

Mount Joy Township

Newsletter

FALL 2013



FROM THE DESK OF MT. JOY'S CHAIRMAN, JOHN GORMONT

SUPERVISORS:

John E. Gormont,
Chairman:

Finance, Roads

David R. Updyke,
Vice-Chairman:

Finance, Personnel

Gilbert M. Clark:
Planning, Land Use &
Zoning

Michael E. Gearhart :

Buildings & Grounds,
Council of Govt.

Bradley A. Trostle:

Personnel, Public Safety



SUPPORT STAFF:

Susan Harbin,
Secretary/Treasurer

Cindy Smith,
Zoning/Code
Enforcement Officer

Sandra Laughton,
Office Assistant

Scott Hughes,
Road Master



OFFICE HOURS:

Mon., Wed., & Fri.:
9:00am - 12:00pm

Tues. & Thurs.:
1:00pm - 4:00pm

717-359-4500
mtjoytwp@mtjoytwp.us



Moving into the Colorful Fall Season

As we begin to see the leaves turn to many different colors and beginning to fall, it tells us that cooler weather is on its way. Many of us look forward to it, but there are others who dread it, as they know what will soon follow.

Reflecting as to where we are at this time of the year, it means we will be preparing the road crew for the months ahead, preparing the 2014 budget and continuing to plan for the future of the township.

The summer weather has been very good for the Township Road workers this year. They have been able to complete the base repairs and replace old damaged drain pipes in a timely manner. This has allowed us to complete the tar & chipping and line painting of the roads that were scheduled for this year. The hope was to get them early, before cooler weather arrived, and they were successful. Great job this summer by the Road workers.

Over the next few weeks we will be getting ready for the winter season. The road crew will be preparing the equipment for snow removal and putting plans in place to cover anything that Mother Nature sends their way. I hope all of you are prepared for whatever Mother Nature presents us with.

As for the 2014 budget, we are doing everything we can to continue to reduce the township millage again. Time will tell, as we work through the process.

If you are not aware, Sheri Moyer has moved on to another job at the county, we all want to let her know that we wish her well in her new job and we will miss her at the township.

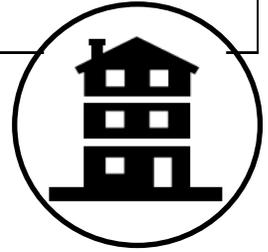
That being said, I want everyone to welcome Sandra Laughton to the township. Sandra has accepted the Office Assistant position, replacing Sheri.

As we head into fall season, many of you may be traveling for the holidays, so as always, enjoy your travels and be sure to return home safely.

John Gormont, Chairman

Mount Joy Township Board of Supervisors

“ZONING 101”



Any structural addition requires permitting and inspection. This includes fencing over six feet in height.

Projects with no structural changes, such as windows, doors, and roofing materials replacement do not require a Township Zoning Permit. For repairs of \$2,500 or more, an Adams County building permit is required.

Septic inspections and reporting forms are currently in process for District 3. Please be aware, if your property is located in District 3 you will be required to have your system inspected by December 31, 2013. If you need a listing of approved septic haulers, please give the office a call.

What the United Contractor Code Applies To

UCC Permit not Required

- Normal home repairs, remodeling, and renovation
- Detached buildings 1,000 square feet or less
- Carports open on three sides
- Agricultural buildings as (defined at S103)
- Decks and porches under 30 inches in height with no roof

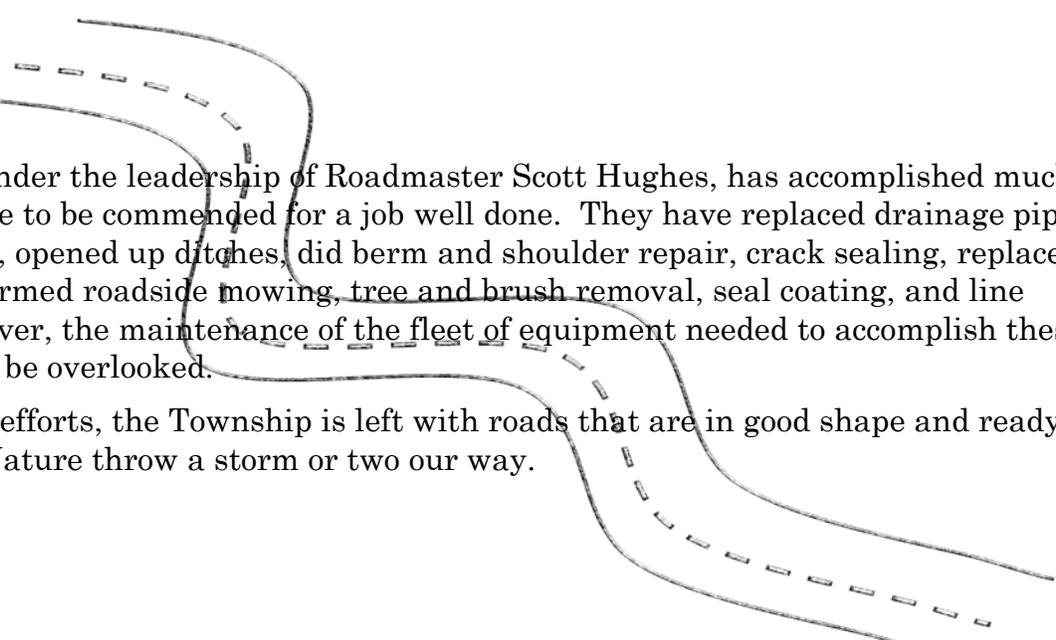
UCC Permit required

- Structural or egress changes
- New home build or additions
- New of upgraded electrical service
- Pools over 24 inches deep
- Decks and porches over 30 inches in height with or without a roof
- Retaining walls over 4 feet in height
- Fences over 6 feet high

ROAD REPORT

Our road crew under the leadership of Roadmaster Scott Hughes, has accomplished much this year, and are to be commended for a job well done. They have replaced drainage pipes, done base repair, opened up ditches, did berm and shoulder repair, crack sealing, replaced road signs, performed roadside mowing, tree and brush removal, seal coating, and line painting. Moreover, the maintenance of the fleet of equipment needed to accomplish these tasks should not be overlooked.

Because of their efforts, the Township is left with roads that are in good shape and ready, should Mother Nature throw a storm or two our way.



FUNDING FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANIES

One of the pressing issues that Adams County, and nearly every other county in the Commonwealth, faces is the continued viability of volunteer fire companies. The valuable services that fire companies provide are threatened by a shrinking base of volunteers and increasing costs. For several years, Mount Joy Township has actively considered and put in place funding for the provision of fire services in the Township. We strongly believe in providing funding that is fair and equitable.

The four companies that serve Mount Joy Township are Alpha (Littlestown), Bonneauville, Gettysburg and Barlow. In order to continue effective services, they must exert considerable effort on fund raising and recruitment. All of them also receive tax payer support from the municipalities that they serve. By far the most significant source of tax payer support for these companies, in proportion to population, comes from Mount Joy Township. **In fact, the township is currently operating under a three year contract with the four companies that provide them over \$70,000 per year. This is the largest township budget item that is supported by your taxpayer dollars.** In addition, the township distributes the approximately \$31K annually received from the state's Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax.

Unfortunately, most municipalities in the County do not fund their fire companies anywhere close to this amount. The Adams County Council of Governments (ACCOG) is an unofficial organization of municipalities – townships, boroughs and school districts – that seeks to solve local problems through joint activities. Recently, ACCOG commissioned a study designed to look at solutions to this problem. The study recommended that every municipality enact a .25 mill fire tax. The tax would be based on assessed property value.

A fire tax is separate from the general property tax, from which municipalities, including Mount Joy, may direct support to the companies. **Should we enact a fire tax at the rate supported by ACCOG it would increase our payments to the four companies to \$113,894. Our total township property tax rate would increase from the current rate of .17 mills to .42 mills, nearly tripling your township property tax.**

Some of you may recall that we had a fire tax five years ago. We were the only municipality in Adams County to have such a tax. One of the first things the current Board of Supervisors did was to repeal this tax. We were concerned about several issues. First, the amount of money raised by this tax far exceeded the funds paid to the companies by surrounding municipalities. Second, the fire tax, which is based on assessed property values, is inequitable.

As part of the repeal of the fire tax, we asked the fire companies to work with those municipalities so that everyone paid their fair share. This never happened. Instead, when we told the fire companies that we could not support this inequitable situation and proposed a more equitable level of funding, the companies informed us that they would withhold services from our residents.

In Pennsylvania, townships legally must provide fire services to residents. We had no choice. We negotiated a contract with them that guarantees fire services for three years. Next year will be the third year of the agreement. The agreement is funded out of general revenues.

One of the advantages of funding our fire companies out of general revenues, rather than a dedicated fire tax, is that we could negotiate a requirement that the companies would provide us with information about their activities and finances, such as fund raising, equipment purchases, and the number of times they serviced homes in our Township. The data obtained through the agreement with the fire companies shows that, based on the modest number of fire calls to the Township, services provided to Mount Joy are out of balance with current funding levels. Mount Joy is still paying significantly more than other municipalities for fire services provided to its residents.

We looked very carefully at the fire tax concept. We note that several municipalities have announced that they will enact this tax. However, we believe that a fire tax such as the .25 mill proposal by ACCOG is unfair on municipalities, such as Mount Joy, that have high property values.

It simply exacerbates often-voiced concerns with a tax system based on property values and ignores calls for reform of the system. Based on existing data, under a fire tax based on property values our residents will pay even more for fire services, while the number of fire calls made here remains extremely low.

As an alternative to the ACCOG fire tax proposal, we suggest using a fair funding formula to determine a municipality's financial obligation to fire and rescue service providers -- one based upon a fixed figure per household. Once the financial obligations under this formula is determined, then as provided by law each municipality in Adams County would choose which methodology it will use to raise the funds. This would also result in quite a different millage rate for each municipality should they choose the methodology of a fire tax to raise the fairly determined financial obligations rather than an allocation of general revenues.

The funds distribution method as proposed by the ACCOG study also poses problems in our view. It requires the fire companies to submit bills to the municipalities for reimbursement. Where more than one company serves a municipality it is possible that duplication of funding will occur. The system may encourage companies to look for things to spend money on so as to not let their "share" of the money go to a neighboring company. And, it requires more paperwork and financial transactions than are necessary. Further, municipalities would be limited by law as to what fire company expenses it could fund through the fire tax; such limitations would not affect allocations through general revenues. We think municipalities should with each company work out a funds distribution system that is more practical. Mt. Joy Township already has a system in place for the distribution of Township's general fund contribution and the funds received from the state for the Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax (a tax that is built-in to some resident's fire insurance premium). That process allocates the funding to each of the four companies based on the population served, land area covered, and their activity levels in the portion of the Township they cover. This process for the allocation of the funding has been used for the past 5-6 years and has been strongly supported, by the four companies that serve the township.

We are also concerned that the ACCOG study focuses too strongly on the funding issue and ignores several others that threaten to destroy the volunteer fire company tradition. Claims are made by fire tax advocates that with more tax payer funding volunteers will be able to focus solely on putting out fires; they won't have to spend innumerable hours raising money through bingo games and shrimp feeds. Frankly, we hope that the companies don't stop these activities and we doubt that they will. These social activities are a time honored tradition in our communities. How might a dedicated tax affect volunteer activities? We know from experience that once a tax is in effect it is very hard to remove it; they usually grow like snowballs rolling downhill and worse, create dependencies that may stifle other volunteer activities and financial contributions.

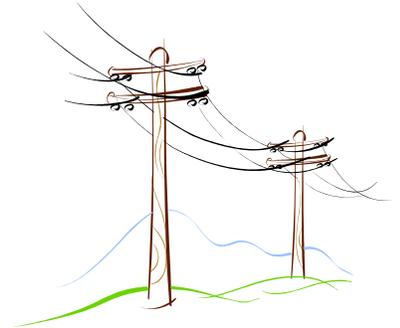
Finally, the ACCOG study also does not address duplication of services. We believe that the implementation of a fire tax will put off a badly needed review of a reorganization of fire services county-wide. When Mount Joy agreed to fund the ACCOG study we thought it would look at the number of companies and whether some consolidation is appropriate. We know, for example, that in other areas fire service is provided at a much lower cost and with less equipment than here in Adams County. In addition, the study does not address the serious barriers to volunteerism posed by the mountain of regulations, federal and state, that mandate volunteers to spend massive amounts of time and money away from home training, not to mention the decreasing number of individuals who work in this area who have the time to dedicate.

In summary, we are disappointed with the ACCOG study. It is clear that all of our county fire companies provide essential services and we also know that they are run by hard working, dedicated people. They are struggling to cope with societal changes that threaten the viability of the volunteer model. The ACCOG study suggests that money will solve these problems. Perhaps it will, but a fair funding formula should be utilized, one that is fair to all property owners who receive the same level of fire services.

Safety First

The purpose of utility poles in your community is to support the electric and communications infrastructure. However, utility poles also happen to be very convenient for placing holiday decorations and information promoting community events. To that end, this letter is being sent to reinforce the proper procedure to place banners or community improvement/holiday decorations on Metropolitan Edison Company ("Met-Ed") owned poles.

Non approved banners, lights, signs, etc. that are placed on Met-Ed owned poles can become a serious **safety issue** to the public, to Met-Ed employees and to employees of cable and phone companies. Specifically, improperly attached items on utility poles can cause fires, outages and electrical hazards including electrocution.



The following is the required procedure to request placement of banners or any kind of community improvement and/or holiday decorations on Met-Ed owned poles:

1. A list of poles must to be submitted to Met-Ed Joint Use Department
A Field Designer will review the list of poles and determine if there are any issues with clearances on the poles requested.
2. An attachment agreement needs to be executed prior to placement of items on Met-Ed owned poles.
3. A \$1,000,000.00 Certificate of Liability insurance is required prior to permission being granted to attach banners or decorations on Met-Ed owned poles.

Met-Ed does not allow the following:

- Poles to be wrapped with lights from the ground up.
- Clearances begin at 15'6".
- Extension cords, for any reason to light decorations on Met-Ed owned poles.
- Use only outlets that have been approved by Met-Ed design on Met-Ed owned poles for powering approved lightning decorations.
- Horizontal banners placed between two Met-Ed owned poles or across roadways/highways/streets between Met-Ed owned poles.
- Stapled lights or signs to Met-Ed owned poles.
- Metal brackets to hang Met-Ed approved banners or holiday decorations on Met-Ed owned poles.
- No metallic or conductive material in either the banner or support device and pole attachment bands is permitted.

To make a request for banners or any kind of decoration to be placed on Met-Ed owned poles please contact **Met-Ed Joint Use Department** by calling (610) 921-6921 or send an email to kpatrick@firstenergycorp.com. If your community currently has banners or decorations on Met-Ed owned poles, and an attachment agreement does not exist, please contact Met-Ed Joint Use Department.

Thank you for making the community safer!

Mt. Joy Township
902 Hoffman Home Rd.
Gettysburg, PA 17325

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Gettysburg Outlets: Oct. 19th Something to Cheer About. Oct. 31st Trick or Treat. Nov. 2nd Cash 4 Clothes. Nov. 9th VIP event. Nov. 16th Santa arrives. Nov. 22nd Midnight Madness, Dec. 1-24th Lights Festival, visit with Santa, carriage rides, live music.

Alpha Fire Company/Littlestown: November 22nd Turkey Bingo

Barlow Fire Company: October 12th Pit Beef—October 17th Hoagie sale orders by Monday the 14th, call 334-6302
October 19th 10 week club, these tickets were out months ago, there is a meal and drawing the night of feed.
November 2nd shrimp and chicken feed

Bonneauville Fire Company: Bingo every Monday night, doors open at 5, early birds at 6:30, with dinner available. Late night Bingo the 3rd Friday night of each month, doors open at 6, early birds at 7:30, with dinner available. Guaranteed payouts for every game. Every third Friday night of each month. 41 games total, all paper games, including early birds. Guaranteed payouts and special games and prizes. Doors open at 5:30 with early birds at 7:30. Kitchen open with dinner special and soups, sandwiches and pizza.