Board of Commissioner’s meeting is held the third Monday of each month at 6pm

Brian Harris - Township Manager
Jim Bobeck - Assistant Township Manager
Dawn Cieniewicz - Secretary
Michael Setley, Esq. - Solicitor
Pat C. Lupia - Tax Collector

Planning Commission
Meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at 7pm

Walter S. LaSota - Chairman
Robert Entler - Vice Chairman
Frank Sabatucci - Secretary

Diane Benson, Kerry Good, David Hepner, Vanessa Pagan | Eva Eisenbrown - Alternate

Parks and Recreation Board
Meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month January through October at 6pm and December 6th at Noon

Joseph Lupia, Jr. - Chairman
Brad Coley - Vice Chairman
Fred Hatt - Secretary

Casey Blankenbiller, James Kelly, Dr. Timothy Moyer, Andrew Russo

Zoning Hearing Board
Scheduled on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm when required

Marlin D. Seyler - Chairman
Kevin Reichert - Treasurer
Robin Royer - Secretary | Anne Carroll - Alternate
James Gavin, Esq. - Solicitor | Jill Nagy, Esq. - Conflict Counsel

Arts Board
Meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm

Barbara Mills - Chairman
Elisabeth Ledig - Vice Chairman
Ann Barlet - Secretary
Cleon Garl, Madelyn Cave, Marika Horacek-Kunkle, Rachel Conrad
BUSINESS HAPPENINGS
Find out what is happening in Muhlenberg Township.

REPORT TO THE PEOPLE
A letter to the people from Senator Judy Schwank.

END OF AN ERA
The Fairgrounds Square Mall as you once knew it is no more. Learn of its history and what could be next.

YOUR TOWNSHIP TAXES
A yearly breakdown of how your tax money is spent.

WHEN RAIN TURNS DESTRUCTIVE
A soggy month taught lessons in the importance of Flood Insurance.

SNOW REMOVAL FAQ’s
Stay up-to-date on Township snow removal policy.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR OLD PHOTOGRAPHS OF MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP
If you have any old photographs of different locations, buildings or businesses based in the township you are willing to share, we would like a copy for future projects. If you have some you’d like to submit or need them scanned e-mail art@muhlenbergtwp.com
The Crews Around Muhlenberg Township!

On the hottest days of Summer and the coldest nights in Winter residents are served by the Muhlenberg Township Public Works Department, Parks Department and the Muhlenberg Township Authority. Many of these employees are your neighbors and these crews service the community 24-7. They are required to have the necessary trade skills and are responsible for keeping your roads clear, collecting leaves, repairing sinkholes, paving, repairing pumping stations and installing and repairing water and sewer mains!

The Muhlenberg Township Public Works Department maintains nearly 78 miles of roads throughout the Township and is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the storm sewer system as well as Township owned bridges. The Parks Department maintains nearly 500 acres of active and passive land associated with the park system and maintains other assets owned by the Township.

The Muhlenberg Township Authority maintains and operates a water distribution system and sewer collection system, most of which is not visible to Township residents. The Authority operates and maintains nearly 112 miles of water mains which distribute approximately 3.2 million gallons of water per day to Township residents. The Authority is also tasked with operating and maintaining 87 miles of sanitary sewer line which convey 3.9 million gallons of sewerage per day to be treated by the City of Reading. In addition, Authority employees maintain and operate all the pumping stations associated with both the water and sanitary sewer systems.

Although the Muhlenberg Township Public Works and Parks Department are a separate entity from the Muhlenberg Township Authority, these crews work cooperatively to ensure the public infrastructure is maintained to the highest standard! As the Muhlenberg Township Public Works Liaison and the Chairman of the Muhlenberg Township Authority, it has been eye opening to see the dedication and skills required to maintain the infrastructure above and below the streets in Muhlenberg Township! When given the opportunity, please take a moment to thank a crew member.

Commissioner John “Butch” Imhoff
TRASH TALK
2020 was the final year of a 7-year Refuse & Recycling Contract which was awarded to JP Mascaro in 2014. A new contract was put out for bid in June and in 2021 the refuse and recycling hauler will be JP Mascaro with collection remaining Thursday & Friday. The new contract is a 5-year contract with the ability to extend an additional 2 years through 2027.

Effective January 1st 2021 the annual refuse rate will be $350 and $310 for the senior discount. As discussed in the Summer magazine, refuse and recycling collection rates primarily have 2 main cost components which are collection fees (the hauler physically collecting material) and tipping fees (disposal cost at the landfill).

In 2020, the collection fee based on JP Mascaro’s bid in 2014 was $871,992.00. Collection cost in the most recent bid was $1,342,152.00, which is a 54% increase.

The First Class Township Code requires Muhlenberg Township to accept and award contracts to the lowest responsible bidder and JP Mascaro satisfied those requirements. Additionally, JP Mascaro was the only bidder that was able to keep the current collection schedule of Thursday & Friday.

ROAD PAVING
The 2021 Road Paving Project will consist of paving various roads throughout the Township. Street excavation is governed by Chapter 125, Article III of the Muhlenberg Township Code and sets forth standards that must be adhered to regarding opening a street.

The most important provision applicable to township residents is that utility companies are prohibited, unless a situation is deemed an emergency, to cut a street within three (3) years of paving.

When utility companies excavate on a township road they are required to temporarily restore the road and complete final restoration in a specified timeframe. Final restoration includes removing the temporary asphalt and repaving the cut with at least 4” of asphalt wearing course and sealing the perimeter of the cut.

UTILITY COMPANY
CONTACT INFO
UGI
2525 N. 12th Street
Reading, PA 19605

Customer Service
800.276.2722
customerservice@ugi.com

Switching to Natural Gas
800.276.2722 Option 4
gasconversion@ugi.com
Muhlenberg has a lot of good stuff going on including the anticipated adoption of the 2021 budget with no tax increase. The Township takes pride in holding the line on taxes and has done so for the past 6 years. However, depending on the 2021 economic climate, an increase may be required for the 2022 budget year. As the graphic shows below, your Township tax goes a long way for being only 12% of your real estate tax bill. The Township does a lot with your money including some important things like police protection, paving and plowing roads, picking up leaves, maintaining over 500 acres of park land, attracting business, issuing permits, donating to our library and ambulance, successfully obtaining grant money for equipment and road projects, Spring Fiesta, RiverFest, and more.

TAX REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

Residents often have concerns about how and where their tax dollars are being spent within the Township. Commencing in July of every year, the Township begins the budget process. The budget is a document that builds on the objectives and goals established by the Board of Commissioners. Each year in the Fall the Board holds a budget workshop to discuss current and future budgetary needs. This is one of the most important meetings of the year. It is open to the public and the Township encourages all residents to come out, and see first-hand how their tax dollars are being utilized. The following information is the breakdown of revenues and expenditures for the 2021 calendar budget year. It is a broad view of the finances as a whole but it provides you the information on the “where and how” of the budget allocation for 2021. We continue to search for new innovative ways, as well as follow conventional methods, to provide the level of services and programs that our residents enjoy and have come to expect in the most cost-effective manner. The First Class Township Code adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania mandates municipalities to adopt a preliminary budget, advertise accordingly, and adopt a final budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Feel free to reach out and contact staff if you have specific questions as it relates to the Township and its finances.

Where the Money Comes From

The Township’s major operating revenues are real estate tax and
earned income tax. Other tax revenue includes real estate transfer tax, local services tax and business privilege tax. The balance of operating revenue is comprised of other revenue which consists of licenses and permits, charges for services, fines, interest, recreation fees and other non-tax revenue.

The General Fund revenues are projected to increase from $15,160,190 in 2020 to $15,231,285 in 2021. The slight increase in revenue projections are due to a conservative budget approach and uncertainty surrounding local and global economies in 2021. The Township’s general purpose millage rate is currently 4.4 or $440 per every 100,000 of assessed value and the Fire Fund is 0.6 or $60 per 100,000 of assessed value.

A Home Assessed at $100,000 pays $440 Dollars in property tax to the Township based on the 4.4 general purpose millage rate. The chart below breaks down where your tax dollars go in the general fund.

Where the Money Goes by Program

The projected operating expenditures are budgeted to increase from $15,441,675 in 2020 to $16,015,922 in the 2021 budget. This is an increase of $574,247 or 3.7%. The increase is primarily due to the increase in the cost of refuse collection and personnel costs including wages set by collective bargaining agreements for Teamsters and Police and health care costs which increased from 2020.

The largest functional areas of the Township by expenditure are Public Safety which includes Police, Ambulance and Public Works. These areas represent a total of 68% of the Operating Budget.

TRASH & RECYCLING

TRASH & RECYCLING ARE COLLECTED ONCE A WEEK. ADDRESSES WEST OF RT. 61 ARE COLLECTED ON THURSDAY AND EAST OF RT. 61 ARE COLLECTED ON FRIDAY.

TRASH COLLECTION IS BILLED TWICE A YEAR - 1ST IN JANUARY AND THE 2ND BILL IN JULY.

COLLECTION BEGINS AT 6 AM SO YOU SHOULD PLACE NO MORE THAN 8 CONTAINERS OF TRASH, YOUR ONE BULK ITEM AND YOUR RECYCLING CONTAINER AT THE STREET’S EDGE ANYTIME AFTER 6 PM THE NIGHT BEFORE YOUR SCHEDULED PICK-UP. ALL TRASH MUST BE IN PLASTIC OR METAL CONTAINERS (SORRY, NO 55 GALLON DRUMS PERMITTED) OR PLASTIC TRASH BAGS. PLEASE DON’T USE SMALL CONTAINERS SUCH AS BOXES OR GROCERY BAGS FOR TRASH BECAUSE THEY ALLOW TRASH TO BLOW AROUND CAUSING LITTER - HELP KEEP THE TOWNSHIP CLEAN!

DON’T FORGET ALL OF YOUR TRASH AND RECYCLING NEEDS CAN BE FOUND ON THE TOWNSHIP WEBSITE AT WWW.MUHLENBERGTWP.COM.
Water pollution and conservation are important issues during the spring and summer months; however, there are many things that we can do during the winter months that will help reduce water pollution and help conserve water. Below are three topics with several tips on how to make a difference this winter:

Too Much Salt
When the snow and ice melt after a winter storm, the water flow will take with it anything that it collects on the ground and wash it down storm drains. This means that melting ice will carry the deicer materials that we use to clear our driveways and walkways down storm drains and into local waterways. The chlorides that make up the deicers can harm aquatic wildlife, affect nearby plant growth in your yard, and can remain trapped in your soils. Luckily there are alternatives to conventional rock salt deicers that are easy to purchase and will also help in keeping our path-ways safe! Here are some helpful tips that will keep your pavements clear and local streams cleaner:

- Removing freshly fallen snow before it has a chance to freeze and harden into ice is one of the more effective ways of keeping your pavements clear. Deicers work better when there is only a thin layer of ice or snow.

- If you are using traditional rock salt, the recommended application is a handful for one square yard. Using more salt than this will not make the ice melt faster; it will only end up costing you more money and the salt will be washed away by the stormwater!

- Pay attention to the type of deicer material you are using so that you reduce the risk of damaging your sidewalk and driveway.

- Mixing sand in with the deicer will also aid in melting the snow and ice and allow you to cut back on the amount of rock salt that is being used. Sand and regular brand kitty litter will also add traction to the surface as well. But remember, if there is left over sand and kitty litter on your walkway or driveway, then use a broom to clean it up. Using a hose to wash the sand and kitty litter away will push the material into nearby storm drains and potentially cause a clog or back-up of the drains, so put that broom to work! Fertilizer is not an appropriate substitution for any of the above materials.

Losing Water
Bursting pipes in the winter time can cause a strain on water supply levels and also on a homeowner’s wallet. By preventing pipe bursts and water loss now, you can help conserve water and money!

- If you have outside spigots, turn them off during the winter months to prevent them from bursting due to the cold temperatures.

- You may be able to turn the spigots off by an inside valve, and then drain the remaining water from the pipes.

- Make sure that your water pipes are insulated properly and check for leaky pipes now before freezing temperatures arrive.

Household Hazardous Waste
It is important to dispose and use cleaning products appropriately. The water that goes down your sink drain also carries residues from your home, and many harsh household chemicals are not removed by sewage-treatment or septic systems.
Household Hazardous Waste is any household product which is labeled: **CAUTION, DANGER, FLAMMABLE, EXPLOSIVE, TOXIC, WARNING, CORROSIVE, POISON and VOLATILE** or a combination of these characteristics.

Here are a few things that will help reduce these problems with household chemicals:

- Read your labels and know what is in the product before using it.
- Consider using products that are “environmentally friendly.” These products will advertise that they do not contain phosphates, chlorine, ammonia, etc. (all of which contribute to water pollution)
- Store household chemicals in a dry area with the lids secured tightly.
- Use only the recommended amount of the product.
- Never dispose of chemicals in storm drains (they lead directly to nearby rivers).
- When disposing of household chemicals, check to see if there are special instructions and/or collection sites for your convenience. In Berks County, the Berks County Solid Waste Authority hosts Household Hazardous Waste Collections in the Spring and Fall to help homeowners dispose of Household chemicals. For additional information please visit the Berks County Solid Waste Authority website at [http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/swa/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/swa/Pages/default.aspx) or call 610-478-6362.

(This article is compliments of the Berks County MS4 Steering Committee and Cooperative Education Program.)

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The Muhlenberg Rail Trail is a beautiful park that is hidden and unfortunately unknown to many residents of the Township. The Rail Trail was constructed on the former corridor of the East Penn Branch of the Reading Railroad which ran between Allentown and Reading beginning in the 19th century. Use of the rail line ceased nearly 40 years ago and the Township acquired the right-of-way in 2003 for construction of the trail.

The two-mile paved trail starts at the Northern Trail Head parking area, which is located off Mount Laurel Road near the intersection of Furnace Road. The Trail is, for the most part, level and runs south into Laureldale to a terminus located at the South Trail Head parking lot at the intersections of Montrose Avenue and Prince Street. There are a number of alternative access points including Hay Road, Frush Valley Road, Florence Street, Rosedale Avenue and 11th Avenue. The wheelchair friendly Trail is a favorite location for runners, walkers and their dogs, bicyclists, and bird watchers. You can find the Trail on Google Maps.

The Rail Trail is in need of Trail Tenders **“Friends of the Rail Trail”** to be the Eyes and Ears of the Township. Trail Tenders provide a critical volunteer function and perform routine trail maintenance and report concerns or issues that occur from time to time. **Friends of the Rail Trail would meet one Saturday per month and the Trail Tenders would be responsible for general upkeep, litter, special projects like painting benches, gardening, etc. The Trail is a perfect place for passive recreation however the natural beauty could be enhanced.**

If interested in becoming a Trail Tender and Friend of the Rail Trail you can sign-up at [https://bit.ly/38WD3c5](https://bit.ly/38WD3c5) or email your name and phone number to swolfinger@muhlenbergtwp.com.
ARE YOU READY FOR WINTER DRIVING?

Yes, we’re from Pennsylvania, so we know how-to drive in snow and ice, right? Then why so many accidents? Here’s how you can improve safety and comfort when driving in winter conditions: **BE PREPARED**

Let’s put an ice scraper, snow shovel, kitty litter, flashlight, jumper cables and a cell phone in the vehicle. Oh, include some food, water, and a blanket too, especially if you drive on Route 78. Make sure your battery and tires are good and won’t let you down in cold and snow. It’s a good idea to have your hoses and belts checked too. Wipers, defrosters, and washer reservoir, you have to see out the windshield. It’ll be tough if the wipers don’t wipe and the cleaning solution isn’t winter rated or the reservoir has run dry.

**DRIVE IN CAUTION MODE**

You may be the best driver there is, but we can’t count on the other drivers’ skill, can we? Keep the speed down and the distance up. No tailgating, cell phone use or distracted driving. Be alert at all times. Leave plenty of space between you and other vehicles so you can accelerate and brake slowly. If you start sliding, lay off the gas and steer gently in the direction you want to go. This is when you’ll appreciate the extra distance you have between you and a crash. No herky-jerky moves please. Deliberate and calculated are the themes of winter driving.

Choose your route carefully. Avoid hills, severe curves and roads that don’t get plowed quickly if you can. Take the long way if it’s safer, better yet – **STAY HOME!** Have that extra cup of coffee or tea; wait until the plows have done their thing. By the way, a good place to be on a snowy road is behind the plow, not passing it.

**BE SAFE AND ALWAYS BUCKLE UP!**

Use approved car seats for the little ones. Keep your vehicle inspected and in good mechanical condition. Headlights always on. Check mirrors constantly, stay alert for hazards. Be courteous.
Preparing for a New Year

We’re closer than ever to the end of 2020. The past year certainly offered a multitude of challenges that no one saw coming, and, well, who knows what 2021 will bring? I do know we as Pennsylvanians are ready to meet any upcoming trials and opportunities.

Preparing for a new year is a good time to think about upkeep and maintenance. This includes examining your vehicle and home for potential hazards.

The Car Care Council, a non-profit organization focused on motor safety, recommends checking the following in your vehicle every 12 months: automatic transmission fluid, battery and cables, belts, brakes, cabin air filter, chassis lubrication, coolant, engine air filter, engine oil, exhaust, hoses, lights, power steering fluid, steering and suspension, tire inflation and condition, wheel alignment, windshield washer fluid and wiper blades.

Inside your home you should be mindful of Carbon Monoxide (CO), an odorless, colorless and tasteless deadly gas that is a by-product of the combustion of fossil fuels. The Pennsylvania Office of the State Fire Commissioner warns that forced air furnaces are frequently a source of carbon monoxide leaks, especially at furnace connections to flue pipes and systems that vent fumes to the outside of your home. Cracks, holes and metal fatigue in combustion chambers and heat exchangers can also allow CO to leak inside the home. The office recommends keeping a window slightly open, even in winter, so CO can escape to the outside and fresh air can be introduced into the home. Be sure to check the batteries in your Carbon Monoxide detector, or, if you don’t have one, consider purchasing one.

This is also a time to consider checking your credit. According to the Federal Trade Commission, the Fair Credit Reporting Act requires each of the nationwide credit reporting companies – Equifax, Experian and TransUnion – to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.

As always, if my office can be of assistance in helping you with state-related programs or services, please call my office at 610-929-2151. We’re here to help!
A Soggy Month Taught Lessons in the Importance of Flood Insurance

The month of August in Muhlenberg Township quickly became a soggy one we will likely never forget. Heavy rainfall followed closely by Hurricane Isaias resulted in an unwelcomed 10.9"+ of precipitation in the first week alone. To put it in perspective, that’s more than three times the average monthly precipitation that is expected for our region in the month of August -- all in one week! It’s no wonder we experienced extensive flooding in many areas of the Township. The remainder of the month could be summarized as hot, wet, dry, stormy, repeat. We experienced an abundance of Mother Nature’s acts and ultimately tallied 12.25" of precipitation and 11 days with temperatures in the 90s during the month of August. Sadly, many of us were left with flood/water damage to homes or businesses, and worse, many quickly found out from our homeowners insurance carriers and business insurance carriers that flood is not covered under a standard policy. We weren’t alone. It is estimated that only 5% of single-family homeowners in the US have flood insurance.

How were so many unprotected? FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) identifies areas at high risk of flooding as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). Property owners are required to purchase flood insurance only if their properties are in these designated areas. But as many have found out the hard way, even if flood insurance is not required, it is certainly needed. In fact, 31% of flood claims made in the country are for properties outside of designated flood areas, and all 50 states have experienced floods in the last five years. The bottom line is, we should never underestimate the risk we face from flood damage even if we are not officially identified as being in a flood zone. If you are outside of a flood zone, there is no existing insurance industry standard that can calculate your specific flood risk. Hurricanes like Harvey, Florence, Michael and just recently in our own community, Isaias, caught people off guard in terms of their real flood risk. Compounding the confusion are factors such as a warming climate and building/construction impacting the natural topography of our land. We know little about their impact on flood risk.

So what can we do to protect our community? The insurance industry and local stakeholders should work together to communicate the growing flood risk to our communities, to mitigate and adapt to the warming climate, and to work collectively on risk transfer options and mitigation options that fit the specific needs of the community. There are insurance solutions for individual property owners and business owners, as
well as steps that can be taken to protect natural infrastructure such as wetlands. We should be mitigating physical damage to properties by building stronger structures. Strong building codes have clearly demonstrated benefits by withstanding natural catastrophes such as flooding.

We can’t predict what Mother Nature will do next, but we can plan and prepare. Talk with your trusted insurance professional about flood insurance and how it can provide a safeguard when the weather turns soggy.

Samuel K. Harter is the Sr. Vice President of Tompkins Insurance and can be reached at 610.603.7466 or sharter@tompkinsfinancial.com

THE SOGGY FACTS

Never underestimate the risk from flood damage even if not officially identified as being in a flood zone.

Catastrophic events like Hurricanes Florence and Harvey and Superstorm Sandy exposed that as many as 80% of homeowners and business owners are not insured for flood.

The frequency and severity of hurricanes and flood events seems to increase each passing year.

There is strong evidence to suggest that climate change has a significant influence on these extreme events.

2020 HAS BEEN ONE FOR THE BOOKS! BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY

Dear Patrons and Neighbors,

Since the Governor’s stay-at-home order closed down public libraries, COVID-19 has affected Muhlenberg Community Library in many ways. Even when closed to the public, library staff continued to work from home, helping our patrons stay connected, informed and entertained.

Our mission to educate continued as the platform and need changed, by:

- Learning new ways to do things
- Planning how to safely re-open
- Purchasing more ebooks and eaudio books (usage has doubled)
- Creating virtual story hours and guided craft demonstrations
- Providing free WiFi in our parking lot
- Starting curb-side pick-up

We were just about to provide in-person services again, when the rains hit and over half of the library was flooded, damaging the carpet and underlying tiles. Staff, with the help of volunteers, started the renovation by packing and moving over 500 boxes of books and shelving. Despite this adversity we will open as of December, barring any other COVID-19 closures.

The pandemic and water damage hit the Library hard. Expected losses from March through December are:

- RivErFest, Miniature Golf, and other Fundraisers - $6,050
- Designer Bag Bingo and Nellie Walter Events - $8,850
- Spring mailing - $7,500
- Used Books Sales - $1,400
- Renovation repairs not covered by insurance - $36,000

We need your help now. Please donate today!

Watch Facebook and our website for Raffles and other opportunities to support the library.

Sincerely,

Linda Roebuck
Board of Trustees, President
linda19605@yahoo.com
The End of an era

The 750,000 sq ft Fairgrounds Square Mall was developed by Interstate Properties in the late 1970’s. Recognizing the potential of the Berks retail trade area and the need for a pleasant climate-controlled atmosphere the mall was constructed at the former location of the Reading Fairgrounds Speedway, officially opened in October 1980 with Boscov’s and JCPenney serving as anchor stores.

The mall was thought to draw more shoppers to the north end of town, and it worked for a period of time. The mall embarked on an expansion in 1988 adding Phar-Mor and some additional smaller stores. Montgomery Ward came in 1996 as the long planned fourth anchor, and a renovation was done throughout the mall. Success did not last long, for Montgomery Ward was finished just three years later and Jason’s Furniture moved into the space. Not long after, JCPenney converted their store to an outlet location and in 1999 sold to GP Properties Inc.

Anchor shuffling continued into the 2000’s with Phar-Mor leaving. Jason’s Furniture moved to that space, while National Wholesale Liquidators took their place in the old Ward’s. They too did not last, and in 2005, Burlington Coat Factory moved into the space. Jason’s closed in 2009 and was replaced with Super Shoes and Planet Fitness. JCPenney closed their outlet store in 2011. GP-Fairgrounds Square LP defaulted on its mortgage, which led to the mall being sold to BNY Mellon for $13.6 million in 2013.

In 2016 the Hull Property Group took over the Fairgrounds Square Mall and in 2018 the mall had 12 tenants remaining, down from a peak of 75 stores at one point.

In 2018 the Hull Property Group closed the interior of the mall and Boscov’s, Burlington Coat Factory, AMC Classic, Super Shoes, Planet Fitness and Baja Beach Tanning remained open.

In 2019 the Hull Property Group announced they would demolish 80 percent of the mall for redevelopment, leaving open tenants such as Boscov’s, Burlington, Planet Fitness, Super Shoes and AMC Classic. Demolition of the Fairgrounds Square Mall began this Spring and will be completed in early 2021.

The Hull Property Group intends to redevelop the 51-acre site once the demolition is complete and site improvements have been made. The parcel is located in the C2 Shopping Center Commercial District which promotes commercial uses to accommodate the general needs of the community. Although we are unsure of what future development will look like at this site, redevelopment will happen. The Township looks forward to what lies next for this historical site of Muhlenberg Township.
Dear Muhlenberg Township Residents,

After the holiday season; Spring project plans begin to come to mind. The process of completing a Zoning Permit Application, knowing what to expect and getting through the process can seem intimidating. The employees of the Township are here to assist the residents with making their project ideas become a reality. Don’t wait until the last minute to contact the Zoning Office, we suggest planning ahead. During the busy season the review/approval process of an application can take up to 30 days. Residents are encouraged to call the Zoning Officer with any questions and/or help needed to complete the application. It is important and helpful to provide as much information as possible when completing a zoning permit application. A few of the most common projects that require a zoning permit include; but not limited to, fences, sheds, pools and home additions. The first step to any project; is to determine the zoning district your property is located within, and identify the ordinances that apply to your specific project. The information is also available on the Township website at Muhlenbergtwp.com

"ZONING PRESERVES THE CHARACTER OF A COMMUNITY, DON’T DELAY...PLAN YOUR PROJECT TODAY!"

Just a friendly reminder that the Township is currently enforcing the quality of life ticketing system. Please keep your sidewalks shoveled and free of ice and winter debris.

Christmas Tree and Holiday Décor Safety

- Fresh trees are less likely to catch fire; water a fresh tree daily.
- Make sure the tree is placed at least 3 feet away from any heat sources; such as, fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents and certain lights.
- Make sure the tree does not block any exits.
- Only use lights that have a recognized testing laboratory label.
- Be sure to choose the correct lights for each specific use; many lights are indoor/outdoor specific.
- Replace broken bulbs and loose connections; only connect the number of strands together recommended by the manufacturers specs.
- All exposed wiring should be replaced with new.
- Always turn Christmas tree lights off before leaving home and at bedtime; using a timer can be helpful.
- All exterior lighting should always be plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter receptacle.
- Keep all your holiday candles away from the Christmas tree, décor, and surrounding furniture.

Have a safe, and wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,
The Muhlenberg Township Engineering, Codes and Zoning Departments

BE SURE TO FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @muhlenbergtwp
It is hard to not find anyone, family, friend, relative, or neighbor who wasn’t impacted by the torrential downpours this year that didn’t seem to end. This storm dropped record rainfalls causing destruction to both local businesses and many of our residents. It can feel helpless to have no alternative but to watch your home become inundated with water and sometimes even sewage. There is no way to stop this type of natural disaster and the best thing you can do is to protect yourself by preparing right now for any future events.

The first common misconception is that local government is responsible and should pay for any damage. You may think to yourself, “After all I pay taxes.” While that is true that you do pay taxes, your local government cannot possibly prepare and charge its residents for every possible natural disaster, act of nature, or slip and fall lawsuit it receives. If local government paid for everything described above, no one could afford to own a home or business. It is also not a local government law; it is a state law called the PA Political Subdivision Tort Claims Act. ‘Sovereign Immunity’ for local government existed prior to the mid 1970s. The term is derived from English common law term ‘the king can do no wrong’. The current form of the law has existed since 1978.

Since the local municipality will not provide financial assistance, it is important for you as a homeowner and business owner to be properly prepared.

Here are some important things to think about or items to know:

Water damage to your home is a tricky situation in the insurance industry. ‘Standard’ insurance policies will cover losses by water resulting from accidental discharges from appliances or broken valves. That same ‘standard’ policy will not cover water losses as a result of the overflow of a body of water or runoff of surface water. Unfortunately many residents and business owners are finding this out the hard way.

One of the most common misconceptions is that you can’t get flood insurance if you are not in a Flood Zone that is recognized by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The reality is that you can. Actually the NFIP says 31% of properties that are damaged from flood are outside the flood zone. There is also a 30 day waiting period to secure flood coverage so don’t wait until the next hurricane or tropical Storm to secure protection.

There are other important endorsements you can add to your policy such as Back Up Of Sewers and Drains that protects your property from things like sewer backup. This coverage is not always included on ‘standard’ insurance policies. Many residents believe just because the Authority owns the Sewage system, their insurance or the entity itself will pick up the coverage. The same immunity statute applies as indicated above. Please be sure to contact your insurance agent to add this coverage. Many times the cost can be less than $100 per year. This...
is definitely a small price to pay to restore a finished basement damaged by a sewer backup.

Not all of us are insurance experts so selecting the correct insurance professional may be most important of all. When you pick your dentist, doctor or lawyer you research the best you can find. The best insurance professionals should provide guidance on coverage that can protect you in these unstable environmental times and shouldn’t be there just to offer you the cheapest rate with a smile.

There is not much we can do about the losses that happened this year causing many of us a tremendous financial burden in these already tough economic times. All we can do is prepare our homes and businesses so next time we have some peace of mind that help is on the way.

Mike Malinowski is the President of EHD Insurance and can be reached at 800-544-7292. Thanks to Mike for this valuable information!

Other than the protection a good insurance policy can provide, there are mechanical devices that a homeowner can choose to have installed to prevent the backup of sewage into their home. These are commonly known as backwater valves, which are installed in the home’s sewer line. They can be installed in a basement floor, or if there is no basement, in an underground vault in the yard. If a home is known to be in an area prone to flooding, the cost of these products is small compared to the expense to replace a finished basement or living space in your home. As with any mechanical device, they do require some maintenance to be sure they work properly when needed. More information on these valves can be found at http://backwatervalve.com/products/fullport-backwater-valve.html or by calling the Authority Office at 610-929-4709.

We all hope that we do not find ourselves in this situation, but having the right knowledge and information to protect ourselves is invaluable.

On a different note, we want you to know that the Authority Board, Management and Staff continue to work to find the most cost-effective way do perform our duties. Several recent projects were completed by utilizing current technology to replace old technology, and at a reduction in cost to the Authority. We will continue to look for these savings in every project. Our goal is always to provide the highest quality product, and service, at the lowest possible cost to you, our customers.

Water and Sewer utilities are managed by the Muhlenberg Township Authority, which is a wholly separate entity from Muhlenberg Township and as such you should direct all business and questions to the Authority. Located at 2840 Kutztown Road, Reading, PA 19605. 610.929.4709

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
- Report any suspected illicit discharge
- Do not dump anything down storm drains, onto roads, or into streams
- Perform a soil test to determine your need for pesticides and fertilizers
- Dispose of household hazardous wastes at County recycling events
- Clean up after your pet
- Pick up trash in your area and dispose of it properly

WHEN TO REPORT
When in doubt, call it in! It never hurts to report an incident even if you are not sure that it would be considered an illicit discharge. It is important to provide as much detailed information as possible in order for the proper authorities to make the appropriate decisions to resolve the problem.

How to report:
Go To Muhlenberg App
Call Muhlenberg Township 610-929-4727
Call the PA DEP Regional Office 610-916-0100
info@muhlenbergtwp.com
MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP FIRE & RESCUE

It is the time of the year where everyone will be warming their homes with some form of heat for the remaining fall months followed by the winter months to come. With the heating season upon us, it brings concerns of safety related to heating our homes. There are plenty of concerns for 1st Responders when it comes to protecting our community during heating season.

Household uses for heat range from the use of boilers/furnaces, gas and propane heaters, woodstoves, gas stoves, fireplaces (gas and natural wood burners), coal stoves, fuel supplied space heaters and electric space heaters. With these types of heat sources comes the concern of carbon monoxide poisoning relating to their use. Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, nonirritating gas that is produced through the incomplete combustion of carbon-containing substances. CO poisoning occurs from breathing in elevated air levels of carbon monoxide. Symptoms are generally non-specific and commonly include headache, dizziness, weakness, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. Large exposures can result in loss of consciousness, arrhythmias, seizures, or death. The dangers of CO exposure depend on a number of variables, including the victim's health and activity level. Infants, pregnant women, and people with physical conditions that limit their body’s ability to use oxygen (i.e. emphysema, asthma, heart disease) can be more severely affected by lower concentrations of CO than healthy adults would be.

Unintentional, non-fire related CO poisoning is responsible for approximately 450 deaths and 21,000 emergency department (ED) visits each year. CO poisoning is a leading cause of unintentional poisoning deaths in the United States. Americans ages 65 and older are among the highest fatalities.

Symptoms of CO poisoning (National Fire Protection Association)
- CO enters the body through breathing. CO poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses. Some symptoms include shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness or headaches. High levels of CO can be fatal, causing death within minutes.
- The concentration of CO, measured in parts per million (ppm) is a determining factor in the symptoms for an average, healthy adult.
  - 50 ppm: No adverse effects with 8 hours of exposure.
  - 200 ppm: Mild headache after 2-3 hours of exposure.
  - 400 ppm: Headache and nausea after 1-2 hours of exposure.
  - 800 ppm: Headache, nausea, and dizziness after 45 minutes; collapse and unconsciousness after 1 hour of exposure.
  - 1,000 ppm: Loss of consciousness after 1 hour of exposure.
  - 1,600 ppm: Headache, nausea, and dizziness after 20 minutes of exposure.
  - 3,200 ppm: Headache, nausea, and dizziness after 5-10 minutes; collapse and unconsciousness after 30 minutes of exposure.
  - 6,400 ppm: Headache and dizziness after 1-2 minutes; unconsciousness and danger of death after 10-15 minutes of exposure.
  - 12,800 ppm: Immediate physiological effects, unconsciousness and danger of death after 1-3 minutes of exposure.

Safety tips (National Fire Protection Association)
- CO detectors should be installed in a central location outside each
sleeping area and on every level of the home and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards. For the best protection, interconnect all CO alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for placement and mounting height.
- Call 911 if the CO alarm sounds.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month; replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- If the audible trouble signal sounds, check for low batteries. If the battery is low, replace it. If it still sounds, call 911.
- If the CO alarm sounds, immediately move to a fresh air location outdoors or by an open window or door. Make sure everyone inside the home is accounted for.
- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- A generator should be used in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors and vent openings.

Heating equipment is a leading cause of fires in U.S. homes. Local fire departments responded to an estimated average of 52,050 fires involving heating equipment each year. These fires resulted in annual losses of 490 civilian deaths, 1,400 civilian injuries, and $1 billion in direct property damage. The homes include one- and two-family homes (including manufactured homes) and apartments (including townhouses and other multi-family dwellings). Space heaters are the type of heating equipment most often involved in home heating fires, figuring in two of every five of these fires and accounting for 86% of associated civilian deaths, 78% of civilian injuries, and 54% of direct property damage. According to NFPA's latest U.S. Home Fires Involving Heating Equipment report, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires and the third-leading cause of home fire deaths. More than half (53 percent) of all home heating fire deaths resulted from fires that began when heating equipment was too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding.

Between 2011 and 2015, portable and stationary space heaters accounted for more than two of every five (43 percent) U.S. home heating fires and five out of six (85 percent) home heating fire deaths. December, January and February are the leading months for home heating fires. The peak time of day for home heating equipment fires is between 4:00PM and 8:00PM (27 percent of fires), with another 20 percent occurring between 8:00PM and midnight. The fewest fires occur between midnight and 8:00AM (18 percent), but these fires caused almost half of the heating fire deaths.

Safety tips (National Fire Protection Association)
- Keep anything that can burn at least three-feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month.

To all our community members and partners please have a safe and warm heating season. If you have any questions regarding the safety tips mentioned, smoke or carbon monoxide detectors installations, please don’t hesitate to call Muhlenberg Township Fire & Rescue Headquarters at 610-929-8050 for further assistance.
SNOW REMOVAL FAQ'S

The Muhlenberg Township Road Crew work tirelessly to assist the residents as quickly as possible. Understanding this can avoid a lot of frustration. We make every effort to assist with emergencies as they occur while performing ongoing maintenance and clearing of the Township roads. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

How many miles of roads does Muhlenberg Twp have?
Muhlenberg Twp has approximately 78 miles of roads that we maintain. Taking each directional lane into consideration, that means there are 156 miles of road lanes that need to be maintained. Additionally, there are 30 cul-de-sacs which need special attention.

How do we determine the order and priority of plowing each road?
The main roads that handle the most traffic are plowed and treated first. The connector roads are then addressed. Finally, the roads contained inside developments are plowed.

Why does the plow make a single pass through a development instead of clearing the entire road and cul-de-sac?
To facilitate emergency vehicles, an initial pass is made on all roads and a circular pass is made in the cul-de-sac. Development roads and cul-de-sacs serve significantly less traffic, and therefore, receive a different priority than main and connector roads. Once the main and connector roads are clear and a pass has been made in each development for emergency vehicles, the road crew will begin to re-visit developments for further clearing.

What happens if my vehicle is blocking the snow plow?
Vehicles that are parked on dedicated roads that interfere with traffic flow or snow plowing will be towed at the owner’s expense. Every effort will be made by the Police to notify the owner before the vehicle is towed. The trucks will make their best effort to work around vehicles parked within developments, however, if there is not enough room to maneuver the Township trucks, the streets will not be plowed.

What can I do to avoid problems during storms?
You can remove overhanging trees and shrubs so that they do not impede the flow of traffic, damage passing vehicles or become a hazard. Please keep all trash and recycling cans off the street to prevent damage during plowing. You can place snow delineators at the edge of curbs on streets and cul-de-sacs for more accurate plowing. It is also a good idea to mark fire hydrants and transformers to assist emergency crews upon any possible emergencies.

What do I do if my mailbox has been damaged during plowing?
If your mailbox has been damaged by direct contact with the plow or truck, you should call the Township 610-929-4727 to file a report. The Public Works Supervisor will inspect the damage to the box, and at his discretion, authorize repairs or replacement up to $75.00 regardless of the style of mailbox.
YOUR SNOW REMOVAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIPS

Vehicle Parking: If possible, park vehicles off the street in your driveway at least 10 feet from the edge of the road. It’s especially important to get all vehicles off of cul-de-sacs because of the added difficulty plowing them. If cars are parked in cul-de-sacs it may prevent the plows from clearing a passable area for you and your neighbors.

Driveways: The Township annually receives complaints about plowing driveways closed or covering sidewalks after a resident has spent hours shoveling them open. Unfortunately, during plowing operations snow is pushed to the right side of the road, regularly blocking driveways and parked cars and occasionally covering sidewalks.

The best way to avoid having to clear snow from your driveway multiple times is to wait until plowing operations are completed before you clean up. If you’d like to get a head start but don’t need to get out of your driveway, consider not shoveling the last six feet toward the street until the plowing operation is complete.

If you must clear your driveway before plowing is complete, you can minimize the amount of snow plowed into the driveway by piling most of the snow from the driveway on the traffic downstream side of the street (not in the street). This will both minimize visibility problems coming out of the driveway plus it will help reduce the amount of snow pushed back into the driveway as added plowing takes place.

Sidewalks: Snow and ice must be cleared from sidewalks within 24 hours after the storm ends. If you can’t completely clear your sidewalk because of ice conditions, treat it with sand or another abrasive material.

Not Permitted: Don’t throw or blow snow into the streets or alleys because it may create a hazardous condition. Pile the snow behind the curb line or street edge where it won’t obstruct traffic movement or the Township’s plowing operation.

Stay Back: Do not allow children to build and occupy snow forts, snowmen & similar creations and don’t place holiday decorations within 10 feet of the edge of pavement.

Storm Water and Fire Hydrants: You’re required to clear snow around fire hydrants on your property. You can also help minimize flooding by clearing snow from storm sewer catch basins located along your property.

Before Winter: Please check the position of your mailbox to insure that it doesn’t extend over the edge of the street; trim trees and shrubs so that branches do not extend to the roadway; and move any temporary equipment at least 10 feet back from the roadway to reduce the susceptible to plow damage.

Snow Emergency
The Township will declare a snow emergency when a significant winter storm is predicted. When an emergency is declared, all vehicles must be removed from the streets that have snow emergency route signs posted until snow removal is completed and the snow emergency declaration has ended. To learn whether a snow emergency is in effect, please listen to local radio stations and or visit www.muhlenbergtwp.com.

Trucks with Plows Raised
A truck with a raised plow does not always mean the driver has completed your area. They may be returning to the Public Works building for fuel, additional materials or equipment repairs or responding to a call for assistance from the Police, Fire or Ambulance.

Contacting the Township during a Snow or Ice Event
If you believe the Township damaged your property due to snow removal activities or if you have a snow removal question or request, call the Customer Service Center on Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 4:30PM at (610) 929-4727. If you receive a recording, leave your name, address, phone number and nature of your call and the staff will address your issue on their next workday.

Above all, please be patient. If you have any problems or have areas that may have been missed, please submit them using the Go To Muhlenberg App.

In the event of an emergency call 911.
Muhlenberg Township Parks & Recreation connects the township’s residents to the natural world, to each other, and to fun physical and social opportunities. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic we are working under the guidelines put in place by the Governor’s office. Unfortunately we are still unable to have events that typically occur during the Winter season. We are working within the guidelines to bring you as many programs as possible. Please continue to visit the Parks & Rec page at the township website (www.muhlenbergtwp.com) and on Facebook at (www.facebook.com/mtparks) for program updates.

We are looking forward to the Spring season to hopefully bring you fun, interactive programs for our residents and those surrounding Muhlenberg Township. We urge you to continue to wear your mask and practice social distancing. Stay safe and protect yourself and your neighbors.

HOLIDAY HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST

The Muhlenberg Arts Board is taking names of homeowners that would like their house judged in the Holiday House Decorating Contest. We know that some homeowners have a great deal of pride in decorating their homes for the various holidays and the Board would like to recognize their efforts. Prizes will be awarded to each category winner. You can register online at https://secure.rec1.com/muhlenberg-township-pa/catalog.

Rules of the Contest:
1) All contestants must live within the Muhlenberg School District.

2) Entry deadline is Dec. 14 at Noon. You can register online, email ksreiber@muhlenbergtwp.com or call 610-929-4727 ext 265. **Judging will take place on Dec. 15th from 6 to 9PM.**

3) Homeowners are encouraged to designate in what category they would like to be considered, but the Arts Board has the right to reassign the category.

Judging Categories:
**Whimsical/Creative** – display has hand designed elements; moving decorations; use of music.

**Holiday Spirit** - display includes all or most aspects of home and yard.

**Classic/Nostalgic** – displays utilizes traditional elements in decorating.

**Contemporary** - display has some creative uses of inflatables.

4) Winners will be notified by Dec. 18 and a photo of their home will be posted on the Township website and the Parks & Recreation Facebook page. All contestants grant Muhlenberg Township the nonexclusive right to use a photos of their decorated homes in future promotional materials.
MUHLENBERG LIONS CLUB
Serving the Muhlenberg Community since 1932

DONATION DRIVE
YES, WE NEED YOUR HELP

Due to the Corona Virus pandemic, we are unable to raise money to give back to the Muhlenberg Community. All our fundraising events were forced to be cancelled. You can help us to continue to support our community, Vision and Blind Programs, Ambulance, Library, Student Awards and Scholarships and many more!

Please send your tax-deductible donation CHECK payable to:
“MUHLENBERG LIONS CLUB” and mail it to:
Lion Joel Johnson
3507 Chestnut Street
Laureldale, PA 19605

Free Pre-K Education

• Certified teachers
• Nutritious meals
• A secure building
• Bi-lingual staff
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• A warm, supportive environment
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See if you qualify!
Call 610-921-0285 x 203
riverviewchristianpckc.com
If you would like to advertise your company in an upcoming issue of the Muhlenberg Magazine, please email art@muhlenbergtwp.com and we will supply you with all the information you need.