



Charlestown Township Newsletter



Spring 2024 Edition

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



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Frank A. Piliero, Chairman
Charles A. Phillips, Vice Chair
Kevin R. Kuhn, Member
Louis P. Rubinfeld, Member
Hugh D. Willig, Member

TOWNSHIP MANAGER

Christopher W. Heleniak

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

Supervisors

1ST Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

Environmental Advisory Committee

2nd Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission

2nd Tuesday @ 7:00 p.m.

Historical Commission

3rd Wednesday @ 1 pm
Jan-Mar-May-Jul-Sep-Nov

Parks & Recreation Board

3rd Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.

Zoning Hearing Board

Scheduled on as-needed basis

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

Welcome to Our New Supervisor

Following the resignation of Supervisor Susan Bednar, the Board conducted interviews of twelve candidates, and on March 6th appointed Louis P. Rubinfeld to fill the vacant term until the next general election cycle in 2025.



Louis earned a doctoral degree in computer engineering. He has worked in the development of dental imaging and video surveillance equipment. He was also an adjunct professor at Villanova University and University of Pennsylvania.

Above: Lou Rubinfeld

Free Concert – June 20th



Charlestown Historical Society will present a Free Concert on Thursday, June 20 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Wisner-Rapp House located on Yellow Springs Road adjacent the Brightside Farm Park featuring the Bluegrass Trio "Borderline".

Bring a lawn chair and join us for a great evening!

Above: Concert from a previous year at the Rapp House surrounded by the Brightside Farm

Have you been missing our Friday email updates? Following an email provider change at our office, you may have been inadvertently dropped from the circulation list. Please contact Linda Csete at admin1@charlestown.pa.us if you'd like to continue receiving our updates.

Annual Spring Park, Trail & Roadside Cleanup

Charlestown Park

Troop Leader Karen Buzzi reports that there were 28 scouts collecting trash along with 15 parents who stayed to help at Charlestown Park. Thank you to troops 41861, 480, 41233, and 4347, and to Karen for this and other great photos.



Charlestown Road

Members of the Environmental Advisory Committee, led by Dan Walker, undertook a roadside clean up of Charlestown Road through PennDOT's adopt-a-highway program. He initiated the program with PennDOT in 2023, and Flagger Force was on site to keep our volunteers safe from traffic.

Pickering Creek

Along the Pickering Creek trail, the Longua family reprised their many-years efforts as friends of the Pickering Creek with Dad Bill Longua taking the pictures shown at right.



Resident John Pickering collected roadside trash along Route 29 as he's done for many years on our behalf.

Historical Commission Seeking Old Photos of Swiss Pines

Did you visit Swiss Pines in the 1970's, 80's or 90's? The Historical Commission is looking for photos from visitors when the Japanese Gardens were open to the public. We'd especially appreciate any photos you may have of a wedding or other special event. We'd like to receive scans of your photos. If you're not able to scan them yourself, you can make arrangements to bring them to the Township office and we will scan them and return them to you immediately after. Photos or questions may be emailed to Linda Csete, at admin1@charlestown.pa.us . photo by J. C. Raulston, 1976.





PICKERING DAM TRAIL

SPRING 2024

SATURDAY MAY 18TH AT 8:00 AM

TRAIL CLEANUP

CLEANUP SUPPLIES PROVIDED ——— PLEASE BRING DRINKING WATER

After several storms the trail needs some love. Come join us in cleaning up debris, moving fallen trees, reinstalling foot bridges and trash removal.

This will be a fun day, a great way to give back, and a chance to meet your neighbors!

If interested in helping please email makinlee@gofoxonline.com
to confirm you are planning on attending.

Park or Trail rules and regulations apply to all events.

Follow the Charlestown Parks and Recreation Facebook page for event details, updates and cancellations.



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) IS SPECIAL – LET’S BE SAFE!

- Patti Lynn, Recycling Resources Manager, CCSWA

If you are Trash Smart, then you know that household hazardous waste (HHW) includes the old gasoline, pesticides, chemicals, and batteries that accumulate in our basements, sheds, and garages. These materials need to be handled differently than other trash and recyclables in our homes, for the safety of people and our environment. **“Hiding” hazardous materials in trash and recycling can be especially dangerous!**

These troublesome incidents happened in our region:

- On a household trash route, a Phoenixville Public Works employee was sprayed with motor oil that exploded inside the truck during compaction.
- A lithium battery is suspected of starting a fire in a recycling processing facility in York County, causing major disruption in the region for a year.
- At regional HHW collection events, our contractor has dealt with incidents of people hiding strictly unacceptable, and potentially dangerous, material in their otherwise acceptable materials.
- At one HHW event, a resident brought acid in an unsecured container which leaked during transport, damaging the truck bed, and potentially causing injury to people.

Chester County is home to two landfills, Lanchester and SECCRA. Neither can accept hazardous waste. So, what to do? Register for a HHW event. Bring items such as fluorescent bulbs, rechargeable batteries, oil-based paint and solvents, gasoline, pool chemicals, and pesticides to a regional household hazardous waste (HHW) collection event. Chester County participates in this program with Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties.

- Residents of any of these five counties can use the HHW program in any of these five counties.
- **In Chester County, you must register online <https://www.chestercountyswa.org/> for a drive-through event.** Registering helps us manage capacity, supplies, and staffing needs. And it reduces wait times for the public.
- Go to: <https://www.chestercountyswa.org/121/Upcoming-Household-Hazardous-Waste-Event> for more information.

Nearly 200,000 pounds of materials are safely managed through this program annually. **If you are planning to move or clean out a home, make a plan for your HHW NOW! If in doubt, check it out! Stay safe and stay Trash Smart!**

HHW Collection Dates:

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR EACH EVENT! REGISTRATION WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE A FEW WEEKS BEFORE EACH EVENT.

Saturday, April 20, 2024 - Phoenixville
Friday, June 21, 2024 - Coatesville

Saturday, August 24, 2024 - Oxford
Saturday, October 5, 2024 - West Chester

Managing Stormwater Together

Charlestown's naturally undulating terrain brings us our beautiful viewsheds along with something less desirable: excess stormwater. In recent years, heavy rains have become more frequent and in greater volume than ever before. Following are details on the parts we all play in managing stormwater together.

What the Township Does Through its MS4 Program

MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, which, as described by the Penn State Extension, is: "A separate storm sewer system is a collection of structures, including retention basins, ditches, roadside inlets and underground pipes, designed to gather stormwater from built-up areas and discharge it, without treatment, into local streams and rivers. It's called a separate system because it's not connected to the sanitary sewer system which drains waste water from inside a home to a sewage treatment facility or a private septic system."

Charlestown follows its MS4 program to perform the following functions:

- Maintaining an inventory of all stormwater structures in the Township and inspecting them regularly.
- Identifying future improvement projects.
- Repairing inlets, culverts, gutters, and catch basins as needed. In 2023, extensive repairs were performed on Howell Road, Buckwalter Road, and Three Ponds Lane.
- Responding to resident concerns and complaints.
- Preparing for storm events to the extent possible before they occur.
- Providing education and resources to our residents on what they can implement on their own properties.

The Role of Other Agencies

Of the public roads in our Township, slightly over half are state roads maintained by PennDOT. This includes 18 roads totaling 29.95 miles in length. The Township maintains 74 roads totaling 26.5 miles in length. These figures illustrate that on average, state roads are the more major roads and connectors in our Township, including Route 29, Route 401, Phoenixville Pike, and Charlestown Road, to name a few.

In addition to the Township and State, many roads and open spaces and their associated stormwater facilities are owned privately by residents or by homeowner associations.

When the Township conducts inspections, we reach out to these agencies when they need to perform additional maintenance work.

What You Can Do

- Communicate with us! Report stormwater issues such as a clogged drain or inlet. Call 610-240-0326 or email manager@charlestown.pa.us so we can follow up.
- If you live in a HOA community, ask for and review their stormwater guidelines.
- Incorporate stormwater management design in your landscaping projects: pervious pavers, planting trees, and creating meadows all help improve groundwater penetration and reduce or eliminate runoff.

Nest Box Hosting

- by Planning Commissioner Andy Motel



To all our Nest Box Host Landowners, we thank you for helping birds by hosting a Charlestown Bird Town (CBT) nest box. Over the last few months, we placed boxes throughout the Township. Whether you are hosting a Kestrel box, a Barn owl box (or both), each box has a number for ease of reference and to help sort any data we collect.

With nesting season approaching, it seems appropriate to outline what host landowners can expect. First, we will need access to the nest box throughout the year for assorted reasons. Exactly how often we will visit is only an estimate, but you can expect visits to monitor nesting, eggs, the progress of hatchlings, presence of predators, and for our general education. We will clean each box at least once a year, after fledging, and address maintenance issues as necessary. Other than the CBT boxes at Brightside, each CBT nest box is located on private property. We know it is important to close gates, reattach cables, avoid leaving tire tracks, or trash, and generally minimize intrusion. Before I visit your property, I will send you a text or leave a message. If you have a preference, let me know. (See contact information below.)



At Left: Barn owl box (Box 7) While we hope Kestrels and Barn owls quickly occupy every box, nature will decide what happens and when and other birds, or squirrels, may use the nest box first. You are in the best position to monitor developments with the box on your land. So, please share what you see!

If you own a camera, photo updates are very welcome. We intend to share what we learn with Township residents and as we do so, we will also emphasize that our nest boxes are located on private property.

We look forward to spring and hope that nature cooperates!

If you are interested in hosting a nesting box, contact me:

Andy Motel

amotel@andrewmotellaw.com

If you cannot reach me, call Dan Walker, 267-980-5877 or Pete Goodman, 610-655-5020.

Your Best Sources of Township News

In addition to our printed quarterly newsletter, we strive to keep our website up to date with the latest information. When you have a moment, visit our FAQ section for detailed responses to our most frequently asked questions. Visit us at www.charlestown.pa.us

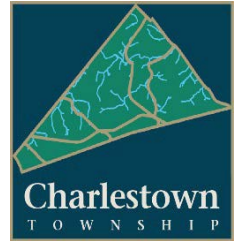
The Parks & Recreation Board has a Facebook page featuring upcoming events and lots of photos for you to enjoy. Check out <https://www.facebook.com/CharlestownDay/>

And for weekly updates each Friday, sign up by emailing admin1@charlestown.pa.us



Birds at Brightside Farm Park

- By Andy Motel and Pete Goodman



Our signature bird area is the Brightside Farm Park. In early 2019, with guidance from the Valley Forge Chapter of the Audubon Society, Township residents placed nest boxes among 76 acres of former farm

fields. Bluebirds and Tree Swallows moved in soon after. In 2021, Kestrels occupied a nest box mounted on a utility pole adjacent to the driveway to the farm buildings and community garden. Through an introduction by John and Patty Werth of Valley Forge Audubon, Dan Mummert, a diversity biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, visited Brightside Park in June 2021. Before an attentive audience, Dan placed leg bands on three Kestrel chicks before returning each to the box.

There are currently 22 blue bird boxes, 3 Kestrel boxes, 2 Screech Owl boxes and 2 Barn Owl boxes on site. Last year the Township moved forward with plans to convert the former patchwork agricultural land into meadow habitat, and we are now in the midst of a multi-year plan.



In 2022 and 2023, Mr. Mummert again banded Kestrel chicks from the driveway nest box (now “Box 1”) and from a second box in the park close to Hollow Road (Box 2). The public is invited to view the banding process, which has become very popular and will be announced. In December 2022, Charlestown officially became a member of Bird Town Pennsylvania, a program for municipalities sponsored by the Pennsylvania Audubon Council. For more information about Bird Town, see www.birdtownpa.org

Because of the Township’s commitment to meadow habitat, Dan Mummert offered us a Purple Martin Condominium, which was installed last spring at Brightside. They quickly moved in, and a new generation fledged from the Condo this past summer. Signage was provided and installed by the PA Game Commission.

Since the 1970’s, Kestrel and Barn Owl numbers have steadily declined in Southeastern Pennsylvania. These raptors require open fields and grassland to hunt, so the progressive loss of such habitat and the absence of nest sites are factors in that decline. To help Kestrels and Barn Owls, in 2023 CBT members asked many landowners if they would host a CBT nest box.

Every landowner we approached responded enthusiastically. Since then, CBT members have put up Kestrel and Barn Owl boxes across the Township. As mentioned, we numbered each box to help us track our progress and organize any data we collect. While every property is not suited for a Kestrel or Barn Owl box, other birds use nest boxes that any homeowner can host. Through this program, we hope residents see they can help birds and promote a healthy environment.

In 2023, Charlestown Bird Town was upgraded from its original status of a green level Bird Town to Silver, bypassing the Bronze level! We’re very pleased to have made this dramatic jump in our first full year as a PA Bird Town Township!

For information about Kestrels and Barn Owls go to: <https://www.hawkmountain.org/raptors/american-kestrel>
<https://www.pgc.pa.gov/InformationResources/GetInvolved/LandownerPrograms/Pages/Barn-Owl-Conservative-Initiative.aspx>

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) at Brightside Farm Park February 17th.

Undeterred by the snowy weather, members of the Audubon Society and Township residents counted 21 species including a kestrel in flight (bottom left) and a northern mockingbird (top right).

- photos by George Csete



Planning Commission member Andy Motel made arrangements with the Audubon Society for the event, which was held at the Brightside Farm, stunning from this view from Deerfield's open space across Yellow Springs Road in the photo at bottom right.

