

Nottingham Township

909 Sugar Run Road • Eighty Four, PA 15330

724-348-5622

Newsletter

Fall 2008

Letter from the Chairman

*By Ray Barley, Chairman
Board of Supervisors*

When asked once again to write an article, my first thoughts were, I don't have much to say or discuss that hasn't already been said. As I proceeded to organize my thoughts, the realization came to me that much has occurred since our Spring Newsletter. The TrAILCo powerline project has been halted, or delayed, depending on who you talk to. The 500 Kv lines will not be, at this time, located in Washington County, but it is less clear on the locating/relocating of the 138Kv lines.

Nottingham is also in line to be impacted by the gas exploration and recovery. Numerous companies will be seeking both shallow and deep well drilling leases from our residents. We urge you to go slow and seek legal counsel if you have any doubts or questions on the documents and/or deals you are being offered.

We have also been in discussions with our fire service providers to update coverage areas and the quality of response for our residents. We have terminated our agreement with the former Ellsworth-Somerset Volunteer Fire Department that had served a portion of the Township. Presently, we are working on an agreement with North Strabane Fire Department. North Strabane Fire Department will respond now under a mutual aid agreement with Valley Inn Volunteer Fire Department until the final agreement is in place. This should be a tremendous asset to our Township. North Strabane Fire Department has a paid, full-time staff. They can respond quickly out of their Route 19 Station. In the future, they will be responding from their substation along Thomas-Eighty Four Road. Finalizing this agreement will ensure excellent coverage for all Nottingham Township.

Any structure fire or significant incident will be responded to by Finleyville, Valley Inn, North Strabane and Peters Township Fire Departments. If you have any questions as to which Company will provide basic service to your area, please contact the Township Office.

Additionally, you will continue to receive annual donation requests from Finleyville, Valley Inn and/or North Strabane Fire Departments. These Companies need your continued support in order to provide the services we have come to expect. I encourage you to "adopt" the fire hydrant closest to your property. Keeping it clear of weeds, snow and landscaping will save precious minutes in locating it in a time of need.

The Township is in the process of installing a new automated phone and answering machine system. This should be completed within the next few weeks. A menu will be provided to all callers listing the different extensions and options available to aid in the routing of your call.

Please, spend a few minutes reading this Newsletter. There will be some exciting things happening in 2009. The creation of a Township web page for use in early 2009, expanded activities and events under the sponsorship of the Recreation Board, the addition of a tennis court to our Township Park, and much more.

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Public Works Department

By Douglas S. King, Director of Public Works

It's that time of year again, and as much as I love the fall weather and beautiful colors of the trees, I must admit, the season that follows is my least favorite. Winter to your Public Works Department means late nights and very early mornings spent outside keeping the roads safe for all of us.

This coming winter will be the most challenging that we have had to face in the six (6) years that I have been here. No one needs reminded that everything is costing more this year. I'm sure that you have heard from watching the news or reading the paper that salt has just about the same price tag as gold! Not to mention, quantities will be very limited this year. We have been fortunate enough to have locked in to a contract for this winter season, and it is, although a lot higher than last year, one (1) of the best prices in the state.

Unfortunately, you will see us using a stronger mix of anti-skid material on the roads this winter to combat the higher prices in an effort to conserve our allotment of salt. Please, we urge you to use a little extra caution driving this winter season. The salt shortage is a state wide issue and is not only limited to Nottingham Township.

We ask that you refrain from on-street parking for it makes the job of clearing the roads of snow and ice easier, quicker, and above all, safer. Not to mention, on-street parking is in violation of Amendment A to Ordinance 5, which will be visited later in this Newsletter. The Zoning Officer will be informed of all vehicles being parked on the roadways during winter maintenance. Appropriate actions will be taken accordingly.

The Township has taken over winter maintenance of two (2) previously maintained PENNDOT roads. Starting this 2008-2009 winter season, Nottingham Township will be responsible for the salting and plowing of Sugar Run Road from Sichi Hill to Valley View Road, and Valley View Road from Sugar Run to Venetia Road.

A video surveillance and monitoring system, along with a new alarm system, have been installed in and around the Municipal Building. This was done in an effort to deter vandalism and protect the assets of our Township, including the surrounding grounds of Sherwood Park. The security system has been up and running since mid-summer of this year.

Other projects will include some tree trimming throughout the Township, and construction of a second nature trail and tennis court in Sherwood Park.

Important Tax Payer Information

By Linda Mahoney, Tax Collector

- 2008 REAL ESTATE TAXES FOR TOWNSHIP AND SCHOOL ARE NOW DUE.
- NOTTINGHAM TOWNSHIP REAL ESTATE TAXES ARE DUE AT PENALTY UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2008.
- RINGGOLD SCHOOL TAXES ARE NOW DUE AT FACE VALUE.

The school district now offers installment payments. The second payment was due to the Tax Collector's Office by October 31, 2008. The school district will accept the use of Master Card and Visa credit cards. School taxes are due by December 31, 2008.

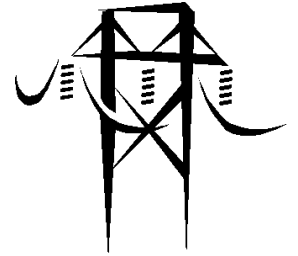
All unpaid real estate taxes will be liened January 5, 2009.

If you are a homeowner presently living in the home and have not applied for the Act 50 Homestead Exclusion, contact the Washington County Assessment Office in January of 2009 for an application. Ringgold Tax Relief was \$160.01.

Another item of importance is the transfer of any mobile home. Please be sure that all current and prior year taxes are paid. A notarized, signed title or bill of sale, with the serial number and VIN (vehicle identification number) must be given to the Assessment Office. If this is not done the mobile home will not be transferred to another person. For any questions regarding mobile home transfers contact the Washington County Assessment Office at 724-228-6850.

Application of the Trans-Allegheny Interstate Line Company (TrAILCo)

Word was received in mid-August this year that Administrative Law Judges Mark A. Hoyer and Michael A. Nemeck, issued their Recommended Decision that the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission deny all applications of the Trans-Allegheny Interstate Line Company (TrAILCo). The proposed project consisted of approximately 52.6 miles of transmission lines, two (2) 500 Kv and three (3) 138 Kv lines, and included a substation in Washington County ("Prexy") and one (1) in Greene County ("502"). Their recommendation was based on their determination that the applicant had failed to meet their burden of proof on several issues, including need and benefit to the residents of Pennsylvania. If you would like to review their 364 page recommendation, go to <http://www.puc.state.pa.us/PCDOCS/1019983.pdf>.



A lot has happened since August! Just a few short weeks after Administrative Law Judges Hoyer and Nemeck issued their recommendation, Allegheny Energy and Greene County officials entered into an agreement. On September 22, 2008, an agreement was announced which apparently abandoned plans for a high-voltage line through Washington and Greene counties, halting plans for the controversial 500-KV power line from North Strabane, Washington County, to Dunkard, Greene County ("the Prexy segment").

According to the published terms of the agreement, Greene County will receive a financial settlement of \$750,000, and the company has agreed to issue quitclaim deeds, returning easements to the dozens of property owners in *both* Greene and Washington counties who would have been affected by the line. Many of those property owners had challenged the rights of way, acquired decades ago, claiming these easements were abandoned or no longer valid for various reasons. The agreement stated that the utility will revisit the location and content of the "Prexy facilities" in North Strabane Township, and proposed that a "collaborative" consultation take place to determine a way to meet the need for reliability and capacity upgrades along the "Route 19 corridor," including construction of "up to 10 miles" of 500KV line (somewhere) in Washington County. The new proposal will apparently include upgrade of the *existing* 138 KV infrastructure along Route 19, which was recommended by the Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Protection in the proceedings on the original application.

The Agreement left out Washington County officials, who were presented with a separate agreement days later and only given a few days to make a decision. The Washington County commissioners did not support the proposed agreement, which included similar terms to the Green County agreement, including a cash payment to Washington County. More time will be needed to study the proposal and determine if it is in the public interest. Washington County Commissioner Bracken Burns said that he saw nothing in the agreement that would preclude the company from proposing different high-voltage lines in Washington County.

Not specified in the Greene County agreement is the impact on the 138 KV lines which would have run from the Prexy substation in North Strabane to and through various locations within Nottingham Township.

According to the Green County agreement, Allegheny Energy will not seek federal intervention to reassert access to the rights of way they are giving up, nor will they seek to exercise eminent domain for those rights of way. The Energy Act of 2005, states that the federal government has backstop authority to approve critical transmission projects even if they are denied by states.

Allegheny Energy and TrailCo are still requesting that the Pennsylvania PUC authorize the "502" substation in southern PA and a few miles of 500 KV line to connect to the approved 500 KV line in West Virginia. Allegheny Energy has said that the Pennsylvania portion of this project is needed to avoid local power interruptions in the next few years, but the PUC Administrative Law Judges were not convinced, as described in their recommended decision.

Your Township Officials continue to monitor this situation. If you would like more information on the TrAILCo project please visit www.stophetowers.org or www.aptrailinfo.com.

House Numbers ARE Required

It is required by Township Ordinance Number 60 that all residences in the Township be clearly indicated by a house number. This allows postal service and emergency vehicles to locate any given homeowner or property within the Township. These numbers must be displayed in a position easily observed from the public right-of-way and should be Arabic numbers at least three (3) inches in height and one-half (1/2) inches wide. Parts of Nottingham Township are very rural with many homes hidden from view. If a house number is not clearly displayed it can be difficult for any emergency vehicle to locate a residence. Those moments spent looking for your home could be the difference between life and death. Fines could apply.

If you have not already done so, please comply with this important request.

Pennsylvania's Natural Gas Boom Puts Townships in a Difficult Position

Article taken from the PSATS quarterly newsletter "TOWNSHIPS TODAY"

An energy company wants to lease your property so it can capitalize on what many suspect is a significant — and untapped — natural gas reserve lurking under Pennsylvania's surface. The gas is trapped thousands of feet underground in what is known as the Marcellus shale, a layer of rock that stretches from upstate New York to West Virginia and, in between, blankets parts of Ohio and two-thirds of Pennsylvania. This rock formation lies at a depth of 5,000 to 8,000 feet.

Recent drilling innovations, coupled with the prospect of huge profits for companies that can get in and get the gas to market, have triggered a gold rush of sorts here in the commonwealth, where the shale formation appears to be the thickest and, therefore, holds the most abundant supply. As a result, thousands of gas wells have been popping up in townships across the commonwealth.

According to the experts, the shale's seemingly vast supply offers real promise for the nation's natural gas reserves. On top of that, its development over the next decade or so could lower home heating bills across the United States, reduce our dependence on foreign energy, bring jobs and businesses to areas of Pennsylvania that need them the most, and pump millions, if not billions, into the state's economy.

There is another side to this story, though. And it's the one being told by township supervisors statewide, many of whom have found themselves in a difficult position. Local elected officials must deal with the impact of this growing industry and even address your complaints. However, the truth is, township supervisors have very little authority to regulate gas well drilling — and they certainly can't stop it.

Powerless in Pennsylvania

Among townships, damaged roads are the most common complaint. But the development of gas wells in Pennsylvania has brought other side effects, too, including altered landscapes, declining property values, and around-the-clock noise. And what troubles township officials the most is that thanks to *Pennsylvania's Oil and Gas Act of 1984*, they are virtually powerless to halt the damage.

There are definite energy problems that need to be addressed. Companies can just come in and run roughshod over us with no recourse. Townships would like to exercise some control, but nothing can be done.

So who does have the power under the act to make these companies play by the rules? It all lies with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which regulates, permits, and oversees the oil and gas industry in Pennsylvania. It's an ironclad authority that means one thing: **Townships are precluded from establishing their own rules for oil and gas drilling.**

Every well that gets drilled must comply with the Oil and Gas Act, and townships are pre-empted from interfering with this DEP function. The matter gets muddier when you throw in the fact that this issue is largely about private property rights, too. If you, as a landowner, don't mind a well or two or three on your property, very few municipal officials are going to argue with that — or try to intervene.

In fact, energy companies are making many township residents an offer they simply can't refuse. Residents, on the other hand, are quickly opening the door to let them in. Stories are circulating that some landowners in northeastern Pennsylvania are signing leases for as much as \$2,500 an acre on top of the 12.5 percent royalty fee they'll receive for gas that is extracted from their property.

Get the facts

Given these circumstances, you, as a township resident, have some real control in determining what unfolds in your community. However, before you make a decision, experts advise that you do some research to fully understand the gas industry and the leases their representatives are asking you to sign.

One valuable resource is the Penn State Cooperative Extension's Natural Gas Exploration and Leasing Team, which has been offering workshops statewide to educate landowners on the energy industry and also hosts an informative Web site, www.naturalgaslease.pbwiki.com or www.dep.state.pa.us/enotice. Useful information can also be found at www.pagaslease.com, which was created by Ron Stamets, founder of the Natural Gas Lease Forum for Landowners.

Here are some helpful tips for landowners considering gas drilling:

Remember that whatever you sign is a LEGAL CONTRACT and you will be bound by its terms.

- Get every promise in writing.
- Remember that the lease tips the scales in favor of the drilling company. Therefore, it is your responsibility to understand the benefits the company is getting and the rights you are signing away.
- Hire an attorney who has working knowledge of federal and state gas laws to explain the lease and its ramifications and negotiate on your behalf.
- Consider joining or forming a landowners group so you are in a stronger position to negotiate a lease. This can ensure you won't have to bear the entire financial burden of hiring a qualified attorney, who may charge up to \$350 an hour.

Keep Fire Hydrants Clear – Adopt a Hydrant Today!

If a fire were to occur in your neighborhood, would the firefighters be able to find the fire hydrant nearest your home? Residents are encouraged to make sure the fire hydrant located near their home is accessible. Please make it a point to uncover your fire hydrant after each snowfall. Clear a path approximately 3 feet around the fire hydrant. This will allow firefighters enough room to attach hoses to the fire hydrant if the need should arise. Remember, water is the main tool firefighters use to extinguish fires. Delays in locating the fire hydrant could hamper fire suppression and possibly raise the risk of injury and property damage.

Adhere to these additional fire hydrant guidelines:

- Never paint a fire hydrant.
- Keep plants to a minimum surrounding all hydrants.
- Do not hide fire hydrants with fencing, bushes, earthen berms, rocks or any other object!

Fireplace safety tips

- Always make sure the flue is open before lighting a fire.
- Never burn charcoal or use a hibachi in your fireplace. Both produce deadly carbon monoxide.
- Protect against sparks by enclosing a fireplace's opening with glass doors or a sturdy screen.
- Never close the flue while a fire is still smoldering. Carbon monoxide could build up.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene or lighter fluid to start a fire. Burn only dry, seasoned hardwood.
- Have your fireplace cleaned and inspected annually. They should be properly vented and free of blockages.
- Protect the top of your chimney with a guard that keeps out birds and small animals.
- Keep flammables such as newspapers, magazines, rugs and carpeting well away from the fireplace.
- Remove holiday decorations from the fireplace and mantle before building a fire which could ignite.
- Teach children to stay back from the fireplace.
- Never leave any fire unattended.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Visit www.firesafety.gov for more information.



Don't forget to change the batteries in all smoke detectors!

I-79 to Mon/Fayette Expressway Southern Beltway Project

A public hearing was held by the Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB) on August 6, 2008, at the North Strabane Municipal Building to hear testimony on the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) request to condemn active agricultural lands located within the Southern Beltway Project Area in Washington County. Although several agricultural properties throughout Nottingham would be affected by the condemnation, the Supervisors and the Township Agricultural Security Area Advisory Committee were requested to render a decision only on the one (1) property actively enrolled in an Agricultural Security Area located in the proposed project area. The Township's decision **not to condemn** this property was forwarded to the ALCAB for review at this hearing. Regardless of that decision, approval was granted by ALCAB to the PTC condemning these agricultural properties for the construction of the Mon/Fayette Expressway identified in the Green-1 Alternative Option 1A and the Tan-Red Alternative of the project map.

No funding for this project is yet to be identified with the timeframe being dependent on future evaluation by the PTC. The PTC says that they are committed to seeing this project through to the Record of Decision (ROD), with the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) being distributed by late fall of 2008. For more information and all current press releases on this and other PTC projects go to www.paturnpike.com/.

Senior Citizen Discount Offered to Waste Management Customers

A 10% discount on your solid waste bill through Waste Management is now available to all senior citizens living in Nottingham Township. Senior citizens homes are described as any residence of the Township in which one of the residents, who is the head of the household, is 65 years or older.

If you are a senior citizen living in the Township simply contact Waste Management Customer Service at the number listed below. State the reason for your call, and you will be instructed on how to receive your 10% senior discount.

1-800-866-4460 or visit <http://www.wm.com>

Township Ordinance Reminder

Our Township would like to take this opportunity to remind all residents of two (2) ordinances that have become strictly enforced throughout the Township. Both were developed for that purpose of maintaining the health, safety and welfare for all citizens of the Township.

Amendment A to Ordinance No. 5 – Snow Removal & Vehicular (on-street) Parking Ordinance

Amendment A to Ordinance No. 5 was adopted on March 5, 2007, to provide for the declaration of snow removal conditions, along with prohibiting vehicular parking on any public road during certain times. As we prepare to head into yet another winter season, it was thought to be a good time to review with the residents the importance of this ordinance. **On-street parking by any vehicle in the Township limits is prohibited between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. any time of year. No vehicle at any time shall be permitted to park in a way to obstruct or interfere with the flow of traffic.**

A snow removal emergency is declared to exist whenever snow falls during any period of 24 hours or less to approximately one (1) inch or more, or to require plowing. Plowing becomes increasingly difficult when cars are parked on public roads, particularly in the development areas. Maneuvering through those parked cars makes plowing that much harder and less efficient for all of us. Don't forget that it is also prohibited for any resident or business to blow or dump their snow onto a public road way. This can add to an already dangerous road situation!

Ordinance No. 79 – Burning Ordinance

The Burning Ordinance was enacted by the Supervisors on October 17, 2005, to regulate and restrict outdoor burning. As our community continues to grow, adapting to that growth becomes part of our everyday living. It is against public policy to permit **uncontrolled and unrestricted** outdoor burning. The purpose of this Ordinance is to prevent needless public damage to life and property because of public and private nuisances caused by outdoor fires deliberately or carelessly set and maintained.

Please adhere to the following guidelines when you consider burning:

1. Fires only on private property and at least 20' away from any property line. No burning is permitted on any public road, sidewalk or public property in Nottingham.
2. No fire shall be allowed to burn or smolder unattended. If burning, a responsible adult must be **present at all times** and have readily available fire-extinguishing apparatus.
3. No fires shall be permitted to burn in adverse weather conditions. (Drought, high winds, rain, etc.)
4. Contained fires shall be in a non-combustible container. Leaves, brush, and/or natural, untreated wood need not be placed in a container and can be burned.

Do not burn list

- Construction debris or waste – use a refuse dumpster.
- No garbage or rubbish – use weekly mandated garbage pick-up.
- Offal waste – waste parts of butchered animals.
- Grubbing waste – trees, shrubs and vegetation being cleared from land during or prior to construction.

**All Township Ordinances can be viewed at
the Township Office, Monday-Friday,
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

****ALWAYS KEEP FIRES AT A REASONABLE SIZE YOU CAN MAINTAIN!****

If you are planning an uncontained fire of a size, clearing property or a field, contact the Township Office. Special written permission may be necessary from the Enforcement Officer. Please call the Township Office at 724-348-5622 with questions.

Activities of the Nottingham Township Planning Commission

By Jim Sanford, Planning Commission Chairman

Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (Nottingham, Carroll and Union Townships and Finleyville Borough)

You'll recall that the Comprehensive Plan started out as a cooperative effort of four municipalities. For various reasons, it has been decided to pursue a joint agreement between Nottingham Township and Finleyville Borough. The legal question of whether only two (2), but not all, of the four (4) participating municipalities may join in an Implementation Agreement has been resolved and the Board of Supervisors has requested that the Planning Commission review the document in this light. This review has begun, but is expected to take several months. The grant money is all gone, so any revisions will be accomplished by your Planning Commission and Township Office staff. Once this review is complete, the Plan will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors, and the public hearing process will begin anew – this will be a new plan.

Your Planning Commission is working hard to ensure that this Plan meets the long term interests of the township as growth and residential development continue to march south.

2008 Spring and Summer Activities

The Planning Commission, working closely with former Supervisor Bruce Konsugar, Supervisor Pete Marcoline and Kevin Wilmot of Widmer Engineering, the Township's Engineer, has continued work on the Storm Water Management Ordinance. The initial draft of the proposed Storm Water Management Ordinance was prepared by Bruce Konsugar and Mr. Wilmot.

The requirements for Storm Water Management are presently incorporated into Township Ordinance No. 32, but the current requirements are judged to be insufficient and inadequate. You could ask, "Why not just invoke the State and County ordinances?" The answer is that they are far from complete. Yet, there is a very real need to do something soon. So, Nottingham Township, largely through Bruce's leadership, has determined to take a leadership role and not wait. Because the proposed revisions will clearly be extensive, the requirements for Storm Water Management will be set forth in a stand-alone Ordinance, which will be coordinated with the requirements of Ordinance No. 32.

The Planning Commission anticipates that completion of the Storm Water Management Ordinance will take several months. Ordinance No. 32 will undergo extensive review and revision at the same time of the Storm Water Management Ordinance. This new (and the revised) ordinance will impose significant changes in how we do business. The largest changes will impact truly large developments. Your Planning Commission is working hard to ensure that for the average homeowner, who wants to build a shed or pave a driveway, the requirements will be minimal and understandable, as long as fundamental requirements of managing run-off volume and velocity are met. When we finish the draft, you will be encouraged to review and comment on the proposed ordinance.

Planning Commission Monthly Workshop Meetings

The Planning Commission holds its monthly Workshop Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. The meetings are informal. No submission of any type is required. Any resident considering submitting a subdivision/land development plan has the opportunity to discuss their plans with the Planning Commission prior to formally submitting an application. At these meetings, the Planning Commission can give the resident some guidance as to whether or not the subdivision/land development that the resident is contemplating is permissible in Nottingham Township. This procedure has proven to be a cost saving measure to applicants and serves to expedite the application process. You are encouraged to observe these meetings. If you think you will be a part of any development, please avail yourself of the opportunity to seek our opinion at no cost.

We encourage you to observe our regular meetings, which occur on the Monday following the workshop meetings. We use the same checklists to evaluate your submission that you are provided when you make your application.

8-1-1 the new "Call Before You Dig" Number

The public is being urged to dial 8-1-1 before they dig! Most homeowners are unaware that they must dial 8-1-1 when intending to move dirt, even for a small project, such as planting a tree or installing a mailbox. For more information visit the Web site at www.call811.com.

Remember, know what's below!



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

Nottingham Township Holds Car & Cycle Cruise

The Nottingham Township Car & Cycle Cruise was held at Sherwood Park on Saturday, June 21, 2008. Many local cars and cycles were in attendance at this event. Trophies were awarded for the Best 1948 and Earlier, Best 1949 and Later, Later and Best Muscle Car, and Best Motorcycle. The winners were picked by Nottingham Township Supervisors. A Lady's Choice Award was chosen by one (1) of Nottingham Township's newer residents, Washington County Commissioner Diana Irely.

Great food was prepared and served by the Thomas Youth League from the new concession stand located next to the ball field. The concession stand is the newest addition to Sherwood Park. 50/50 raffles were held to benefit Boy Scout Troop #1300 and Thomas Youth League.

Entertainment was also provided. A local favorite, William Dell and the Wee Jams, was on hand to keep everyone's toes tapping. D. J. Babe's Music Factory offered a variety of music that was enjoyed by young and old alike. Thanks to the great weather it was an enjoyable and successful day for all!



Some of the vintage cars on display for the event.



William Dell & the Wee Jams perform at the Car & Cycle Cruise.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
VENETIA, PA 15367
PERMIT #28

NOTTINGHAM TOWNSHIP
909 Sugar Run Road
Eighty Four, PA 15330