



SPRING/SUMMER 2024

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BOROUGH BULLETIN



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Letter from the Mayor

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Hello, Chester Heights!

Welcome to the Spring/Summer Newsletter for 2024. In this issue you will find some things are the same- like this letter from me- and some things are different. Which is also a description of the changes at the Borough this year. The November election ushered in many changes here in Chester Heights which you will read about in this issue.

In the following pages, you will meet the four new members of Council: Timothy, Natalie, Jeanne and Anne. You will read about the new consolidated committee structure, going from fifteen committees and chairpersons down to four. You will meet our new solicitor; our new Borough Code Enforcement Officer, our new Zoning Officer, our new Engineer, new members of the Zoning Hearing Board and Planning Commission and our new Fire Marshal.

Keep reading to get a sneak peek at the events being planned for residents this year, including new informational events with Senator Kane and with the PA State Police. The Mayor's Event Committee was dissolved and absorbed into the new committee structure. It's been a fun privilege to create and deliver the first ever family events in the Borough. I look forward to bearing witness to the next chapter of community service.

The other big change (for me at least!) is that I am no longer the Chair of the Communications Committee. That committee has also been absorbed into another one. For the first time in six years of being an elected official in Chester Heights, I did not write or edit any of the content in this issue, nor am I the voice of your emails and social media posts. There's a new voice behind the curtain, and you will meet her in these pages.

I love interacting with all of you and being accessible, so now that I don't chair any committees and am not doing social media, I am going to begin hosting office hours starting in April. I plan on a few morning hours twice a month and a few evening hours as well. Come say hello, bring your feedback, your concerns or desire to chat and I will be there. Stay tuned for more information on days and times for Office Hours with The Mayor coming soon!

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to express my sincere thanks to our former Council members and our professionals who did not return to the Borough in January. Laura Lim, Rob Sacks and Bob Adams worked hard for our residents and their impact on Council will be felt for years to come. Matt Houtmann was our Engineer for over ten years; his service to the borough is much appreciated. Jerry Montella was our solicitor for almost 20 years. No one else knows our Borough better than him. Their presence will be missed.

Please join me in congratulating our new Council and professionals and wishing them well as they undertake their new roles. Keep reading to meet them and see what they have in store for you.

See you at Office Hours!

Mayor Gina Ellis

Borough Committees

In an era where adaptability and inclusivity are paramount, the Borough of Chester Heights is proud to introduce a new committee structure that reflects our commitment to forward-thinking governance. This strategic realignment from fourteen to four core committees—Finance and Administration, Community Engagement, Infrastructure, and Public Safety—ensures that our efforts are more streamlined, efficient, and aligned with the diverse needs of our residents.

This initiative was born out of a desire to enhance collaboration among council members and volunteers, eliminate redundancy, and improve our responsiveness to community concerns. By consolidating our focus, we can leverage our collective expertise and resources more effectively, ensuring that each committee operates with a clear, purpose-driven mandate.

Our new structure focuses on four pivotal areas:

The Finance and Administration Committee oversees the borough's finances, including budget preparation and financial oversight, integrating tasks from the previously separate Finance, Insurance, Fire Company Finance, and Nomination Vacancy committees. With a broader scope now encompassing human resources, this committee is pivotal for financial stewardship and personnel matters, ensuring fiscal responsibility and compliance with budgetary constraints.

Community Engagement Committee was formed by merging the Communications/Public Relations, Mayor's Event Committee, and the Historical Committee, this group is dedicated to enhancing community outreach and engagement. It centralizes efforts to foster transparent communication, promote education on local governance, and build community through various events. This committee

takes on the crucial role of strengthening the social fabric of our borough and encouraging active participation in governance.

Infrastructure Committee (Public Works) emerges from the consolidation of the Borough Property/Parks/Open Space, Highways/Transportation, and Public Utilities/Trash/Recycling committees. Tasked with the comprehensive oversight of the borough's infrastructure, it focuses on property management, road maintenance, utilities, and sanitation. By coordinating efforts in these areas, the committee aims to streamline processes, improve maintenance and upgrades, and enhance communication with residents regarding borough-owned assets.

The Public Safety Committee eliminates redundancy by bringing together the Planning/Zoning, Engineering/Construction/Inspections, and Public Safety/Environmental committees, this newly formed committee adopts an integrated approach to ensure community well-being. Focused on planning, engineering, and public safety, it aims to optimize resource use, facilitate decision-making, and promote a cohesive strategy for addressing the diverse needs of our community.

Each committee is empowered to form subcommittees for specific tasks, inviting broader community involvement and ensuring that every aspect of borough governance is approached with a clear, purpose-driven mandate. This streamlined structure is designed to enhance efficiency, collaboration, and the overall effectiveness of our council's operation. We are confident that this reorganization will provide a solid foundation for responsive, community-centric governance, setting the stage for innovative solutions. Below are the updated committee member assignments:

Finance & Administration

MARTA DRISCOLL
(Chair)

JEANNE L.
MONTGOMERY

ANNE SEARL

SUE TIMMINS

DARLENE KURTEN

Community Engagement

JEANNE L.
MONTGOMERY
(Chair)

NATALIE
ANDERSON

ANNE SEARL

GINA ELLIS
(Mayor)

Public Safety

TIM HUDAK
(Chair)

DREW BAUM

MARTA DRISCOLL

NATALIE YOUNG

Infrastructure (Public Works)

NATALIE YOUNG
(Chair)

DREW BAUM

LARRY WARD
(Road Master)

GINA ELLIS
(Mayor)

Meet Our New Council Members

Welcome to our four new Council members, recently sworn in and ready to serve, joining alongside existing council members, Natalie Anderson, Drew Baum, and Marta Driscoll. Chester Heights is sure to benefit from a range of perspectives and ideas. And a big thank you to Bob Adams, Susan Clarke, Laura Lim, and Robert Sacks for their commitment and contributions to the borough. Their service is truly appreciated.



Timothy Hudak

Timothy Hudak

Timothy Hudak graduated from Garnet Valley High School in 2009. Tim discovered his passion for community involvement through his membership in the local Boy Scout Troop 260, where he obtained the rank of Eagle Scout in 2008. His favorite hobbies include backpacking, camping, wilderness survival, and studying historiography.

Tim followed his passion for public service to Temple University where he studied Criminal Justice with an emphasis on Police Science. While at Temple, Tim participated in dozens of ride-alongs with the Philadelphia Police Department to help implement cutting-edge crime mapping techniques.

After graduation, Tim pivoted professionally from pursuing Criminal Justice to pharmaceutical manufacturing. He has worked at Pentec Health, Quotient Sciences, and Catalent, and is currently the manufacturing manager at Pace Life Sciences in Norristown, PA.

Tim enjoyed serving on the Chester Heights Zoning Hearing Board before running for Chester Heights Borough Council. Having been a member of St. Thomas while growing up, Tim is passionate about preserving the history of the Parrish buildings. He also looks forward to working with the Chester Heights Fire Company and the Pennsylvania State Police to better serve the borough's residents.



Jeanne L. Montgomery

Jeanne L. Montgomery

Jeanne L. Montgomery, originally from Upper Darby, has long been passionate about serving the community, first in Haverford Township and, more recently, in Chester Heights— since moving to Darlington Woods in 2019. She enjoys fostering connections and bringing people together to address community needs. Jeanne was involved in developing the Haverford Reserve Dog Park and served on the Hilltop Civic Association and the Haverford Alliance for Drug Awareness (HADA).

Jeanne had a 30-year career at Verizon, followed by 14 years at Saint Joseph's University in the Office of Government and Community Relations. While working full-time, Jeanne attended Saint Joseph's University for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Now retired, Jeanne hopes to continue to draw upon her education, work experiences, and community relationships to keep Chester Heights a place that we are all proud to call home.

Jeanne has been married to Hugh Durkin for over twenty years and together they raised five children in Havertown and have three grandchildren and a new dog, Phoebe. They enjoy traveling, attending local musical events, Philly sports, and theater, and trying new restaurants.



Anne Searl

Anne Searl

Anne Searl was born and raised in Chester Heights, in a historic home on Valleybrook Road. She graduated from Garnet Valley High School and attended the University of Delaware, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work. Anne attended graduate school at West Chester University, where she majored in Educational Counseling.

Anne spent several years working in the field of Social Work then began a long career in Human Resources. She is currently employed as the Sr. Executive Director of Human Resources for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, an international non-profit organization. Anne also works as a freelance Human Resources Consultant for small businesses and non-profit organizations.

Anne has volunteered her time at various organizations over the years, including the Delaware County Heritage Commission, the Delaware County CASA Advisory Board, the Concept School Board, and the Chester Heights Historical Committee. Anne also served as a Councilwoman for the Borough, in an appointed role, from 2015 through 2017. Anne is married to Timothy Searl, an IT Manager for Project Management Institute and a Volunteer Firefighter for Chester Heights. She has two children, Emily and Justin.



Natalie Young

Natalie Young, Esq.

Natalie Young is a lifelong resident of Delaware County and a graduate of Strath Haven High School and Saint Joseph's University's Haub School of Business. After several years in retail management, Natalie decided to pursue a different career path and ultimately enrolled in law school at Widener University's School of Law in Delaware.

As a lawyer, Natalie spent a large part of her legal career practicing law in Philadelphia, before joining a Delaware County law firm in 2022. Natalie's legal practice focuses on general real estate and construction litigation as well as land use and zoning matters. Through her legal practice, Natalie often attended meetings before governing bodies and municipal boards for clients and eventually began attending her local Borough's Council meetings while living in Morton, Pennsylvania. In 2017, Natalie was appointed to serve the remaining term of a seat on Morton's Borough Council and was ultimately elected to the seat the following year.

Upon moving to Chester Heights, Natalie served on the Zoning Hearing Board for more than a year, before being elected to Borough Council during this past election. Natalie hopes to use her experience with the law, local government, land use, and business to foster a better community for the residents of Chester Heights.

Natalie and Andrew Young have been married for over twelve years and have two sons who are currently (or will be) attending school in the Garnet Valley School District. Both of Natalie's sons are active in the FC Brandywine (soccer) and baseball programs with the Brandywine Youth Club. Natalie is a volunteer Team Leader for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Overnight and Out of the Darkness Walks. In her spare time, Natalie enjoys writing, traveling, gardening, and spending time on the beach in Ocean City, New Jersey.

SAVE THE DATES 2024

- April 16** **Vision Zero Chester Heights Focus Group**
(in person, details TBD)
- May 2** **Scams - What You Need to Know to Stay Safe**
Presentation and Tips from PA State Police
53 W Baltimore Pike, 2nd Fl - Borough Office 1:00 pm
- May 27** **Memorial Day - Honor-Remember-Celebrate**
343 Valleybrook Rd - Chester Heights Park
Veterans and Community Members
(Time TBD)
- September 21** **Borough Recycling Day**
343 Valleybrook Rd - Chester Heights Park
9 am -12 pm

WATCH FOR ADDITIONAL DATES

- August** **Another SEPTA Senior Pass Mobile Sign-Up TBD**
- October 6-12** **Fire Prevention Week - Look for Events**
- Oct/November** **Diwali Festival**
Sub-Committee forming in April to help plan

*Ideas for new events? The Community Engagement Committee would like to hear your suggestions.
Contact jeanne.montgomery@chesterheights.org with your ideas.*



While the Borough DOES NOT ENDORSE any business, service, or product, we would like to thank the businesses that appear in this newsletter and recognize each of them as contributors to our community. Thanks to their advertising support, this newsletter has been produced at no charge to our residents.



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Developments, Projects & Borough Initiatives Update

DEVELOPMENTS

THE GARNET PRESERVE (Old Quarry Knoll)

Location: 61 Smithbridge Rd.

Preliminary Approval: December 1991

Final Approval: June 2019

Style and No. of Homes: 8 Single-Family Homes



The subdivision plan for Old Quarry Knoll was officially recorded in 1991 by Delaware County, without a developer's agreement, as part of an easement agreement with PECO that facilitated the creation of the Chester Heights Park on

Valleybrook Rd. The property was later sold in 1999 to Mr. & Mrs. Conrad with the subdivision in place. In 2019 the council received and approved the final development plan. In 2023, NVR, Inc. took over as the project's builder, rebranding it to Garnet Valley Reserve. Construction on seven of the eight homes is now in its final phase, with the first home being occupied in February 2024.

THE RESERVE AT STONEYBANK (Beard Subdivision)

Location: 29 Stoney Bank Road

Preliminary Approval: December 2015

Final Approval: October 2017

Style and No. of Homes: 33 Townhomes

The project is presently on hold pending a resolution regarding the sewer system plan. Initially proposed for connection to the Concord Township sewer system in 2015, the plan was revised in 2017 to connect to Walnut Hill Utility System. This change requires a new maintenance and management approach and a borough oversight agreement per DEP guidelines. The borough has not yet initiated an assessment of the potential oversight agreement's implications. It is important to note that any considerations or actions regarding oversight responsibilities—including operational management, maintenance, regulatory compliance, financial liabilities, and addressing legal disputes—will only be undertaken following an agreement among the concerned parties.

BROOKEFIELD

Location: Valleybrook Road & Smithbridge Road

Preliminary Approval: December 1, 2014

Final Approval: April 6, 2015 (04-15-A)

Style and No. of Units Homes: 77 Townhomes

The project is nearing completion, and the borough punch list items were near complete at the last review by GD Houtmann Engineering. As-built plans have been submitted and GD Houtmann was in the process of reviewing a report issued by a third-party engineer hired by the HOA. On



January 31st, 2024, the borough received a request by the developer to issue the final escrow release of the remaining funds on the project. Pennoni Assoc., the newly appointed borough engineering firm, is reviewing the documents

and evaluating the request. In addition to the remaining escrow, the sewer dedication remains an open item for this development.

Sidewalk/ School Bus Stop – Matt Houtmann assisted Brookefield HOA members in creating the plans for a sidewalk along Hunter Lane adjacent to Disalvo Park and developed the easement description. The project is pending review from the HOA.

ROSE HILL

Location: Llewelyn Rd & Lenni Rd.

Preliminary Approval: December 1, 2014

Final Approval: September 15, 2015 (9-15-A)

Style and No. of Homes: 33 Townhomes



Despite facing early setbacks and undergoing changes in both builders and sewer system plans, the project, now spearheaded by DR Horton as the builder, was revitalized in March 2023. With a sales target of three homes per month

and final sales projected for February 2025, we anticipate welcoming many new residents.

MEDICAL BUILDING "B"

Location: 53 W. Baltimore Pike

Application Filed: June 18, 2021

Preliminary/Final Approval: October 3, 2022

Description: Commercial Medical Building - 3640 sq.ft.

To date the council has not received any additional items for action from the owner. From the borough's perspective the project is on hold.

CHESTER HEIGHTS MARKET

Location: 1 Smithbridge Road

Application Filed: February 12, 2010

Preliminary/Final Approval: August 6, 2018

Description: Renovation of existing commercial building to include a restaurant establishment.

Project is pending DEP sewage facility planning module approval.

continued on page 8

Developments, Projects & Borough Initiatives Update *continued*

8 SMITHBRIDGE ROAD

Location: Valleybrook Road & Smithbridge Road

Application Filed: October 3, 2022

Preliminary/Final Approval: January 2, 2024

Description: Commercial Building 13,600 sq. ft.

The borough is working with the owner on finalizing the agreements.

PHILADELPHIA MEETING ROOM

Location: 479 Valleybrook Road

Application File Date: January 2, 2024

Preliminary/Final Approval: Not yet granted.

Description: Religious Meeting Space

The borough has received preliminary plans for a Plymouth Brethren Christian Church meetinghouse intended for small worship services and has begun the review process. A final decision is currently due by June 1, 2024, unless an extension is granted.

WESTLAKE PLASTICS

Location: 490 Lenni Rd.

Application Filed: January 26, 2023

Preliminary/Final Approval: April 3, 2023

Description: The plans consist of a proposed addition containing 16,640 sq. ft. to be constructed along the southwest side of the existing Main Plant/Manufacturing Facility Building.

Project is awaiting PA DEP approval for wetland disturbance permit.

PROJECTS

CHESTER HEIGHTS PARK TRAIL



The new Chester Heights Park Trail is open, but still suffering from water drainage issues. GD Houtmann is working with the contractor to resolve these stormwater management issues. The community can continue to use the trail as the issues are being addressed.

WAWA ROAD BRIDGE



Several years ago, a tractor-trailer, redirected onto Wawa Rd. due to a detour, damaged a small bridge. The borough faced challenges in getting this repair done. An evaluation was conducted, and the engineer presented two repair options. Initially, the borough sought quotes for a basic repair to prevent further damage but finding a contractor willing to undertake this task proved difficult. The local PennDOT crew stepped in to provide a temporary patch, ensuring the bridge's stability until a more thorough repair can be arranged.

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POWELL PROPERTY ACQUISITION



The Borough of Chester Heights, currently under contract to purchase the Powell property, is preparing to apply for a grant from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for \$1.87 million to cover the remaining cost of the acquisition. This step is

crucial as the Borough needs to front the funds initially and will be reimbursed after the purchase is completed. The grant application is part of a larger funding strategy that includes private donations, borough funds, and a potential state grant, with the aim to preserve the property as public open space without imposing an additional tax burden on residents. If you would like to learn more about the acquisition, check out the Fall 2023 Newsletter.

SMALL SEWER GRANT

The borough was awarded the COVID-19 ARPA PA Small Water and Sewer Program assistance grant in the amount of \$407,467 with a borough match requirement of \$71,906. This \$479K project aims to expand public sanitary sewer services in two critical areas: Llewellyn Road (residential) and Smithbridge Road (residential & commercial), currently reliant on septic systems. This expansion is intended to provide long-term sewage facilities, improve public health, and foster economic growth by enabling business expansion and residential renovations.

NOTE: The borough will provide the main sewer line infrastructure, but the responsibility for designing and installing the connections to the main sewer lines will fall to each homeowner and business. These individual parties will need to cover the costs associated with engineering fees, installation, grinder pumps, and tapping fees payable to the Southwest Delaware Municipal Water Authority.

BOROUGH INITIATIVES

EMPLOYEE MANUAL

This year, the council is committed to adopting best employment practices through the creation of an employee manual, a move aimed at establishing high professional standards while also safeguarding employee rights within our operations.

FIRE INSPECTION PROGRAM

Don't forget to check out the feature on the updated fire safety inspections program on page 14.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Chester Heights is advancing its Comprehensive Plan in partnership with Sarcinello Planning & GIS Services. The next step is applying for the Municipal Assistance Program Grant to secure necessary funding. You can expect to hear from the community engagement committee who will actively promote participation opportunities to residents.

continued on page 10

G.V.G.

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MINI PROS PARK PLAN

The steering committee for the Borough's Park Planning Grant project is now in place and is beginning its work. As a vital member of our community, we encourage you to be on the lookout for opportunities to participate and contribute to this important initiative over the next year. Your involvement is crucial in shaping the future of our local parks and recreational spaces. To ensure you do not miss these opportunities, we invite you to sign up for our email list. <http://tinyurl.com/CHSignUP24>

LENNI QUIET ZONE



In response to longstanding concerns from residents about excessive train horn noise stemming from the reactivation of the SEPTA train crossing at Lenni Rd. in 2022, the borough is collaborating with Middletown and

Aston on the Lenni Quiet Zone Feasibility Study. Because the crossing is located in Middletown Township the borough cannot unilaterally create or enforce a quiet zone. This initiative aims to assess the potential for establishing a quiet zone to mitigate noise issues. The study's cost is estimated at \$36,000, with a significant portion covered by a third-party donor, leaving our borough's share approximately \$2000, which we have included in our 2024 budget. Moving

forward, our next steps include drafting an intermunicipal agreement for the study and continuing to actively represent our community's interests in this collaborative effort.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE



In an effort to address community concerns, the borough initially looked to an existing Concord Township ordinance to form a Historic Preservation Committee and create a Historic Preservation Ordinance. However, after extensive review by council, the planning commission, and our professional appointees it was determined that

simply adopting an ordinance from another municipality wouldn't suit our borough's unique needs. Recognizing the necessity for a more tailored approach that addresses both residents' and the planning commission's concerns, we are re-evaluating our strategy. We're now drawing on additional resources and anticipate presenting a draft ordinance by late spring or early summer if not sooner.

NOTE: Due to the newsletter deadline, updates are current up to February 15th, 2024. For more up-to-date information, subscribe to our Email News. <http://tinyurl.com/CHSignUP24>

Local Garden Tips - *Bernie Miller*

Word is from Phil that we will have an early spring. Gardeners are looking for those mild days to prep the yard for spring. Here are some pointers for homeowners to consider to help avoid a crush of "to-do" items in April and May.

February and early March are your last best times to prune fruit trees and roses. Leave lilacs and azaleas until after they have bloomed.

Do not panic as you see your spring bulbs sprouting. They are hardy souls and cold weather rarely impacts them. Their leaves remind us that spring is not far away and where we planted bulbs last fall.

Check mail-order companies or local garden centers for vegetables and flower seeds. Mail orders provide more choices but local is convenient. Seed packets tell you how many weeks ahead you can start seeds. The last frost date for us is early May. Most seeds require at least 70 degrees for good germination. Once



sprouted the seedlings require good light to stay sturdy. Many gardeners place seedlings under fluorescent lights 2-4 inches above the leaves. Lights are on timers for 14-16 hours.

You can incorporate compost into garden beds now until planting time. This provides natural, slow-release fertilizer to your plants.

The last piece of advice for our HOAs is to have a conversation with the grounds crew about mulching individual trees. The volcano look, where mulch is 6 or more inches high against the trunk is unhealthy for trees. Two to three inches is ideal to help keep out weeds and maintain ground moisture. Volcanos invite rot and critters as there can be too much of a good thing.

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Family Support Line Celebrates Grand Opening of State-of-the-Art Children's Advocacy Center

(Provided by Blaire Jamison)

Family Support Line celebrated a significant milestone with the grand opening of its new state-of-the-art Children's Advocacy Center in Chester Heights, Pennsylvania. The inauguration, held on January 30th, marked the culmination of diligent efforts to provide a safe and nurturing space for those affected by child sexual abuse.

The event, attended by over 130 guests including Family Support Line staff, board members, and esteemed elected officials, showcased the organization's commitment to healing and justice. Notable figures such as PA State Senators John Kane and Tim Kearney, Delaware County Council members Monica Taylor and Kevin Madden, and First Assistant District Attorney Tanner Rouse, among others, graced the occasion with their presence and delivered heartfelt remarks.

Executive Director Sarah Gibbons expressed gratitude for the overwhelming community support, emphasizing the center's critical role in facilitating the healing process for children. Despite the sobering nature of their work, Gibbons highlighted the significance of the new facility in fostering trust and comfort among the young survivors. "Since we moved in on December 4th, our staff have conducted 85 forensic interviews. When you factor in the other children we have also seen through therapy and group sessions, over 100 children have already been touched in two months," said Sarah Gibbons, Executive Director of Family Support Line. "

Senator Kearney discussed Family Support Line's expansion project as a vital response to the alarming increase in cases of child sexual assault. He commended the organization's dedication to providing essential services and reaffirmed his commitment to collaboration in creating a safer future for children.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, attendees were invited to explore the cutting-edge facility through guided tours. With specialized areas designed to offer a haven for children and families seeking support, the center offers a place for healing and comfort during a time of crisis.



Mayor Gina Marie Ellis, (fourth from the left) at the grand opening event of the Family Support Line's new Chester Heights home.

Senator Kane echoed sentiments of hope and resilience, emphasizing the center's role as a symbol of compassion and protection. He pledged continued support for Family Support Line's mission to advocate for vulnerable members of the community.

Delaware County Council Member Kevin Madden talked about the county's commitment to supporting initiatives aimed at safeguarding residents. He commended Family Support Line for its unwavering dedication and acknowledged the significant investment made to enhance services for children and families.

As the event concluded, Family Support Line expressed gratitude to all attendees, partners, and supporters who contributed to its success. With a renewed sense of purpose, the organization looks forward to continuing its mission of advocating for and supporting children and families in their journey toward healing and justice. For those seeking more information about Family Support Line and its services, visit their website at www.familysupportline.org.

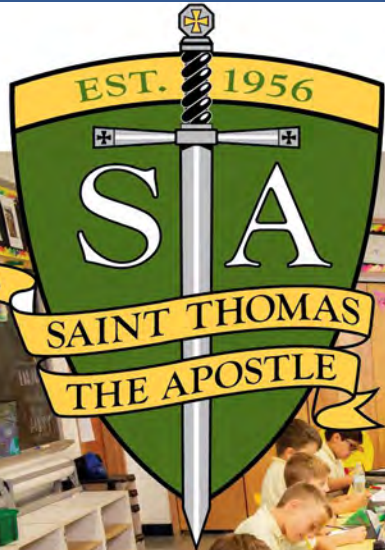


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Borough Fire Safety Inspection Program

Enhancing Community Safety: A New Direction in Fire Inspections

Recognizing the need to enhance our fire safety measures, the council convened a new fire inspection subcommittee to evaluate the borough fire safety inspection program (Chapter 97 of the Borough Code) to create consistent inspection procedures aimed at assuring the safety, health and welfare of our residents. This initiative is crucial for ensuring that every residence, regardless of type, benefits from the highest standards of fire safety.

Background: In 1998, our borough took a significant step towards enhancing fire safety by enacting Fire Prevention Ordinance 153, now codified as Chapter 97 of our borough code. This important chapter not only established the role of the Borough Fire Marshal but also set forth a proactive fire inspection program under section 97-22. This program is crucial for our community's safety, requiring inspections before any building transfer, or occupancy, and mandating regular inspections of all rental and commercial properties every two years.

Subcommittee Findings: A detailed evaluation of borough records and insights gathered from similar municipalities our dedicated subcommittee — comprised of the Fire Bureau (Fire Marshal, Fire Chief, Chair of Public Safety), the Deputy Chief, and the Emergency Management Coordinator — has offered significant findings on our current compliance status. The committee found that only 16% of the commercial buildings have been inspected within the last three years, indicating a need to catch up on inspections for the remaining buildings. For residential inspections, the borough's focus has predominantly been on multiple-unit rental properties and new home purchases, but single-family home rental inspections had been overlooked. These homes, which are equally covered under the code, are now also due for inspection in 2024. In addition to lagging inspections, the committee also identified the need to standardize fees for both commercial and residential inspections.

Recommended Changes

- 1) Incorporate recommendations put forth by the former Ordinance Committee to require inspections on a yearly rather than a biannual basis.
- 2) Update the code to reference the current International Fire Code 2018 which is the effective fire code in the state of Pennsylvania and retain parts of the borough code that provide for more strict public safety standards.
- 3) Adopt a new fee schedule that identifies the fees clearly and consistently. Specifically setting residential rental and U&O fees at \$120, multi-unit residential building fees at \$65 per unit, and establishing a tiered fee structure for commercial buildings dependent on the square footage applied on a per building, per tenant occupancy basis ranging from \$150 - \$1000 (see proposed fees – next page).
- 4) Create an updated inspection form and establish a list of rental and commercial properties to allow for a consistent and predictable way to retain and access inspection records.



Implementation: Implementing our fire inspection program after years of oversight will be a journey that requires patience and time. The first order of business was to adopt the new standardized fee schedule and make the recommended corrections to the borough code. Next with the sale of Madison Apartments, inspectors must bring the complex up to date on inspections to comply with the requirement of inspecting all buildings before transfer.

Commercial buildings and businesses will be the next area of focus. Building owners can expect to receive notice from the Borough Fire Marshal about their inspection being due with a list of items that will be evaluated during the inspection. The inspections will be conducted on a pass/fail basis where failing inspections will require a re-inspection on failed items. Unlike in prior years, commercial fire inspection fees include the cost of two (2) inspections, the initial and one re-inspection if needed. Additional inspections required because of the failure of the work to pass the initial two inspections, shall result in the assessment of 1/2 the inspection fee for each additional inspection.

And finally, the borough will begin to inspect local residential rentals. Homes rented throughout the borough will be required to undergo a fire safety inspection. Even though the code authorized and mandated these inspections since 1998 this will feel like a new compliance practice for many who are renters and landlords in the borough. For each unit that has been identified as a rental the landlord will receive a letter notifying them of the requirement, providing a list of items that will be checked at inspection, and a request to schedule said inspection. The timeline for the inspection will be determined by the Fire Bureau and will be included with the letter.

Our plan to streamline inspection schedules and standardize fee structures is designed with the well-being of our community in mind. By making these processes more efficient and equitable, we aim to facilitate comprehensive compliance that benefits everyone. This approach not only helps in preventing potential fire hazards but also contributes to a culture of proactive safety awareness.

Next Steps: The Fire Bureau and Council members have raised questions about expanding our inspection program to cover a broader range of building safety items from the International Building Code (IBC). We agree that there is room for more safety items to be added. In an effort to broaden the safety inspections in the borough to include a more comprehensive list, CHB will need to pass either a stand-alone ordinance to pull items from the IBC and add them to their inspection protocol, or we will have to adopt the International Property Maintenance Ordinance which includes provisions for safety inspections. Evaluating these options is the next logical step, but we can no longer wait to provide safety for our residents by ignoring the code we have available to us now.

Recognizing the need to enhance our fire safety measures, we are committed to addressing the inspection backlog and incorporating single-family home rentals into our safety protocols. Our plan to streamline inspection schedules and standardize fee structures is aimed at ensuring comprehensive compliance and safeguarding our community's well-being. Through collaborative efforts with property owners and stakeholders, we look forward to strengthening our borough's resilience and maintaining a safe environment for all.

As we update our municipal code and implement new fee schedules, we are committed to keeping our residents informed and prepared. Updates will be promptly shared on our official website, through our email newsletter, and across our social media platforms. To help you anticipate and prepare, we've compiled an overview of the fire safety inspection checklist. This checklist is designed to ensure your property meets the latest safety standards, reflecting our dedication to the well-being of our community. Please note, however, that this overview is not exhaustive. Additional requirements may apply, reflecting our ongoing dedication to maintaining the highest safety standards in our community.

PROPOSED ANNUAL FIRE INSPECTION FEES

RESIDENTIAL

Pass or Fail

Use and Occupancy: \$120.00

Fire Inspections Residential Rentals single unit: \$120.00

Residential rentals, multiple apartment units within the same building: \$65.00/per unit

A re-inspection fee of 1/2 the fee charged per re-inspection

COMMERCIAL

Commercial fire inspection fees cover two (2) inspections: the initial inspection, and one follow-up, if necessary. If further inspections are needed due to noncompliance, each additional visit will incur a charge of half the original fee.

Commercial apartment buildings have multiple apartment units within the same building. \$65 per unit

Nonresidential auxiliary buildings co-located with the multiple apartment buildings will be additional, per the commercial unit fee schedule below.

Commercial Units: Per Building, Per Tenant
Occupancy or Change in Tenant:

1-2000 square feet: \$150

2,001-5,000 square feet: \$200

5,001-10,000, square feet: \$300

10,001-100,000 square feet: \$500

100,001 square feet or greater: \$1,000

Do I Need A Burn Permit?

Per Borough Code § 97-29 The Fire Marshal must be notified if you intend to burn any brush or another type of natural vegetation on your property. - *Steel Fire Pits and Chiminea are acceptable burning vessels after hours, do not require a permit, and do not have to be extinguished at sunset. Bonfires are NOT permitted due to the dangers of a large fire and flying embers. Pit fires are permitted for yard debris.

OPEN BURN REGULATIONS:

- **Prohibited Open Burning:** Open burning of construction materials, land clearing debris, trash, or any materials on public streets, roadways, curbs, gutters, or street drains is strictly forbidden at all times.
- **Permissible Open Burning:** The burning of leaves, small brush, and twigs is allowed only on Fridays and Saturdays from 7 am to sunset.
- **Burning Requirements:** Only one pile is allowed, which must not exceed 6 feet in diameter. A fire extinguisher or a garden hose must be readily available nearby.
- **Sunset Rule:** All fires must be extinguished by sunset, without exception.
- **Permit Requirement:** A permit is required for open burning, which can be obtained from the borough office. The burn permits are \$5 per weekend or \$20 per month.
- **Fire Marshal's Authority:** The Fire Marshal has the authority to cancel open burning permits due to drought conditions or other unsafe circumstances.



OVERVIEW OF FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

- Smoke Detectors:** All smoke detectors will be tested using artificial smoke. Detectors over 10 years old are not allowed.
Placement of Smoke Detectors: Smoke detectors are required in all bedroom locations. Additionally, smoke detectors are required at a rate of one per floor per 1,200 sq. ft. (residential) /800 sq. ft. (commercial). If the layout of the home is unusual, more may be required. If smoke detectors are hard-wired (110 volt), they must be replaced with the same type. No substitutions are allowed—a battery-operated unit cannot replace a hard-wired unit.
- CO Detectors:** CO detectors must be installed and operable on each floor of the dwelling.
- House Numbers:** Must be properly displayed and easily seen from the street. The numbers must be placed on the street side and be clearly visible.
- Storage of Flammable/Combustible Materials (paints, solvents, cleaners, gasoline, etc.):** Commercial properties must have metal storage lockers. Homeowners cannot store gasoline indoors. All home hazardous materials must be disposed of properly before resale.
- Egress and Door Exits:** Door exits with double cylinder locks are required, with emergency keys nearby. Panic hardware is required on all commercial exit doors. A small hook with the key is acceptable.
- Storage of Flammable Materials Close to House (trash, building materials, LP gas tanks, etc.):** Storage of propane tanks indoors is prohibited.
- Gates, Chains, and Other Methods of Restricting Access:** To roadways, driveways, or other vehicle paths must not impede emergency vehicles. Knox boxes are acceptable. Forms are available from the Fire Marshal's Office.
- Electrical Systems:** Must be properly installed with a UL (Underwriters Laboratories) sticker on the main breaker panel.
No exposed wires or open boxes allowed. Proper grounding is required. Ground fault interrupters (GFI) are required within 6 feet of all water basins and wet/damp areas.
- Heating Systems / Fireplace Inspection:** A certificate from a certified business (present year service sticker) is required. Overview of exhaust exits from heaters—main, space, and water. Fuel hazards of natural gas, heating oil, and propane. Present year contract certificates or receipts are required to show preventative maintenance was performed on heaters and fireplaces. Cracks in prefabricated fireplaces with panels of fireboard or firebrick cannot exceed one sixteenth of an inch in width. Replacement is necessary when this condition exists. Wood and coal freestanding stoves require the same.
- Dryer Vents:** Must be rigid metal.
- Portable Fire Extinguishers (Active Dates):** Required in all rentals and commercial properties. Fire extinguishers must have the present year date on tags.
- Fire Alarm Signaling Systems:** A certificate of working order from a certified technician or business is required. Fire alarm systems must have a present-year certificate of good working order from their monitoring companies, where applicable.
- Automatic Sprinkler Systems:** For fire protection purposes with suitable water supply and sprinkler alarm system must have a certificate of good working order from a certified technician or business, where applicable.
Note: *The above items are required for all property sale transactions, commercial, and residential rental units. The basis for all inspections is in accordance with, but not limited to, the Chester Heights Fire Code, the currently adopted International Fire Code, all NFPA codes, the International Building Code, and the UCC of PA.*

Fireworks are Dangerous & Non-Permissible in Chester Heights



As summer approaches, we remind residents that “backyard fireworks” can lead to serious injuries, property damage, and other harmful effects. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (Fireworks | CPSC.gov), in 2022, there were 11 firework-related deaths and over 10,000 injuries resulting in emergency department visits. Seventy-three percent (73%) of these injuries occurred around the July 4th holiday. The National Safety Council estimates that over 19,000 fires are caused by fireworks each year.

Here are some additional points about fireworks. Fireworks are reported to be the most common trigger for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms among military veterans. Bystanders and neighbors in close proximity to backyard fireworks may be exposed to unsafe noise levels. Explosive sounds, such as those from fireworks and firecrackers, are more hazardous to hearing than other loud noises. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association cautions that at close distance just one loud burst can cause permanent hearing loss. People need to be at least 500 feet from launch sites without ear protection. Fireworks startle infants and children, frighten them, and interrupt their sleep. Pets can be affected by fireworks, especially dogs, experiencing prolonged anxiety and fear (panting, trembling, pacing, whining). Loud blasts can send wildlife, e.g., deer, running onto roads leading to vehicle accidents and injuries.

Along with other national agencies, we are urging Chester Heights Borough residents to leave firework displays to our authorized experts when planning their holiday celebrations. If you or your neighbors choose to set off fireworks in your yards, we emphasize that the sale or discharge of fireworks is clearly prohibited by Section F-3101.1 of the Code unless covered by a state-granted permit. Please always take all safety precautions with fireworks, and remember that there is a noise ordinance for Chester Heights Borough. Public firework displays sponsored by township and borough professionals are held throughout Delaware County, so residents can take advantage of enjoying these events. Please help us keep our community safe and peaceful during holidays and throughout the year.



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Appointments Coming Soon

Senior Events & Resources 2024

UPCOMING EVENTS	WHERE	WHEN
Senior Expo: Dozens of organizations will be on hand to provide assistance and resources to seniors. There will be a light lunch, refreshments, and door prizes!	Upper Chichester Township Municipal Complex, 8500 Furey Road, Upper Chichester, PA	April 11, 2024 (10 am-2 pm)
Enhancing Senior Safety: Protect Yourself from Scams Presented by PA State Troop K	Chester Heights Borough Ofc. 53 W. Baltimore Pk, Chester Heights, PA	May 2, 2024 (1 pm)
COSA Senior Expo: Dozens of organizations will be on hand to provide assistance and resources to seniors. There will be a light lunch, refreshments, and door prizes!	Harrah's Casino, 777 Harrah's Blvd., Chester, PA	May 3, 2024 (9 am-1 pm)
Delaware County Senior Games: Two weeks of games and fun.	Varied locations- check the website, you must register http://delcoseniorgames.org	June 10, 2024, thru June 21, 2024
Concord Senior Expo: Exhibitors from agencies, local organizations, businesses, and clubs to share information on services and issues important to you. Refreshments are served and door prizes throughout the day.	BYC Gym, 41 S. Thornton Rd. Glen Mills, PA	October 10, 2024 9 am – 12 pm
The County Office of Services for Aging: COSA 610- 490 1300, 800-416-4504 Email: COSA@co.delaware.pa.us	https://www.delcosa.org/home , 1510 Chester Pike, Suite 250, Eddystone, PA	
Concord Senior Center: Lunch, events, seminars, trips, 610-358-9359	817 Concord Rd, Glen Mills, PA	1st Monday of the mth. Membership fee. Lunch Lunch may be purchased
Surrey Services: Lunch, events, classes, games Email: info@surreyservices.org	SurreyServices.org several locations	Membership \$50 per year



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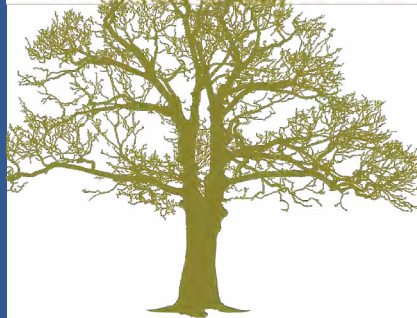
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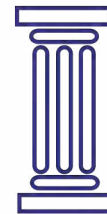
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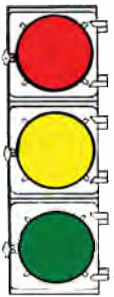
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