 is now at \$8,039,670.00. We continue to prepare five-year financial plans to maximize the power of your tax dollars. Our non-taxable land value is at 32%, causing a real estate tax loss of \$1,166,475.00. 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.

The cumulative increase in the township real estate tax, for a property assessed at \$100,000, from 2004 through 2025 is \$267.00. We take tax increases seriously and we do our very best at minimizing them by carefully watching our finances. Trash (\$280 per unit), recycling (\$92 per unit) and light district fees remain at the 2023 levels for 2025.

The building addition and renovations for the police department were started and completed in 2024. The project included a shower and locker room, interview room, armory, computer server room, remodeled offices and squad room, and a new building security system. The total cost of the project stands at \$1,439,381. An amount of \$800,000 was loaned for the project and the balance of the cost was paid

(Continued on Page 8)

Supervsrs / Admin (Continued from Page 7)

with American Rescue Plan funds and cash on hand.

Township staff provided training to 20 newly elected Berks County municipal officials on financial planning tips for their municipalities.

The township sent numerous email blasts to residents and businesses on various topics including recycling collection schedule changes, information on the Animal Rescue League, tax seminar opportunities, voting location changes, PennDOT road projects in the township, Greenfields Fire Company car wash event, Police National Night Out information, license plate replacement event, road closure notices and detour routes, yard waste center closing and reopening information, Berks County emergency alert program changes, trash / recycling / yard waste flyers and the administration department holiday schedule. ❖

Sign UP !

The township occasionally sends information to residents via email blasts. The messages usually are to alert residents of recycling or trash collection schedule changes at the beginning of a contract, or for Holiday interruptions, to alert residents of

snow emergencies, road project schedules, storm information and distribution of newsletters.

All email addresses are kept confidential and messages are sent in blind copy only.

If you would like to receive this service from the township, please call, email or visit and provide your email and street address to us. ❖

Car Smarts

The Bern Township Police remind everyone to keep their cars locked. More than 90% of thefts from cars have been committed because the vehicle was left unlocked. If you leave your vehicle unlocked overnight it is an easy target for someone to enter and take your valuables. Even if you lock your vehicle but leave valuables in plain sight a person may break a window to steal the items. The Bern Township Police urge everyone to lock their vehicles at all times and place any valuables in your trunk or take them inside your home. This will prevent any thefts and criminal mischief to your vehicles and hopefully deter criminals from coming into our community. ❖

Important news inside that affects YOU!



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