



## HAMILTONBAN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

### 2010 MID-YEAR NEWSLETTER

This is a mid-year newsletter from your Board of Supervisors to let everyone know what we, your elected officials, are doing to improve conditions in the Township and to cope with unexpected situations without raising taxes.

### **Construction of New Township Maintenance Facility**

It has been clear for many years that the Township Maintenance Facility on Bullfrog Road is greatly in need of repairs and upgrades in order to bring it up to modern standards and reduce potential Township liability. The existing facility buildings were constructed in the 1970s, are not secure from theft, and are quite dilapidated. For example, the existing salt storage shed is supported by piles of gravel on both sides to prevent its collapse. Because of these long-standing deficiencies, in 2006 the then-existing Board of Supervisors considered three possible options to upgrade our maintenance facilities:

1. Patch up the existing structures
2. Build new structures on the existing 4.2 acre site
3. Build a new maintenance facility at another location

At that time (2006), the Board chose option 3. It was selected because Valley Quarries was interested in a land swap which would allow our new maintenance facility to be built on land closer to the current offices with room for future expansion.

After discussions with Valley Quarries, it was agreed that we would exchange the land we owned where the existing maintenance facility is for land that Valley Quarries owned behind the current Township Offices, between Carrolls Tract Road and Bullfrog Road. This exchange was quite favorable for the Township. We acquired 10 acres valued at \$185,000 in exchange for 4.2 acres valued at \$100,000.

The exchange agreement was finalized on December 27, 2007. Along with the agreement, Valley Quarries also agreed to lease the 4.2 acres to the Township for 5 years to allow time for a new maintenance facility to be constructed on the 10 acres we acquired.

**Because of the land swap and the lease agreement, we no longer have the option of upgrading the existing maintenance facility. The Township is legally obligated to vacate the existing facility by December 31, 2012.**

After the land exchange with Valley Quarries was finalized in late 2007, the property was subdivided to cut off the 10 acres that was transferred to the Township and stormwater and other approvals were obtained. Site plans for the new maintenance facility were then drawn up, and a public meeting was held on January 12, 2009 to present the plans to the public, and to get public

comments and feedback. No significant comments or suggestions for modification of the plans were voiced by the public at this meeting. These plans are and have been available for inspection by the public at the Township office. The plans show space for a new office, but actually going ahead with a new office building will depend on additional funding becoming available if recovery of the economy and/or continued growth of the area brings in new revenue. Also, the Board is continuing to pursue grants, and has had some success in obtaining them recently, but no grants have been obtained for new facilities at this time.

In the meantime, because of the legal requirement to get out of the existing maintenance facility, construction must go forward or the Township will be without any maintenance facility, which is needed to be able to maintain and improve the roads of the Township after the lease expires on December 31, 2012.

The Board has made every effort to reduce the cost of the new maintenance facility, including sharing the cost of driveway construction with Liberty Worship Center, which purchased adjoining acreage for their new church. The new Township structures will be Butler/Morton type buildings, with the minimum space requirements for our maintenance supplies and equipment.

This year, after going out for bids, the Board selected an excavation contractor (Jerry Justice Excavating, Inc.), and site preparation work is currently in progress. This includes grading the site and construction of stormwater management berms and basins. After site work is complete, the next step will be construction of a new salt shed, since that is the part of the old maintenance facility most in need of replacement. The final step will be the construction of a maintenance building for storage and repair of Township equipment, so that we can vacate the existing maintenance facility before the lease runs out at the end of 2012.

Site excavation work is being paid for out of the Township's Capital Reserve Fund, which the Board created in 2008. Since then, money has been put into the fund in anticipation of constructing the new maintenance facility. If our current efforts to get grant money are unsuccessful, funds for the construction of the new maintenance facility will be obtained by a mortgage loan, which we expect can be paid for from existing revenues without the need to increase taxes.

We hope that the above information explains how we got to where we are with this project and where we plan to go in the future to upgrade our maintenance facility at minimum cost.

## **Creation of the Recreation and Parks Commission**

On May 1, 2007, the Board created a Township Recreation and Parks Commission (RPC) consisting of 7 volunteer citizens. The RPC advises the Board on how and where to create recreational opportunities for the Township. Together with Fairfield Borough, the Board authorized the creation of a joint recreation plan for both municipalities on January 7, 2008 in Resolution 2008-01. There has been some concern among residents that there is no need for a RPC, but there is a financial reason why it was created, as follows:

The laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania prohibit municipalities from imposing development fees on new subdivisions. Other states, such as Maryland, allow such fees to pay for

the additional road traffic, school usage, and other municipal expenses that result from development. This is one of the reasons that housing in Maryland and other adjoining states is more expensive than in Pennsylvania.

However, Pennsylvania does allow municipalities to charge developers fees for recreational facilities. The money must be used to create and maintain recreational facilities and programs that can be used by all residents of the municipality. The fee may consist of land or cash. Hamiltonban implemented such fees in Ordinance 2008-01 dated May 6, 2008, which added Section 909 to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). Recreational fees only apply to subdivisions of 5 or more houses.

**So, in order to be able to charge developers recreational fees for new developments, the Township must have a Recreation Ordinance and a RPC in place to oversee the use of the money or land.**

The Township RPC was created to meet the Pennsylvania requirements for collecting such fees, and to plan and conduct recreational opportunities for Township residents. The RPC sponsored an Easter Egg Hunt for children of residents this past spring, and plans to continue that as well as other activities for residents. Costs for the Easter egg hunt were paid for by volunteers.

## **Glatfelter Tree Farm Preservation**

On May 24, 2010, the 2,500-acre Glatfelter Tree Farm #1 property in Hamiltonban Township was transferred to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and incorporated into Michaux State Forest. This resulted from a two-year effort spearheaded by the Hamiltonban Board of Supervisors, and preserves the 2,500 acre property from development forever.

Since becoming Pennsylvania's first designated Tree Farm in 1947, Tree Farm #1 has been a local natural and recreational resource while being actively managed for timber production. When the Glatfelter Pulp Wood Company listed the property for sale in late 2007, there was a strong interest from a diverse field of potential buyers and concerned local citizens. Many worried that the property's water resources, wildlife habitat and recreational amenities would be threatened. Current zoning would have allowed for the construction of approximately 500 homes on-site.

However, as a result of the combined efforts of the PA congressional delegation, the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Adams County, Hamiltonban Township and other townships and boroughs throughout the region, the Land Conservancy of Adams County, the Nature Conservancy, and local citizens, a total of \$12,500,000 was raised to purchase the property and preserve it in its natural condition. The nonprofit Conservation Fund was instrumental in the effort, providing a bridge loan to purchase the property while funds were obtained from many sources to purchase the property.

The 2,500-acre property abuts the Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve, serves as a buffer to the popular Appalachian Trail corridor and lies within the viewshed of Gettysburg National Park. It sits at the headwaters of much of western Adams County's water supply and its protection will help provide clean air and water to county residents. Increased opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing and other forms of recreation, combined with on-site sustainable forest management by DCNR, will provide a long-term boost to the local economy.

## **February Snow Storms**

As you know, in February we experienced two heavy snowstorms within 4 days. Each storm dropped over 2 feet of snow, and the last storm also had high winds and deep drifts. Under these adverse conditions, the full time road crew, the part-time crew, the Police Officer, the Township Supervisors, and a number of private citizens worked long hours to open and keep open the Township roads. During the storm there were several medical emergencies in the Township, and the road crew gave special attention to clearing the necessary roads so that ambulances could get to the people needing assistance.

**At the July 6, 2010 Supervisors' meeting, a Township resident came to the meeting and personally thanked Officer Larmer and Roadmaster Harbaugh for saving his life by quickly clearing a path for an ambulance to reach his house during the snowstorm. He said that the doctors told him that he would have died if the EMTs had gotten to him just a few minutes later.**

Clearing of the roads to some of the more remote areas of the Township was delayed by the slowness of PennDOT in clearing the 19 miles of roads in the Township that they are responsible for. PennDOT roads include Fairfield Road, Carrolls Tract Road, Iron Springs Road, Jacks Mountain Road, and PA-16. In particular, PennDOT snowplow trucks got stuck on Carrolls Tract Road and could not clear the road for many hours during the storm. This prevented Township plows from getting to upper Cold Springs Road and the associated roads for many hours during the storm. A high-lift bulldozer had to be rented by the Township road crew to clear parts of Cold Springs Road.

The Township owns three trucks that can be equipped with plows, and those three vehicles were in operation around the clock until all the roads were cleared for at least one-lane of operation. All in all, it was an extreme winter storm, and while some roads were not cleared as quickly as people would have liked, all emergency situations were successfully dealt with, and all of the road crew members as well as Board Chairman Gordon worked long hours plowing snow. The Township is responsible for and maintains 31 miles of road. Clearing all 31 miles twice in one week was a major job, especially when you consider that in the second storm drifting snow sometimes blocked roads that had just been cleared.

Considering the unusual nature of the back-to-back storms, the Township employees and volunteers did an excellent job with limited resources. The Township office was in operation throughout the storm, and regular email advisories were sent to residents on the Township email list to advise them of the current status of the Township roads. Since a State of Emergency was

declared by the Governor, we are eligible for partial reimbursement of the extra funds used during the storm. The Township has been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a reimbursement of \$10,822, or 75% of eligible expenses during the State of Emergency.

## **Office Modifications/Improvements**

The Township office has recently been renovated. The major change was relocating the secretary's office to the front of the building thus increasing the size of the meeting room to accommodate more people during meetings. Also, \$12,500 in grant money has been obtained from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and from the Robert C. Hoffman Charitable Endowment Trust to install an ADA compliant handicap ramp to the office front door (recently completed), and a handicap restroom that will be installed later this year.

A number of improvements have been made to the Township office procedures and processes. Much of the office operations are now fully computerized, and the office files have been reorganized for better file management. A new billing system has been implemented for the Orrtanna Treatment Plant which has cut down on time spent creating invoices and statements. Office efficiency has been greatly improved, thereby saving considerable time and money. The Township continues to maintain an up-to-date website including current news items, which are also emailed to the residents who wish to receive them.

## **Police Vehicles and Equipment**

You may have seen a new police vehicle driving thru the Township. The Township purchased a 4WD 2005 Ford Explorer from the Cumberland Township Police Department. The Hamiltonban Police Department now has two vehicles, a 2000 Ford Crown Victoria Cruiser for normal use and the four-wheel drive 2005 Ford Explorer SUV for winter use. This mix of vehicles allows better police access to the Township roads in all weather conditions. The Township's 1997 Ford Crown Victoria police cruiser has been refitted with yellow lights and has been transferred to the Road Department. Also, a trailer hitch was added to the vehicle, allowing the road crew to use it to tow our small trailer with light equipment such as the mower.

The Township has also purchased and is using an Enradd unit for speed enforcement in the Township. As you may know, Pennsylvania only permits the use of radar for speed enforcement by the State Police. Municipal police are prohibited from using radar, which hampers enforcing speed limits. The Enradd unit will aid in enforcing speed limits in the Township, which is a problem of concern to many residents. If any resident wants to see a demonstration of the new Enradd unit, contact the Township police officer.

## **2010 Road Paving and Maintenance**

Because of State laws mandating payment of "comparable wages" for road work that is contracted out, the Township is now using the road crew to do much of the work that otherwise might be contracted out. This saves considerable money, because the "comparable wage" rate is based on

wages in the major metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and is considerably higher than the going rate for labor in rural areas like Hamiltonban Township. Also, because of the high price of petroleum products like asphalt, the Township is shifting emphasis from repaving to using chip seal to maintain the roads. The following road projects are planned to be or have been completed in 2010.

1. Cold Springs Road from Brunner Lane to Carrolls Tract Road: Establish ditches, scarify road surface, install new crosspipes, build up roadbed 6"-12" with 2RC gravel, fill in shoulders, and apply dust oil. Total estimated cost: \$30,000.

2. Cold Springs Road from Baker's Hill to the Township Line: Replace a 30"X 80' crosspipe in the 4100 block, check other crosspipes and replace as needed, perform base and shoulder work in several locations, in-house seal coating to obtain a double seal coat, and any ditch work that is needed. Total estimated cost: \$61,600.

3. Baker Road: Check crosspipes and replace as needed, base and shoulder work at several locations, in-house seal coating to obtain a double seal coat, and establish ditches on entire road. Total estimated cost: \$7,800.

4. Gum Springs Road: Fill potholes, base leveling, apply flexible base asphalt where needed. Check and replace damaged crosspipes, perform base and shoulder work in several locations, in-house seal coating to obtain a double seal coat, and any ditch work that is needed. Total estimated cost: \$19,700.

Other road projects to be undertaken if funds permit:

- A. In-house seal coating of the office parking lot and Bullfrog Road from Rt. 116 to the Quarry.
- B. In-house seal coating in spots on Gum Springs Road, Mount Hope Road, Newman Road, Baker Road and the seams on Beechwood Drive and Franklin Street.
- C. Begin state-mandated road sign upgrades.

## **Sewer Plant Modification**

As a result of a recent Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) inspection, it was determined that the Orrtanna Sewer Plant has been operating outside of DEP requirements since 1995. At that time, DEP issued a modification to the original permit limiting the time that the spray fields can be in operation. Unfortunately, at that time the plant operators did not change their mode of operation to meet the revised permit, possibly because the plant was not designed with the capability to meet the modifications (it was designed and built in the 1970's). Until a new DEP inspector was assigned this year, DEP inspectors did not enforce compliance with the revised permit.

Discussions with DEP are ongoing. DEP may require that major modifications be made to the plant to continue operation. The Township is applying for grant money to finance the modifications, and hopefully, it will become available. If grant money is not forthcoming, the Municipal Authority will have to borrow the money to update the plant. Interest on any such

loan(s) are required by law to be paid by fees from the users of the sewer plant, and not through taxes on the residents of the Township who don't use the plant.

## **Flooding of Middle Creek**

There has been considerable flooding of Middle Creek recently, which has inundated the intersection of Carrolls Tract Road and Fairfield Road more than once this year. In response to a resident's complaint about this ongoing problem, the Township is working on a fix, and we hope to work with Fairfield Borough to find a solution, since the flooding affects their residents as well as ours. First, we have requested that landowners clear the creek of debris that has blocked the creek and contributed to the problem. Second, since it is a PennDOT road and bridge across the creek, we have contacted them to fix the problem, so far without success. Also, we have asked the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to review the problem and submit a Plan of Study for flood damage reduction with no cost to the Township. We are lobbying our Congressman to encourage USACE to put this project near the top of their list.

## **Summary**

We hope that this newsletter has given you an idea of the challenges your Board of Supervisors faces on a continuing basis and the efforts we are making to deal with them. We are striving to save money by applying for grants so that the Township can continue to operate within budget, and without raising taxes. As we noted in our 2009 Budget message six months ago, Township property taxes have not been raised in almost 6 years, even though County and School Taxes have increased considerably during that time. We plan to continue to cut costs and save money wherever possible to continue our record of living within our means.

The Board of Supervisors and staff continue to closely monitor the fiscal health of the Township and exercise cautious and wise stewardship of your trust. Because public attendance at Township meetings is not high, we believe that this message is an appropriate means of communication with our residents. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the office at 717-642-8509, or email us at [Hamiltonban@embarqmail.com](mailto:Hamiltonban@embarqmail.com).

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