

Charlestown Township Newsletter

Winter 2023 Newsletter

www.charlestown.pa.us

Published by the Board of Supervisors

11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1, Malvern, PA 19355 - (610) 240-0326

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



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MONTHLY MEETINGS

Supervisors

1st Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

Environmental

Advisory Committee

2nd Monday @ 6:00 p.m.

Planning Commission

2nd Tuesday @ 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission

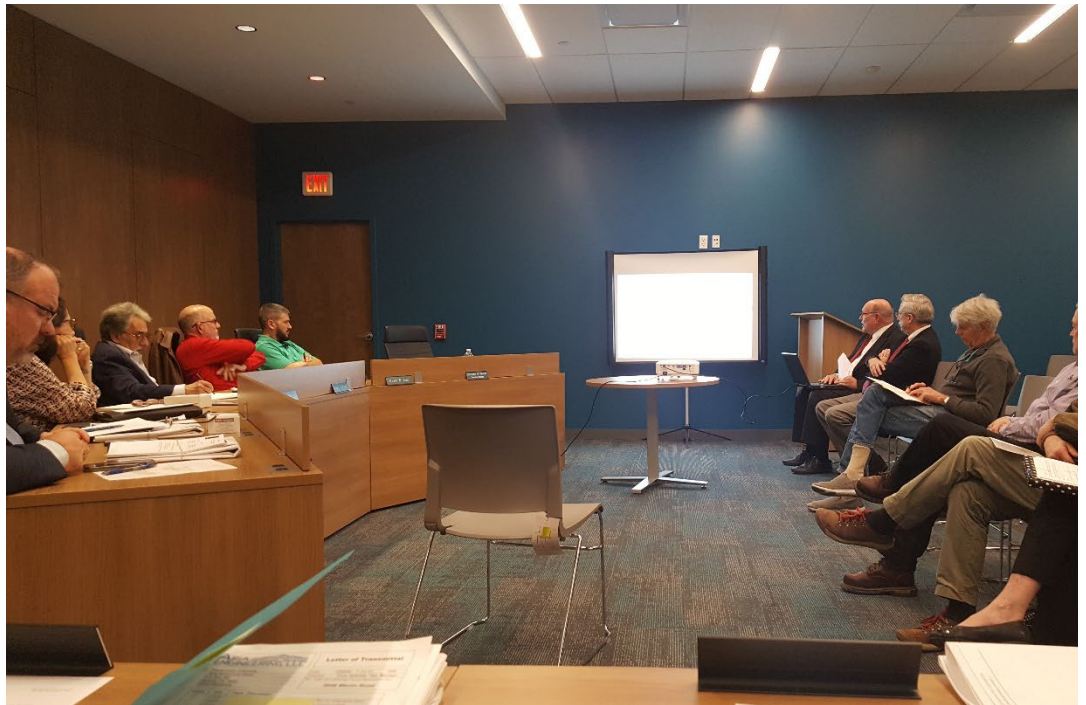
Semi-monthly meeting
schedule to be announced

Parks & Recreation

3rd Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are held at the Township office,
11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1, Malvern

Welcome to our New Township Offices



After a year of planning, designing, and construction, we moved into our new office facility on Nov. 22, 2022 and began holding public meetings here on Dec. 5th. While we await the installation of our state of the art Audio Visual system, presentations will be viewed with a projector and screen. When our set up is complete, meetings will be recorded for later viewing.

The fit out was designed by Norr Partnership, constructed by Builders Inc., and managed by the Township's representative, Bob Dettore of J.D. Bravo Co., Inc.

In addition to the public meeting space, the new facility features a conference room, emergency operations center, administrative offices, and easy access to the building and convenient parking. We hope you join us at any and all of the public meetings that interest you and look forward to better serving our Charlestown community.



Parks & Recreation Updates

- by Stephanie Robinson

Happy New Year from the Charlestown Township Parks and Recreation Board! 2022 was a great year filled with great events! We started with Earth Day projects in the Parks, we held a Wildflower Walk, we supported the EAC's Tree Identification Walk, and we partnered with the EAC on several Weed Warrior

projects. During the summer, we held yoga sessions and had our three amazing free summer concerts at Charlestown Park and the Wisner-Rapp House! We wrapped up the year with our annual Charlestown Day on September 24th. All of these events were well-attended and gave the community opportunities to connect and experiences to enjoy together!

During the summer concerts and Charlestown Day, attendees filled out a short survey asking what other kinds of events they thought would be fun for the Township to offer. You talked, and we listened! Stay tuned in for some fun new events coming your way in 2023. There will definitely be free concerts and our annual Charlestown Day. Event dates and details will be announced in future newsletters and on the Charlestown Township Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

Charlestown Township parks aren't the only places for you to enjoy in the township. We also have many trails, including the Horseshoe Trail, McDevitt Trail, Pickering Trail, and Thompson Trail, to name a few. Please see the Township Website for a list of trails. Nature never stops – there are so many interesting things to see and hear every season, so don't just use the trails in the summertime. They are open all year. However, please keep in mind that the trails are sometimes uneven, and holes, tree roots, and other things may be covered with leaves, so use caution when enjoying the trails. Here is a short list of items you should remember:

- Never walk a trail alone
- Take a walking stick or ski pole with you for balance
- Bring a whistle. Some trails have poor cell phone service, and if you find yourself in a troubling situation, you will want to have a method of communication
- Take a flashlight. Nature can change in a heartbeat, and a once-sunny trail could get dark in a hurry – especially if you wander far from your starting point.



The Charlestown Township Parks and Recreation Board sincerely thanks you for your support this past year, and we look forward to planning more great events and stewardship projects for you in 2023!

Call for Volunteers!

Do you want to become more involved with the community, meet your neighbors, help with events, or participate in stewardship projects? Contact us through the Charlestown Township Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

There are also open positions on the Parks and Recreation Board. Please contact manager@charlestown.pa.us for details.

2023 Event Sponsors, Exhibitors and Vendors needed!

Please contact Makinlee Fox at info@gofoxonline.com for event opportunities.

Take-Aways from November Wildlife Talk

- by EAC Chair Carol Armstrong; all Photos courtesy of Philadelphia Metro Wildlife Center

As part of the EAC's Community Outreach and Education program, we invited for November Michele Wellard of the **Philadelphia Metro Wildlife Center** (the Center), a rescue, rehabilitation, and education center. Michele is a PA State Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator, who brought a raven and a screech owl to help explain how many animals are orphaned each year often due to habitat destruction, and collisions and accidents. She told us how the Center provides healing and a temporary refuge until the animals are well enough to be released into the wild. Often the animals are returned to the locations where they were found, and "rehoming" an animal is in its best interests.

Michele emphasized how important it is for us to co-exist with wildlife and to care for them just as we would step up to help an injured human and educated the audience about how to interact with wild creatures. The Center takes in many of the species around us, excluding domestic pets, bears, and injured deer, but they do take in orphaned fawns, woods mammals (such as opossums, raccoons, foxes, skunks, rabbits, squirrels), turtles, other reptiles and amphibians, and birds (such as raptors, songbirds, pigeons/doves, and both terrestrial and water fowl).



Eliminate rodenticides: Michele explained that use of rodent poison carries a risk of bird and mammal poisoning, as many will eat carcasses, and though vultures and other mammals eat animal remains, they do not prefer rotting food but often eat it due to lack of wildlands and wildlife corridors and food supplies. Also, poisons in the environment affects birds' reflexes and response times causing them to be hit by a car when they would ordinarily be able to evade vehicles.

Other things that humans can do to prevent injuries are securing trash, bringing in soccer nets at night, properly disposing of fishing line to prevent entanglements, and not speeding when driving. Avoid the use of glue paper and traps which also trap unintended animals.



Something we don't think of is to check the stump and branches for nests or dens of baby birds and mammals when a tree is cut down, and to check the pouch of a dead opossum for possible infants.

The Center recommends not feeding wildlife because it creates dependency, and instead supporting or re-creating natural habitats in our yards, and turning lawns into wildlife gardens, meadows, or woodlands. A good wildlife habitat contains native plants, no insecticides, year-round source of water, and nesting or roosting boxes. Use bird feeders wisely and responsibly.

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Continued from page 3 - Take-Aways from November Wildlife Talk

If hunting, dispose of gut piles and use alternative ammunition other than lead because it poisons the wildlife, such as eagles, that feed on the remaining carcass. If you find an animal that seems orphaned or hurt, call the Center first before bringing it in. Here is a safe and cautious method to secure an animal.

Safety and Caution: Box-over method – Box on top, slide cardboard underneath, tape down to transport to a wildlife rehabber.



Interactions between humans and wildlife can create memorable experiences. It is up to us to make choices keeping in mind our wild neighbors. Protect and preserve wildlife and allow them to live free of human interference. Enjoy wildlife outside in their natural habitats! The Center takes both volunteers and donations of various types. The Philadelphia Metro Wildlife Center is in Worcester Township, and can be reached at 267-416-9453; it is necessary to call before bringing an animal in.

Useful Contacts for your Reference

Pennsylvania State Police (610) 486-6280

PennDOT Maintenance for State Roads (484) 340-3200

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

For 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



18th ANNUAL EARTH DAY EVENT

***Charlestown Township Seeks Resident Volunteers for
Spring Roadside Clean-up & Other Earth Day Projects***

Saturday April 15, 2023 9 am – Noon

(Rain Date April 16, 2023 2 pm – 4 pm)

Once again we seek volunteers to participate in a clean-up of selected township roads, parks and open space on April 15th. The Township will provide trash bags, gloves, safety vests and bottled water for volunteers. We will assign safer off-road areas for these groups and for families with younger children.

Litter patrol not for you? Our Parks & Recreation Board and Environmental Advisory Committee members can work with you or your group on planning a specific earth day project.

You may have a particular road or other area you'd like to take care of, otherwise we can suggest assignments and you can select one that appeals to you. You have the option of leaving the filled trash bags at the location for later pick up by the township, or if you have a truck or larger vehicle the bags can be dropped off at the Township yard at 4025 Whitehorse Road.

Clean up supplies can be picked up from the office by appointment up to 1 week before the event. We will reimburse your group for refreshments if you'd like to provide them at your location up to \$5.00 per person or \$50.00 maximum per group.

Do you want to participate but can't on April 15th? We'll provide supplies for any day of the year you or your group is available! To Register or to obtain more information, contact:

Linda Csete, Township Treasurer

email: admin1@charlestown.pa.us

phone: (610) 240-0326 between 9 am – 3 pm Mon-Fri

CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



ACCOMPLISHMENTS & NOTABLE EVENTS

Published by the Board of Supervisors

2022 Annual Report Available Now

The Board of Supervisors has published its 9th Annual Report outlining the accomplishments of the various boards, commissions, committees, and personnel for the previous year along with details and statistics about Charlestown.

The report is a summary of the municipal activity occurring in the Township during 2022. Its purpose is to highlight Township accomplishments and noteworthy events during the past year.

The full report is available to you on the Township Website or upon request to the Township Office. Visit www.charlestown.pa.us

Spring is Coming - The Prime Season to Begin Your Residential Home Improvement Project



Permits are required for additions, alterations (such as finished basements), decks, storage sheds, roofing, fences, pools and other projects. When first considering your new project, you'll find the "Guide to Permits" on our website under "Permits & Forms" at www.charlestown.pa.us to be very helpful.

The Guide provides a check off list for common projects such as additions, alterations/renovations, solar panels, pools & hot tubs, decks, patios, generators, basements, and sheds, and answers the most frequent questions you will have.

Types of Permits

Charlestown Township issues five types of permits related to building and construction:

Zoning Permit: A Zoning Permit is required whenever your project involves placing, constructing, or expanding a physical structure on your property (including driveways), or changing the use of your property. A Zoning Permit is also required for Fences, Demolition of structures, and Signs. This permit confirms that the Zoning Ordinance allows the work project you're proposing.

Grading, Erosion and Sedimentation (E & S) Permit: All improvements creating a footprint of at least 100 square feet must have an E & S plan which is submitted for approval with the Zoning Permit Application. Disturbances and impervious surface coverage over 500 square feet requires a \$200.00 fee and an engineered plan. Disturbances and coverage under 500 square feet have no extra fee, and a hand drawn sketch plan is sufficient. No permit is required for disturbance under 100 square feet.

Building Permit: A Building Permit is required whenever your construction project will need to be inspected to ensure that it meets the standards of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). The UCC covers all aspects of construction: framing, electric, plumbing and mechanical. All projects that will affect any of these systems must have a Building Permit. The UCC uses the International Residential Code 2018 for Residential Construction.

Electrical Permit: An Electrical Permit is required for all electrical improvement projects.

Plumbing Permit: A Plumbing Permit is required for all plumbing improvement projects.

HVAC Permit: An HVAC/Fuel Tank Permit is required for all HVAC or fuel tank improvement projects.

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Continued from p. 6 – Your Home Improvement Project

Tips for Working with the Township on your Permit Application

Preparing your Application:

Review the Guide to Permits on our Website, then call or email the Township Office if you have any further questions. We may refer you to the zoning officer or BCO for additional information.

Review Time:

The application review begins only after the permit coordinator has received all documentation. Partial submissions will not be accepted. Submitting an incomplete application leads to frustration, confusion, and delays. Communication with your design professional and contractors is the key to a smooth approval process.

Allow up to 15 working days for approval of the zoning and E & S permits (if required) and an additional 15 working days for approval of any additional permits, including building, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC.

Fees:

Fees will be determined by the Zoning Officer/Building Code Official and do not need to accompany your submission. You will be notified of the amount due, and fees must be paid before the permits are released. A plan review fee (\$100.00 for residential) must be submitted with any application and will be forfeited if the project is abandoned. This fee is applied toward your total fee charge.

Contractor Registration:

If your project requires a general contractor along with various subcontractors, such as plumbers, electricians or HVAC installers, each one must be registered and provide a certificate of insurance naming Charlestown Township as the Certificate Holder. Commercial contractors and new home contractors must register with the Township. Residential Contractors for projects other than new homes may provide their state (HIC Number) or register with the Township if they have no HIC number.

Certificate of Insurance:

In addition to showing Liability Insurance, each contractor and subcontractor must provide proof of Workers Compensation Insurance or complete the Township's exemption form, which must be notarized.

Are you in a Homeowner's Association?

If the property is subject to a Homeowner's Association, a letter of approval from the HOA must be included in your submission. Keep in mind that the HOA may have requirements above and beyond the Township's, and vice versa. Approval from one body does not guarantee approval from the other.

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Continued from p. 7 – Your Home Improvement Project

After Your Permit is Approved

Once an application has been approved, the project can't be changed while in progress without re-submitting documents to the Township, which may include formally withdrawing an application and re-submitting plans and applications.

At the time your permit placard is issued, you'll be given a sheet listing all required inspections with instructions on how to schedule them. Keep in mind that the BCO is inspecting according to the UCC Code, primarily for safety requirements, and doesn't inspect for craftsmanship. You and your design professional are responsible for quality assurance and craftsmanship.

Construction Exempt from Permits

- Repair or replacement projects which don't involve structural changes or changes to the plumbing or electric systems.
- Replacement windows and doors of the same size.
- Interior Remodeling (Alterations) that do not move or change walls or involve plumbing or electrical work.
- Re-roofing if less than 25% of the roof is being replaced.
- Replacement of plumbing fixtures, such as sinks and toilets.
- Replacement of switches, receptacles, and lighting fixtures rated at 20 amps or less.
- Landscaping fences under 8' in height (ones that do not fully enclose an area). However, they must meet all fence requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Key Fire Safety Tips from the National Fire Protection Association

- Watch your cooking: Stay in the kitchen when you're frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you must leave, even for a short time, turn off the stove.
- Give space heaters space: Keep fixed and portable space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn. Turn off heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Smoke outside: Ask smokers to smoke outside. Have sturdy, deep ashtrays for smokers.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach: Keep matches and lighters up high, out of the reach of children, preferably in a cabinet with a child lock.
- Inspect electrical cords: Replace cords that are cracked, damaged, have broken plugs, or have loose connections.
- Be careful when using candles: Keep candles at least one foot from anything that can burn. Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Have a home fire escape plan: Make a home fire escape plan and practice it at least twice a year.
- Install smoke alarms: Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Interconnect smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- Test smoke alarms: Test smoke alarms at least one a month and replace batteries once a year or when the alarm "chirps" to tell you the battery is low. Replace any smoke alarm that is more than 10 years old.

Salt Pollution

- By Pete Goodman

“Salt is of concern as an emerging fresh water contaminate.” According to John Jackson, PhD, Senior Research Scientist, at the Stroud Water Research Center.

In other words, salt is polluting our fresh water. In some watersheds like Chester County’s Valley Creek which runs through Valley Forge National Historical Park it is past emerging – it is polluting the stream. Background levels of salinity are in some places in the creek already exceeding thresholds for a healthy stream. In the Pickering salinity increased 65% in just one year (2020 to 2021) the largest percentage increase in Chester County.

Valley Forge Trout Unlimited with science and data support from Stroud Water Research Center have produced a fact sheet headed “Salt Is Killing Valley Creek”. The key takeaway from this brochure is how quickly and drastically salinity in Valley Creek has increased to dangerous levels. Please note the illustrative chart.

Why has this happened? Research ties it to the dramatic increased use of de-icing salts.

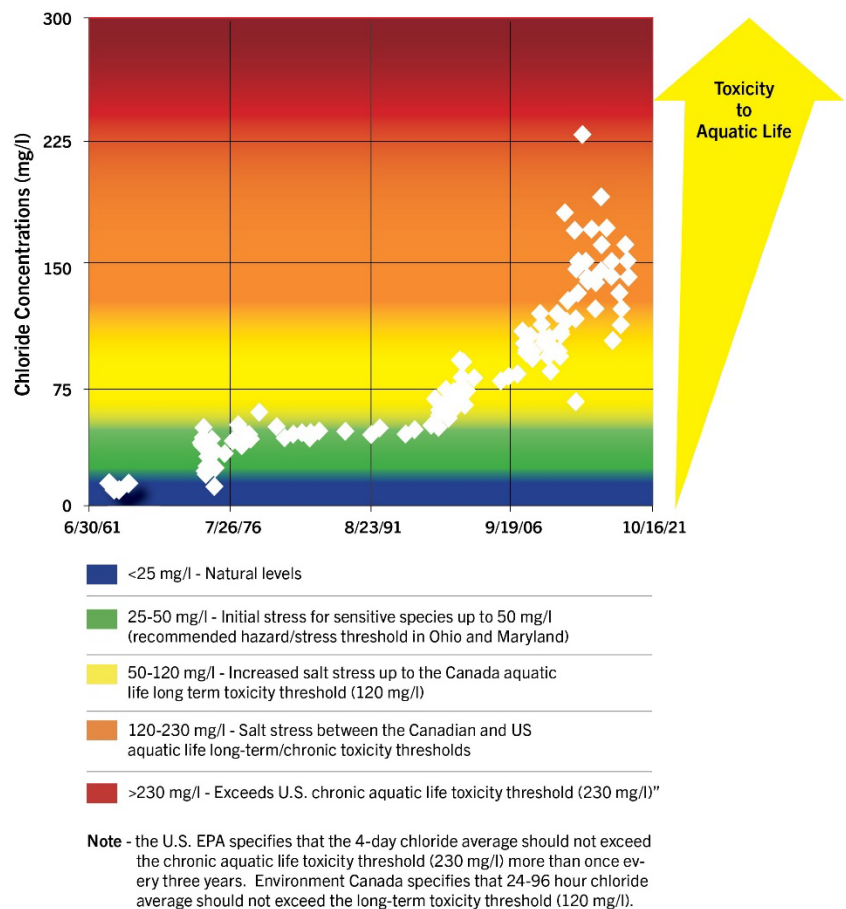
Why should I care? Once the salt gets into solution it becomes nearly impossible to remove from ground water that supplies drinking water. As salinity increases so will the costs for drinking water and infrastructure replacement due to salt enhanced corrosion. Salt also aids in releasing other dangerous toxins as corrosion occur such as lead and other heavy metals.

What can we do? There are no good options once the salt has made its way into the aquifer. The best option and only currently reasonable one is to reduce our de-icing salt use. There is a lot of science out there regarding the problem of salt pollution. For more information, please review the spreadsheet that details the articles and documents that VFTU have used to develop the fact sheet. This information can be found on the VFTU website at www.ValleyForgeTU.org.

What can we do? First and foremost, we need to use less salt. In the case of de-icing salt, more is not better. The appropriate amount is best.

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Valley Creek Chloride Concentrations



Continued from page 9 – Salt Pollution

How do we all use less salt? Use best practices such as the following:

- ✍ Storage: Store all de-icing products in a dry solid floored location. Keep it out of the weather.
- ✍ Snow Removal: Remove snow early and often. This goes for plowing and shoveling.
- ✍ Use De-icing Products Sparingly: More is not better. An appropriate application is a 12-ounce cup of salt for 20 feet of driveway or 10 sidewalk squares.
- ✍ Use Traction Aids in Lieu of Salt: Sand, crushed limestone, sawdust and birdseed are good traction aids. Don't use products containing urea, kitty litter or ashes.
- ✍ Clean Up: Sweep up excess salt and reuse.
- ✍ Report any unprotected salt piles, excess salt mounds along roadways and excess salt use to your township.

Lastly, be patient and careful. In our area icy conditions usually don't last longer than a day or two. Allow time for the salt that you do apply to work. It is not an instantaneous process.

Our expectations should not be that once the snow stops falling that we should be able to travel as though there never was any frozen weather. Be careful out there and especially be careful of others. Our winter weather can be tricky.

Tax Information for 2023

Real Estate Taxes: The millage rate for real estate taxes is .75 (3/4) mills, unchanged for 18 years. Your real estate taxes for 2023 will be collected by the Chester County Treasurer Department. Tax bills are mailed the week of February 1st to the property owner's address of record. For questions, call the County Treasurer's office at 610-344-6370 or email: 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 ½%.

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.

Forms & instructions for EIT and LST taxes, including e-filing, can be found at: www.keystonecollects.com

Earned Income Tax Return Due April 18th

The 2022 local earned income tax return filing deadline is approaching. E-filing is available through the Keystone Collections Group's website at:

www.keystonecollects.com

E-filing is the easy, fast and secure way to file your 2022 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.

Help Birds in Your Backyard—Put in Nest Boxes

- by Andy Motel, Planning Commissioner

Whether your backyard is a limited area outside a townhome, or acres of field and woodland, you can add nest boxes to better accommodate a variety of birds, and now is the right time of year to get started.

Bluebirds

Bluebirds prefer fallow fields, hedgerows, and woodland edges. Given our human impulse to remove dead trees and snags as “unsightly”, nest cavities for Bluebirds and others (below) may be rare so consider putting in a nest box, which are commercially available, or one you build.



Screech Owls

The name is misleading. The Screech owl does not screech; its most common vocalization is a descending trill in late afternoon and evening. About the size of a robin, the Screech Owl is shy and largely nocturnal, but Screech owls will often nest in suburban areas and backyards, perhaps for the protection from predators afforded by close proximity to occupied homes. Beginning in late January, male Screech Owls search for nest cavities. Once located, males deploy seductive vocalizations to entice females. As with Bluebirds and Kestrels, in suburbia, Screech Owls may struggle to find suitable nest cavities. You can sponsor a Screech Owl by putting up a nest box.



Kestrels

North America’s smallest falcon, Kestrels require large expanses of field, patchy woods, or grassland habitat. Kestrel numbers have declined significantly due to habitat loss. With the encouragement of the Valley Forge Audubon Society and Pennsylvania Game Commission, in 2019 volunteers installed a nest box along the farm driveway and in 2021 Kestrels nested in the box. Last year they returned, and a new box installed on the other side of the Park near Hollow Road was also occupied. If you have open area and, better still, many acres of open land, consider putting up a nest box for Kestrels. The box should be located in an open area, and at least 10’ off the ground.

At right: Kestrel eggs in the box at Brightside, May 2022

Find more information at:

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-bluebird>

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-screech-owl>

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/american-kestrel>

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11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1
Malvern, PA 19355

Charlestown Township Meeting Schedule 2023

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

* Meeting held one day later than usual.

NOTE: Meetings are held at the Township Office, 11 General Warren Blvd. Suite 1, Malvern, PA. We recommend you check the agendas posted on www.charlestown.pa.us prior to each meeting for last minute updates.