

## **YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK**

### **Our Fellow Township Residents:**

The primary responsibility of the members of the Board of Supervisors is the financial oversight of South Park Township. Although economic conditions have been challenging at times, we have been successful in maintaining the Township tax rate at 3.062 mills for 2017 without reducing services. South Park Township raised property taxes in 1998, and has continually lowered the millage to the current rate of 3.062. A balanced budget in the amount of \$7,240,100 was adopted in December.

Township officials realize that tax dollars are limited and every attempt is made to efficiently allocate funding over many areas to meet the diverse needs of our residents. Annual operating expenses include an Administrative staff, Public Works Department, Police Department, Recreation Department and Library.

The following is a recap of 2016 activities and plans for 2017:

- The annual road repaving program was completed with an expenditure of \$425,000. The expenditure for the 2017 Road Repaving Program has been increased to \$600,000. Streets under the ownership and control of South Park Township are repaved based upon a long range, 20-year maintenance plan. Residents are reminded that South Park Township cannot control the condition/maintenance of streets owned by Allegheny County or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- The 2016 Township-Wide Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Project was undertaken and completed at a cost of \$325,000. The 2017 program is budgeted at approximately the same amount. South Park Township is required by DEP to maintain and upgrade the Township's sanitary sewer system in areas that are deficient. If the Township does not comply with the mandated corrective action plan measures, DEP can refuse to grant sanitary sewer taps for new construction and levy substantial fines as a result of noncompliance. South Park Township also pays three separate sewage authorities a combined total of approximately \$1.2 million on an annual basis to treat the Township's sewage waste at various treatment facilities, including construction upgrades to plant operations. Sewage-related costs are continually increasing; however, the Township has maintained the sewage user rate of \$6.50/1,000 gallons of use since 2005.
- Another mandate that has gathered momentum within the past several years is MS4, which is an acronym for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System. DEP is requiring all communities in Pennsylvania to more efficiently manage stormwater, accurately plot and document collection systems, and implement corrective measures to more effectively control stormwater runoff. The cost to do so has steadily increased since the program's inception and will continue to increase into the foreseeable future.
- Infrastructure improvements are a priority and include the recent upgrades of two Township bridges, one of which was a joint effort with Jefferson Hills. The Township was recognized in 2016 for these efforts by being awarded first place in the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Road/Bridge Safety Improvement Program across the state of Pennsylvania.
- Public Safety is of primary importance to Township officials and the community. Police officers are continually trained, with the major focus being officer safety. Police officers are furnished with the best equipment, including weapons, firearms, and bullet proof vests, to keep them as safe as possible when performing their duties. The 2017 budget includes hiring an additional police officer to supplement the force. The Township approved the purchase of two new SUVs in 2016, and budgeted for two additional SUVs in 2017 for use by the department. South Park

Township is continually being recognized as one of the 10 safest communities in Pennsylvania, and was presented with the AAA Platinum Safety award in 2016 for the 5<sup>th</sup> continuous year. The award is reflective of the combined safety efforts of all Township departments.

- Snow removal is the major role of the Public Works Department. Substantial economic resources are dedicated each year to the salting and plowing of Township streets. Average winter maintenance costs are approximately \$400,000 in labor and materials. The Public Works Department's numerous duties also include pothole patching, park maintenance, and sanitary and storm sewer repairs. Equipment and maintenance is a top priority, and to meet that goal the Township purchased a Ford F550, 4-ton truck in 2017.
- Recreation is an important component in the services offered to Township residents. Township forces maintain the Township's parks: Evans Park Complex, Wilson Field Complex, Grove Road Park, Highland Park, and Whitewood Park. The Township also works closely with the various athletic associations relative to field improvement requests. South Park Township offers many recreational opportunities and events to residents throughout the year: the 9/11 Ceremony, Community Day, Brunch with Santa, Brunch with the Easter Bunny, the annual Halloween Party, and the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. A particular favorite of Township children is the Summer Recreation Program which offers diverse programming at a reasonable cost for 7 weeks during the summer months. The Township will be working closely with the Allegheny County Park Rangers in 2017 to implement additional programming for children. The 3,000 acre County Park and the expanded Montour Trail presence are both great recreational resources for our residents.
- The Township Library is another wonderful asset available to Township residents and offers a wide array of activities beyond traditional reading materials, CDs, and DVDs. The Library has expanded services to include the new Day Trips and Destinations program, new afternoon programming for adults, and increased STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programming for Township children. The Library was reconfigured in 2016 to make reading and AV materials more accessible to patrons. Computers are available to the public, as are classes in the use of electronic/digital media, including social networking.
- South Park Township has worked to advance outdoor activities such as working in conjunction with the Montour Trail to expand the Trail presence throughout the community by donating property to the endeavor. Recreational fishing also receives financial support from the Township with assistance given to stocking efforts at Peters Creek and Piney Fork Creek.
- New residential construction continued in the Township throughout 2016, with the newest developments being the Saddlebrook Farms Plan located off of Stoltz Road, and the Della Strada Plan located in the vicinity of Ridge Road. 2017 presents additional positive changes to our community. A large-scale development is on the drawing board for the former Consol site located off of Brownsville Road. The 90-acre parcel has the potential for a mixed-use development comprised of commercial/retail, patio homes, multi-family housing, and single-family dwellings. Another development in the early stages is located off of Snowden Road on property formerly owned by the Zupancic family. The developer of the 100-acre project is projecting 96 residential dwellings with a substantial amount of green space.
- The Rt. 88 and Brownsville Road intersection has long been a concern to Township officials and efforts are underway for the Township to work with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission to perform a study as to the implementation of improvements in this area.
- Blight conditions are being addressed as the Township budgets funds each year to demolish several abandoned, unsightly structures. In the latter part of 2016, South Park Township began

participating in Allegheny County's Vacant Property Recovery Program which enables individuals to gain control of abandoned properties and vacant lots under a specific set of criteria. Additional information concerning the program will be available in the March edition of The Park News.

- Litter from all Township streets is routinely collected by a part-time employee hired specifically for this purpose. All Township streets have been adopted under the Keep PA Beautiful Program and routinely cleared of litter by the South Park Proud volunteers.

We assure our residents that Township tax dollars are being utilized as efficiently as possible. The purpose of this article is to provide a brief overview of annual expenditures related to tax revenues, as well as our community's assets and future goals. We thank our residents for their support and contributions throughout the year that help to make South Park Township a remarkable community.

### Board of Supervisors

Dave Buchewicz

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