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## **General**

### **Court rejects petition from PA Builders for relief from new building codes**

The Pennsylvania Builders Association (PBA) and others seeking relief from new and amended state building codes lost their case before Commonwealth Court. The court has dismissed the association's petition which claimed that the current code approval process in Pennsylvania is unconstitutional. The PBA and other participants in the case had argued that new codes, including a rule that all new homes have fire sprinklers, would hurt their industry because new home costs would rise by an average \$15,000 each. Click [here](#) for more.

*Source: PennLive 8/26/2010*

### **33 schools in the Philadelphia region will share \$58.7 million in federal grants**

Fifty-seven struggling Pennsylvania schools - most of them in Philadelphia - will share \$101 million in federal grants over three years to boost student achievement. In the region, 33 schools will split \$58.7 million. The schools must adopt one of four reform models that trigger changes, such as replacing principals or at least half of their teaching forces, bringing in outside management, or closing schools and transferring students to higher-performing ones. Schools in the Philadelphia, William Penn, and Southeast Delco districts, along with the Philadelphia Montessori Charter School and the West Philadelphia Achievement Charter School, learned Thursday that they would receive between \$679,200 (Park Lane Elementary in Darby) and \$4.2 million (Lincoln High in Philadelphia). The Chester Upland School District, which applied for \$6 million in grants for two schools, was not awarded any money.

*Source: Philadelphia Inquirer; 8/26/2010*

### **Main Line's best public high schools**

The Main Line and western suburbs are home to a bevy of nationally-ranked private and public high schools. The latest edition of Main Line Today features statistics and features that make these public schools stand out in Pennsylvania. Click [here](#) for more.

*Source: Main Line Today; September 2010*

## ***Bucks***

### **Lower Southampton announces public hearing**

The Board of Supervisors of Lower Southampton Township will hold a Special Meeting/Public Hearing, Thursday, September 2, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. on the Comprehensive Plan. After receiving community input at the hearing, the board will consider adoption of the plan at their regularly scheduled meeting on September 8, 2010 at 7:30 pm at the Township Building, 1500 Desire Avenue, Feasterville, PA 19053. View the Comprehensive Plan on the [Lower Southampton Township website](#).

*Source: Bucks County Courier Times; 8/13/10*

### **Bristol Township fined \$226,000 for past sewer violations**

Bristol Township supervisors approved a settlement with the federal Environmental Protection Agency and PA Department of Environmental Protection over alleged violations of the federal Clean Water and Clean Streams Acts which occurred from 1995 to 2007. The \$226,000 fine is to be paid over a two-year period, and must be accompanied by a township plan to improve the current sewer system. The fine was negotiated down after Bristol Township officials provided evidence that a plan was in place for capital improvements to the system.

*Source: Bucks County Courier Times; 8/20/10*

### **Central Bucks settles with tax collector**

The Central Bucks School Board has approved a settlement with Buckingham Tax Collector Dorothy Campana. Campana sued the district for hiring Berkheimer Associates to collect school taxes after Campana had deputized the school district to collect taxes. Under state law, only the tax collector has the right to choose a deputy tax collector. In the settlement, the tax collector appoints Berkheimer instead of the school district, thereby enforcing her right to choose a deputy tax collector. The district has not tallied the final cost of the lawsuit. In other news, the Central Bucks teachers' contract expired on June 30. The school board reports that talks are underway but continue to be general in nature. Residents are concerned over a lack of information about the negotiation process.

*Source: The Intelligencer; 8/25/10*

### **Tinicum groundwater report almost complete**

Funded by a grant from the Woodtiger Fund, Tinicum Township has hired an intern to compile a report from the 10 years' of charts, maps, graphs and reports collected by the Bridgeton-Nockamixon-Tinicum Groundwater Committee. Larissa Walker spent the summer organizing the data in an easy to read format designed to assist Tinicum and surrounding municipalities in defining ordinances that deal with a declining groundwater system. The draft report is now being reviewed by the scientists who make up the groundwater committee.

*Source: The Intelligencer; 8/22/10*

### **Bucks commissioners approve storm water plan**

Bucks County Commissioners have approved a storm water management plan for the Neshaminy Creek watershed. Approval of the plan will set in motion the development of storm water management ordinances in the 41 Bucks and Montgomery County municipalities that are within the Neshaminy Creek watershed. The plan includes a model ordinance for municipalities aimed at helping them better manage rainwater runoff from parking lots, buildings and future development. Visit the [Bucks County Planning Commission website](#) to view the Neshaminy Storm water plan.

*Source: Bucks County Courier Times; 8/23/10*

## **Chester**

### **Tredyffrin passes two student housing ordinances**

Two ordinances addressing student housing were discussed, tweaked and approved at the Tredyffrin Township Board of Supervisors meeting. The Registration Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance, while separate entities, will help to regulate and enforce student housing throughout Tredyffrin. Both current and future homeowners will be responsible for complying with the Registration Ordinance, but the Zoning Ordinance will only apply to future homeowners. Current homeowners renting to students will be grandfathered in. The ordinances were approved unanimously by the board and will go into effect on September 16. The registration ordinance requires both current and future homeowners who rent to students to register with the township. Homeowners will be required to provide their own contact information and that of their renters. Also, information must be provided about the college/university/trade school the renter will be attending. The township plans to be in contact with Realtors and local schools to document which students live where. The hope is that by documenting who owns and rents each home, contacting the individuals if necessary will be easier and more time-efficient. Separately, the Zoning Ordinance, states that all future homeowners wishing to rent to students in the R-1/2, 1, 2, 3 and 4 residential districts would need special-exception approval from the Zoning Hearing Board before occupancy. To qualify, the owner will need to show that the property meets the requirements of the ordinance. Those requirements include a buffer of at least 10 feet around the home, no more than three student tenants, and a specified minimum distance from other student homes.

*Source: Main Line Media News; 8/18/2010*

### **Study lauds Coatesville's potential**

Following three days of interactive workshops as part of a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation study considering funding redevelopment of Coatesville's train station, project officials offered some surprising information. "We found you could support, today, 68,000 square feet of new restaurants and stores. They would generate \$17.6 million in sales," said Robert J. Gibbs, a market economist, of Gibbs Consulting Group. "I think our study was conservative, too conservative. I think you could generate \$30 million in sales." The market study was just one part of an overall project that will result in recommendations to PennDOT regarding what it would take to redevelop the station. As part of an initiative called Plan the Keystone, PennDOT wants to improve 12 targeted stations along the Keystone Corridor from Harrisburg to Philadelphia. According to Batson, the corridor is important not just regionally but nationally.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/26/2010*

### **West Whiteland municipal building's contractor sues township**

The general contractor for the new West Whiteland Township municipal building is suing the township for \$1.5 million, claiming the township withheld funds that it and subcontractors were owed. The township says the building leaks and that is why they withheld payments. In a lawsuit filed Aug. 11, attorneys for Magnum, Inc., a Warminster-based company, said the \$1.5 million represented contractual obligations that the township failed to pay, additional costs due to township-caused delays, and costs associated with change orders that the township initiated among other things. Magnum is also trying to recoup expenses incurred as a result of trying to correct the leak problem. While the township claims that Magnum performed faulty or defective work, the contractor claims the alleged deficiencies were caused by the township's project design.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/23/2010*

### **Customers: Rate hike 'horrendous'**

Protesting a rate increase that would more than triple the average customer's bill, residents turned out in force Tuesday at two hearings regarding wastewater rates for Pennsylvania American Water Company. Speakers described the requested rate, which according to a news release from the company would raise the average customer's monthly bill from \$27.43 to \$90.26, as "unconscionable," "horrendous," "unthinkable," and "outrageous" and criticized the company on a range of charges, from unfairness to poor service. But the primary challenges to the rate increase were the arguments that the company was unduly shifting an investment burden to the customers. Company representatives said the primary reason for the rate increase, which would increase revenues to the company by \$8.2 million, was the construction of a new wastewater treatment facility in which the company had invested \$55 million. The facility in South Coatesville serves Coatesville, East Fallowfield, Caln, West Caln, Valley, Sadsbury, West Sadsbury, Highland and West Brandywine. More than 600 people turned out for the two meetings.

*Source: Daily Local; 8/25/2010*

### **Penn Township embarks on Comprehensive Plan project**

The Penn Township Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will be revising the township's comprehensive plan. The township will be working closely with the Chester County Planning Commission to hold 14 work sessions and two public meetings in the coming months. The task force will begin in earnest on Wednesday, September 15 at 7 p.m.

*Source: Chester County Press, 8/25/2010*

## **Delaware**

### **Folcroft addresses problem properties**

The deteriorating condition of residential properties, especially rentals, was the main topic of discussion at a recent Folcroft Council meeting. A resident of Valley View Drive leveled complaints ranging from uncut grass and overgrown weeds to filthy conditions. A nearly half-hour discussion ensued about Section 8 housing and how many landlords live out of state. Councilman Robert Schramm expressed dismay at property owners who do not properly maintain their rental units. Schramm noted that Section 8 reform is a top priority on the council's agenda.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/25/2010*

### **Flood study funding flows into Delco**

Delaware County legislators have secured state and federal funding for a \$500,000 study to help protect area creeks and rivers from flash flooding caused by heavy rains. Delaware County residents and businesses have consistently suffered the brunt of flash flooding over the past decade. The study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) involves 13 different watersheds in Delaware, Chester and Montgomery counties. The project area encompasses 750 square miles and 156 boroughs and townships. The study is funded 75 percent federally and 25 percent by the state DEP. The goal of the project is to identify comprehensive solutions to the degradation of water resources in the region.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/22/2010*

### **Norwood discusses budget shortfall**

Less than six months after a 34.7 tax increase, Norwood Borough finances are back on track. After discussing the 2009 audit, Norwood has closed a \$634,000 funding gap left from a previous administration and is heading for ending the fiscal year with a surplus. According to the 2009 audit, Norwood spent \$3.8 million while it only took in \$3.6 million in revenue. Not appearing on the audit was roughly \$450,000 of unpaid bills. Former Borough Treasurer Dick Delgrego stated that the borough took a hit financially when the income from the real estate transfer tax fell short due to low home sales in the borough. Borough council voted to pass a budget with a 34.7 property tax increase in February to make up for the \$635,000 shortfall. The increase was estimated to generate \$521,000 in additional real estate taxes.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/25/2010*

### **Aldan residents miffed by sidewalk ordinance**

Enforcement of Aldan's sidewalk ordinance, which has been on the borough's books for 116 years, brought about complaints from nearly a dozen residents. The ordinance requires sidewalks and curbs to be in "good repair and shape to readily and entirely shed water toward the gutter" and be kept free of weeds. In past years, the chairman of the council's highways committee annually inspected the sidewalks and curbs. Property owners were notified by mail of any deficiency and told repairs or replacements had to be made within 60 days or a citation would be issued. This year, however, the job was put into the hands of the borough code enforcement officers, and sidewalks and curbs in need of repair were marked with yellow paint. Residents say the economy makes the expense of repairs within two months a financial hardship. Residents can request an extension of the time period by submitting a letter outlining the hardship of complying within sixty days.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/25/2010*

### **Bethel forecasting major deficit**

A recent budget workshop began with a calm line-by-line item reading, but ended several hours later with tempers flaring after it was discovered the township is facing a deficit of more than \$600,000 for 2010. Participants in the workshop cited a need for more transparency, implementation of financial controls, timely dissemination of information, and questions about the competency of Director of Operations Michael George as their biggest concerns. Volunteer finance committee member Kim Champagne said there are 17 line items from 2010 over budget. She added that the volunteer members of the finance committee have been trying to get information and even submitted a Right-to-Know request, but to date, have not received the requested information. The Right-to-Know request included detailed ledger reports, payroll reports and worksheets, including W-2s, a complete list of township employees being paid to perform duties outside of their normal jobs, and a copy of the original construction loan document for construction of the new police department building and township offices. Following weeks of meetings and residential input, a \$2.34 million, zero-tax increase budget was adopted Dec. 31, 2009 for 2010. To avoid an increase, about \$400,000 of a

reserve fund was used and a \$160 trash fee was implemented for 2,700 homeowners. Supervisor Al Groer, at the end of the heated discussion, said he is very concerned about the situation.

*Source: Daily Times; 8/25/2010*

#### **Upper Providence Township land proposal divides residents**

The controversy over a Delaware County plot of land coveted by sports groups for playing fields and by open-space advocates for walking trails has taken another twist: The town council is exploring whether to sell the land for a housing development. The move has raised the ire of some Upper Providence residents, who voted in 2003 to acquire open space for recreation, saw their taxes rise 29 percent, and have paid more than \$1.3 million interest on a bond debt to support the referendum decision. The Township Council, which recently spent \$20,000 on engineering plans and a wetlands delineation study to see how many ball fields the property would support, now says selling the land would be the responsible thing to do in troubled economic times. The 36-acre parcel, known as the Lavin tract, is along Ridley Creek and is filled with trees, wetlands, riparian areas, and meadows. Once slated for possible cluster housing, the land was purchased with part of \$6 million in bond money. Voters agreed to acquire the land for "open space, property development rights, conservative easements and/or active/passive recreational use." With an October deadline to come up with a plan, or spend or refund to lenders about \$1.7 million of what remains of the bond money, township officials presented a series of "sketch plans" which would place ball fields in wetlands. The plans set off a contentious debate between residents and the township. At its last meeting, the council voted to return \$1 million of the \$1.7 million to help retire the debt.

*Source: Philadelphia Inquirer; 8/26/2010*

## **Montgomery**

### **Hatfield Borough Residential Property Transfer Certification takes effect Sept. 1**

The Hatfield Borough Residential Property Transfer Certification ordinance is scheduled to take effect on September 1, 2010. The ordinance requires sellers of a residential property to deliver to the purchasers a certification of use with respect to borough code requirements for smoke alarms, house numbers, sump pumps and drains. There is a \$55 fee for applications filed at least 10 days prior to settlement and the fee increases to \$110 if filed within 10 days of settlement. Please contact [Hatfield Borough](#) for specific information and an application.

### **County budget outlook is grim**

Montgomery County commissioners have looked ahead at the county's financial picture, and the future looks bleak. Early estimates of the budget for next year have the county facing a \$35 million budget gap. Although still early in the budget process, two options were discussed to close the deficit: raise the county property tax from 2.695 to 3.288 mills, a 22 percent increase; or lay off one in four county employees. If taxes were raised the proposed amount, a home assessed at the county average \$168,929 would see a property tax bill of \$555.44, about a \$100 increase over last year. County commissioners are open to suggestions about the budget that would preserve the "quality of life" that is important to residents of Montgomery County, including parks, trails, historic sites and the library system.

*Source: The Intelligencer; 8/25/10*

### **Upper Salford discusses sewage plan**

At a recent Act 537 sewage plan meeting, Upper Salford officials came out in favor of a plan that would divide the township into three districts and would require residents to pump their septic tanks once every three years. The proposed districts are Woxall/Bittersweet; Salfordville; and Salford with about 400 residences each. Some discussion was held over the requirement that septic pumpers belong to the Septic Management Association and it was decided to look for alternate ways to certify pumpers without having to belong to a trade organization.

*Source: Souderton Independent; 8/26/10*

### **Pottstown facing another water rate increase**

Last year, the Pottstown Borough Authority raised the base rate for water 30 percent. This year, an analysis of the authority's rate structure and finances has led to a proposed 44 percent increase in the base rate for water and an additional 15 percent for usage. For the majority of residents in the borough who experience minimum water usage, the base rate would jump from \$25 to \$36. Add to that the average water consumption and the bill will rise to \$40.12. The authority cites debt obligation and an aging infrastructure that needs to be updated as major reasons for the possible rate hike.

*Source: Pottstown Mercury; 8/19/10*

### **Lansdale looks to bring inspections in-house**

In a continuing attempt to find budget savings, Lansdale's code enforcement director recently proposed to hire an in-house building inspector as an alternative to outsourcing inspections. Currently, Keystone Municipal Services provides inspection services to the borough. Lansdale has paid Keystone \$60,000 as of June 30, \$109,200 in 2009 and \$125,000 in 2008. A full-time building inspector salary is expected to top out at \$90,000 annually. If approved, the borough would investigate the reconfiguring of inspection fees, as they are required by state law to be revenue neutral.

*Source: The Reporter; 8/19/10*