

# Charlestown Township Newsletter

Winter 2021 Newsletter

[www.charlestown.pa.us](http://www.charlestown.pa.us)

Published by the Board of Supervisors

4030 Whitehorse Road, Devault, PA 19432 - (610) 240-0326

Township Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday - Friday



## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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## TOWNSHIP MANAGER

Linda M. Csete

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

### Supervisors

1<sup>ST</sup> Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

### Planning Commission

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday @ 7:30 p.m.

### Historical Commission

Semi-monthly 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday  
@ 4:00 p.m.

### Environmental Advisory Committee

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday @ 6:00 p.m.

### Parks & Recreation

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday @ 7:30 p.m.

Meetings will be held via Cisco WebEx  
or Zoom until further notice.

All meetings are open to the  
public.

## New Beginnings for 2021

-by Linda Csete, Township Manager

For most of us, 2020 was a year like any other, with COVID weaving a pervasive thread through the many other tumultuous events. While things aren't yet back to normal, we can now leave the greatest uncertainties of the past year behind and focus on the path forward, with a welcome new element, hope. The greatest antidote to the restrictions that linger into 2021 remains the same: enjoy the outdoors!

### Wildflower Walk on the Pickering Trail

Saturday, April 24. Rain date, May 1

A walk along the Pickering Creek is always a delight. In early spring there is the bonus of spring ephemerals. These flowers come up before the trees have leaves, bloom and set seed, then die back before the heat of summer. You may be familiar with some, like spring beauties and bloodroot,



Blood Root



Spring Beauty

which are common along roadsides and in yards. Look for these two in your backyard and remember to leave some areas a bit messy so there are places for seed to take hold and small animals to nest. The birds may bring other wildflowers to your yard as they forage for food and drop seeds. There may be some special plants in your backyard that you haven't yet noticed.

Last year we had to cancel our spring walk. I hope that by April we can just put on our masks and head out together. We know the date but will wait to see what the COVID restrictions are come spring. Please check the Charlestown Township website in April for more information. <http://www.charlestown.pa.us>

Charlestown has many trails to experience. The paved walking trails at the Brightside Farm Park and Charlestown Park have never been more popular. For hikers, we have beautiful trails along the Pickering Creek in addition to numerous others that are displayed on our trail map, available at the Township Office and on our website. In the meantime, we urge you to continue to observe distancing and mask protocols.

We forward to a brighter new year for all our Charlestown residents!

# Proper Use of Portable Generators During Power Outages

- Source: Chester County Dept. of Emergency Services 2/5/2014 news release



## Use Caution When Using Portable Generators

If installed and operated correctly, using a portable electric generator poses little danger, but improper installation or use could be dangerous to you and threaten the lives of your family, friends, neighbors, and electric utility crews trying to restore service.

Following are some tips for the safe operation and use of portable generators.

### Use your generator safely

Incorrect generator use can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. Follow the directions supplied with the general.

### Never use a portable generator indoors!

Never use a portable generator in a garage, carport, basement, crawl space or other enclosed or partially enclosed area, even with ventilation.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away – do not delay!

Install home CO alarms that are battery-operated or have battery back-up. Test batteries frequently and replace when needed.

### Using your generator outdoors

Place it in a dry, outside location.



Place the generator away from windows, doors, and vents that would allow CO to come indoors.

Generators should be at least 20 feet away from buildings. Even 20 feet away, air flow patterns could still blow carbon monoxide into homes through attic vents, windows, or doors, so it's very important to have a working CO detector inside the home.

To avoid electrocution, keep the generator dry. Do not use in rain or wet conditions. Operate it on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure. Make sure our hands are dry before touching the generator.

### Use and store generator fuel safely

Turn the generator off and let it cool before refueling. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.

Store generator fuel in an approved safety can outside of living areas in a locked shed or other protected area.

If you spill fuel or do not seal its container properly, invisible vapors can travel along the ground and be ignited by an appliance's pilot light or arcs from electric switches in the appliance.

Use the type of fuel recommended in the generator instructions or on its label.

### Connect your generator correctly

Protect your appliances. Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit.

Use proper extension cords. Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.

Never try to power house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "back feeding". It can lead to the electrocution of utility workers or neighbors served by the same utility transformer.

The only safe way to connect a generator to house wiring is to have a qualified electrician install a power transfer switch. *(This requires an electrical permit application to be submitted to the Township for approval.)*

### Shut down the generator correctly

Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.

Remember to perform maintenance between uses. It's important to drain the gasoline from the generator while it's being stored. It's also advisable to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level, and fuel quality.

Start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

## Light Pollution: A Cricket's Perspective

- by Veda Maany, EAC Member



Veda Maany: Thank you for the opportunity to interview you. I realize this is a rare occurrence, that is, crickets offering interviews with humans.

Cricket: You're welcome. Well, my community has an important issue that needs urgent attention, so I offered myself as spokesperson given my background in anthropocentrism. We also thought engaging with Chester County residents is a good starting point, given your history of excellence in environmental stewardship.

VM: Well, thank you for the compliments! So, our focus is on light pollution, otherwise known as artificial light at night

(ALAN) and its impact on your species. Can you explain this more?

C: Why yes. The world's increasing use of ALAN is a pressing issue for many reasons. But first, let's define light pollution. It is made up of direct emission on a land or water surface, and indirect light scattered within the atmosphere known as skyglow. Today, 80 percent of the world's population lives under skyglow. The problem is that ALAN negatively impacts us insect species, and there are a lot of us, perhaps millions, and about half are nocturnal. But it also disrupts the daytime creatures when they are trying to rest. Where we previously relied on the rhythm of light and dark created solely by the illumination of the Sun, Moon and stars, we now have this skyglow interfering with our physiology and behaviors.

VM: Ok well, I'm sure you all could adapt over time. Maybe just transition your nocturnal behaviors into daytime.

C: Sure, but perhaps I need to impress upon you the scale of this impact. It hurts our fellow moth friends- great nocturnal pollen transporters by the way-who fly towards light and makes them increasingly vulnerable to their predators. In fact, about 30%-40% of insects that approach street lamps die soon thereafter as a result of collision, overheating, dehydration, or predation. Our poor firefly friends! It interferes with their courtship signaling, and you know, their population is significantly declining. It impacts birds with their migratory patterns at night, and frogs and toads whose nighttime croaking is part of the breeding ritual. A recent study performed on my own species shows light pollution depresses our immune system, our juvenile development, and aspects of reproduction. ALAN also affects plants; trees growing near lights tend to hold on to their leaves much longer in the fall and break buds and flower earlier in the spring, making them susceptible to frost damage. Also, early flowering plants disrupts feeding patterns of pollinators, birds and other insects. The list goes on....

VM: Ok, so we should just use dim lights then....

C: Actually, modern dim lighting is more harmful to our physiology. The more energy efficient curlicue compact fluorescent lightbulbs and LED lights, rather than the old-fashioned incandescent lightbulbs, are rich in blue light, comprised of shorter wavelengths of light. The best-known sleep hormone melatonin, present in most vertebrates, is very sensitive to and suppressed by blue light, perhaps a conserved adaptation, where blue wavelengths are dominant during twilight (when we should be awake and vigilant about our predators). This suppression also works very fast- only 12 min of exposure to ALAN is able to suppress my melatonin levels. But now our brains are getting signals that it is daytime all night long, and thus the physiological confusion.

VM: I must say, as a physician, this is interesting. It is well studied in humans that melatonin induces sleep, which then induces slow wave sleep, where crucial hormones like growth hormone are released, and research shows that disruptions in this cycle can, over time, contribute to our own chronic illnesses, like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and cancer. And with increasing time spent on looking at screens on our devices, we are learning more about more powerful effects of blue light as well. Harvard researchers found that exposure to blue light, when compared to green light of comparable brightness, suppressed melatonin for about twice as long as the green light. Exposure to ALAN between dusk and bedtime reduced levels of melatonin by 71%!

C: Interesting research on your species. We have noticed the recent preoccupation of humans with their devices. You all used to be outdoors much more- especially the little ones.

VM: We have very important matters to tend to on our devices. Cricket, I'm concerned that without some nighttime lighting, we may see more crimes or car accidents. I don't mean to sound so harsh, but can't we manage without you guys?

C: Well, to put it simply- no insects, no plants, no food, ecological collapse. Plants, which are the main source of food for animals and humans, need us to survive through pollination. We are also food for numerous vertebrates (birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, freshwater fish) that don't directly eat plants. We have many other tasks as well, such as decomposing dead plants keeping the soil nutrient-rich. It's quite an intricate food web and I'm proud to say that we insects are part of its foundation.

VM: OK, well what can we humans do to help the situation?

C: First, simply just turn off the outside lights! If you feel you want some lighting, invest in motion sensors and timers- this will help with the electric bill as well! Also, try to use low color temperature light sources. All packaging for new CFL and LED light bulbs provide color temperature information. Look for warm white sources with a color temperature of 3000K or lower. Blue Light has color temperatures over 5,000K. Also decrease *light trespass* – light falling where it is not intended or needed. You can fully shield and direct light down where it is needed, not into the sky. Also reduce *clutter* – bright, confusing and excessive groupings of light sources. There are apps you can use to measure the skyglow in your area as well if you are curious:

[Dark Sky meter App](#) (iPhones) and [Loss of the Night App](#) (iPhones and [Androids](#))

VM: I see here using this online tool [www.lightpollutionmap.info](http://www.lightpollutionmap.info), that Brightside Park here in Charlestown has a Bortle score of 5, SQM of 19. Bortle score measures light pollution from 1-9, going from dark to illuminated sky, and sqm scores from 16 to 22, the higher number corresponding with low light pollution. Pretty good compared to an urban area of Bortle 8-9 and sqm 17!

C: well, I'm headed to Nebraska, where there are some pockets with Bortle of 1 and SQM of 22. Come visit me some night and we can gaze upon the dark sky together.

VM: Aww, that would be very nice. Thank you Cricket for your time, and good luck with your species!

### ***Charlestown Townwatch Donation***

The Board of Supervisors would like to thank President Bob Wert and Treasurer Emory Todd of Charlestown Townwatch, who turned over \$91, 990.03 in unused funds from the now inactive non-profit organization to the Township for general use. The original donations to Townwatch came from the Township and private sources, mostly residents.

## Enjoy our Trails – and Help Reduce Litter

- by Pete Goodman



My New Year's resolution is to walk more consistently for exercise. I have been a fairly regular walker recently using the Brightside Farm Park Trail.

We are all aware that the pandemic has pushed a lot of us out into our common open spaces. Thank goodness we have such places.

However, it angers me to see trash and dog waste along the trail. How inconsiderate and disrespectful some people can be of our shared spaces.

Especially since at the entrance to the park there are trash and recycle containers and a dog waste center which provides pet waste bags and a place to dispose of them. The cost to pick up litter could feed thousands.

In one year, just nine cities in Pennsylvania spent \$68,000,000 managing litter and illegal dumping. With increased use comes increased litter. All of our available open spaces are being subjected to increased use, and increased litter is piling up.

You can help be a part of the solution by being aware that when you pull your gloves out of your pocket, a tissue or candy wrapper may have fallen out. When you go for your walk or hike take a small trash bag with you and collect as you go. All of that bending over is good exercise.

*At left: dog stations and trash containers are available at Brightside Farm Park and Charlestown Park to help control trash and litter.*

### **Charlestown Township Ranked #30 In their 2021 Listing of the Best Small Towns in the U.S. to Raise a Family**

According to Stacker.com, we're described as "Located along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Charlestown Township is minutes away from Valley Forge National Historical Park and the massive King of Prussia mall. Philadelphia is only 30 miles to the east, but locals can find plenty of [activities in Charlestown](#), such as an annual art show and Charlestown Day."



### **Visit our Website's Useful Links**

The Township Website at [www.charlestown.pa.us](http://www.charlestown.pa.us) is continually updated with the latest information for your reference and use. In addition to announcements of latest events, posting of meeting minutes and agendas, we have a comprehensive list of useful links to information from county, state, and neighboring local communities, sources to info on the environment, public safety, recreation, planning, transportation & more.

If you would like to be in the know on current Charlestown happenings, you can sign up for our weekly email blast by emailing [admin1@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:admin1@charlestown.pa.us) and we'll add you to our list.



## Tax Information for 2021

## Earned Income Tax Return Due April 15

**Real Estate Taxes:** The millage rate for real estate taxes is .75 (3/4) mills, unchanged for 15 years.

Your real estate taxes for 2021 will be collected by the Chester County Treasurer Department.

Tax bills are mailed the week of February 1<sup>st</sup> to the property owner's address of record. For questions, call the County Treasurer's office at 610-344-6370 or email them at [TreasurerDept@chesco.org](mailto:TreasurerDept@chesco.org).

**Earned Income Tax and Local Services Tax:** Both are collected by the Keystone Collections Group.

Charlestown Township's Earned Income Tax is 1% for residents. The rate for non-residents is 1/2%.

The **Local Services Tax** is \$52.00 per year, deducted by your Charlestown Township employer. Persons earning under \$12,000 per year are exempt from this tax.

Employers throughout Chester County are required to withhold all earned income and local services taxes quarterly. Forms and instructions, including e-filing, can be found at [www.keystonecollects.com](http://www.keystonecollects.com)

It's that time of year again. The 2020 local earned income tax return filing deadline is approaching.

E-filing is available through the Keystone Collections Group's website at:

[www.keystonecollects.com](http://www.keystonecollects.com)

**E-filing** is the easy, fast and secure way to file your 2020 tax return. You will need your W-2, your Social Security Number and any other income documents that may apply (such as a PA-UE or a Schedule C).

If you have questions regarding local tax filing, visit Keystone's website and check out their [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or call Keystone's **Taxpayer Helpline** at 1-888-539-1100 to speak with a local, knowledgeable Taxpayer Service Agent.

You can also email your questions 24/7 to [Taxpayer Support](#). Taxpayer Service Agents try to respond to all online inquiries within three business days.

## Charlestown Township Directory 2021

**ADMINISTRATION:** Office Hours are Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Linda M. Csete, Manager/Secretary-Treasurer [manager@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:manager@charlestown.pa.us) (610) 240-0326

Beth Martin, Assistant Township Secretary [admin2@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:admin2@charlestown.pa.us) (610) 240-0326

**BUILDING INSPECTOR/CODES:** Keystone Municipal Services in the Township Office Tues-Thurs a.m.  
(610) 240-0326

**PROPERTY & PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATOR:** Timothy J. Hubbard – [thubbard@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:thubbard@charlestown.pa.us)  
(610) 614-6119

**ROADS AND PUBLIC WORKS:** Roadmaster/Project Manager: - [publicworks@charlestown.pa.us](mailto:publicworks@charlestown.pa.us) Jim Thompson  
(610) 656-9315

**TOWNSHIP ENGINEER/ZONING OFFICER:** Daniel T. Wright, P.E. – [dwright@advancedgeoservices.com](mailto:dwright@advancedgeoservices.com)  
(610) 840-9100



## Snow Reminders

The first objective is to have the roadways open for emergency vehicles. This is basically one lane with anti-skid and road salt applied only to areas that require extra traction such as hills and major intersections. The other roads are then opened.

After the snow has ended, the cleanup begins, that is, trying to get the roadways opened "curb-to-curb" and clearing snow and ice from the intersections, fire hydrants, storm water drains and inlets. We ask for your continued patience and understanding during these snow events.

When a plow operator is pushing back the snow and slush from a roadway, the plow must be run at a speed that throws the snow and slush off the road and over what has previously been plowed. This precludes the plow operator from stopping at each driveway and mailbox. If a plow is lifted at a driveway or mailbox, all of the snow and ice in the plow would be dropped on the road causing additional problems.

## Which Roads in Charlestown are State Roads?

For Snow Removal and other Maintenance Issues on State Roads listed below, call PennDOT at 484-340-3200.

Bodine Road between Foster & Seven Oaks Charlestown Road Church Road Coldstream Road Conestoga Rd (Rt. 401)	Foster Road Hollow Road Merlin Road Morehall Rd (Rt. 29) Newcomen Road Phoenixville Pike	Pickering Dam Road Pikeland Road Seven Oaks Road State Road (Rt. 29) Valley Hill Rd (East of Rt. 401)	Whitehorse Road Yellow Springs Road (north of Hollow Rd) Yellow Springs Rd (east of Morehall/Rt. 29)
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### Useful Contacts for your Reference

*Pennsylvania State Police (610) 486-6280*

*PennDOT Maintenance for State Roads (484) 340-3200*

*For Township & County Real Estate Taxes: Chester County Treasurer (610) 344-6370*

*For Great Valley School District Real Estate Taxes: Keystone Collections (866) 539-1100*

*For Earned Income & Local Services Taxes: Keystone Collections (866) 539-1100*

*SPCA (610) 692-6113*

### Update on the Devault Trail

In 2020, a grant application was awarded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVPRC) to the Township to conduct an Activation Study to focus on ownership, liability and maintenance of the proposed future trail. This trail is a key connector in the regions trail network. The Devault Trail (for which a feasibility study was already undertaken in 2015, would utilize a six-mile, dormant freight rail line currently owned by Norfolk Southern to create



a pedestrian/bicycle connection between Phoenixville to the north, and the office parks and corporate employment centers of Great Valley, located to the southwest.

## *Charlestown Township Meeting Schedule 2021*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Board of Supervisors 1<sup>st</sup> Mon. 7:00 p.m.</b>	4	1	1	5	3	7	6*	2	7*	4	1	6
<b>Planning Commission 2<sup>nd</sup> Tues. 7:30 p.m.</b>	12	9	9	13	11	8	13	10	14	12	9	14
<b>Environmental Advisory Committee 7:00 p.m., 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed.</b>	13	8	8	14	12	9	14	11	8	13	10	8
<b>Historical Commission 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues. 4 pm</b>	19	None	16	None	18	None	20	None	21	None	16	None
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs. 7:30 p.m.</b>	21	18	18	15	20	17	15	19	16	21	18	16

**NOTE: UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: ALL MEETINGS HELD VIA WEBEX OR ZOOM. CHECK THE AGENDAS POSTED ON [WWW.CHARLESTOWN.PA.US](http://WWW.CHARLESTOWN.PA.US) PRIOR TO EACH MEETING.**

**Charlestown Township  
P.O. Box 507  
Devault, PA 19432**