

CHESTER COUNTY

Birmingham Bugle



1040 West Street Road, West Chester, PA. 19382-8012

Winter, 2008

What Can You Do For Your Township?

According to the 2000 Census, the population of Birmingham Township was 4,221. No matter what the size is of the Township, it takes a team effort for it to operate efficiently. Township supervisors, secretaries, police officers and code enforcement officials work together to ensure your family and home are safe. Although Birmingham Township may appear to be a quiet place to live, every day Township officials are taking care of business, answering questions from residents and solving problems. Birmingham Township may run like a well-oiled machine, but we can always use more help.

You can help the Township by getting involved. Volunteering can be personally rewarding, as well as an educational experience. By offering to help, you are choosing to give something back to your community. You also get an insider's view of your local government. You'll see how Township officials tackle issues and reach decisions to serve the best interests of the entire community. Volunteering also allows you to play a role in shaping your Township. How much time you give is entirely up to you. While you can make a big commitment by serving as a supervisor or as a member of a committee such as the planning commission; the recreation, parks and open space committee; or the historical architectural review board, there are smaller tasks that can be performed, such as helping with the clean-

up day at Sandy Hollow Park. Besides the satisfaction from volunteering for your community, the time and talents you donate help to reduce costs.

To get the volunteer ball rolling, call or e-mail the Township. Let us know what skills you have to offer and how much time you have to spend. Township officials will appreciate your willingness to pitch in and will work with you to find volunteer opportunities.

If your schedule just can't handle the commitment to volunteer, think about attending Township meetings. It's important to give back to the community but it's equally important to understand the issues that are being addressed by the Board of Supervisors. The Supervisors

meet the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:30 PM. Meetings can last a half hour to a couple of hours depending on agenda items. Agendas are posted on the Township's Web site no later than the Friday before the upcoming meeting. Time is set aside for public comment so you can play an active role in governing by addressing the Board face to face and helping to guide its decisions.

If you find it difficult to attend a meeting, the minutes from the Supervisors' meetings, as well as from the various committees, are posted on the Township's Web site after they are approved at the following meeting.

Now, don't you have a phone call to make or an e-mail to send?

It's About Time

After twenty years of service on the Township's Planning Commission, Al Bush was appointed Supervisor on July 2nd to finish the unexpired term of David Bortner who resigned to successfully pursue the position of Judge for the Court of Common Pleas. Al was the winning candidate for a six-year term as Supervisor in the fall election.

As a retired professional, Al has the time to spend on the day-to-day needs of the Township and to promptly respond to the questions and problems of the Township residents. Al brings a wealth of knowledge and history to the Board. He will continue to work closely with the Planning Commission. He will also serve as the liaison from the Board for the Township's various consultants. Al resides on Brinton Run with his wife Nancy, the Township Tax Collector.

Welcome Aboard Al! After twenty years as a Planning Commission member, it's about time you wore the hat of a Supervisor.

Board of Supervisors:

John Conklin -
Chairman
William Kirkpatrick -
Vice-Chairman
Al Bush - Member

Administrative:

Quina Nelling - Secretary/
Treasurer
Gail Ayers - Office
Assistant

Zoning Officer and Building Inspector:

Joseph Sofranko

Township Solicitor:

Joseph Brion, Esquire

Newsletter Editor:

Judy Jensen

Birmingham Township:

www.birminghamtownship.org
Phone: (610) 793-2600
Fax: (610) 793-3417
Email: birminghamtwp@
comcast.net

Police Administrative:

Thomas Nelling -Chief of
Police
Phone: (610) 793-3333
Fax: (610) 793-0319
Police, Fire, Ambulance
Calls: 9-1-1
Email:
birminghampolice@
comcast.net

Township Committees:

Board of Supervisors
Planning Commission
Zoning Hearing Board
Historic Architectural
Review Board
Recreation, Parks, and
Open Space

The Birmingham Township
Office is open Monday to Fri-
day from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Historic Commission

In 2002, a new Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a planning tool to support decisions concerning development, open space conservation, historic preservation, recreation facilities, traffic management, utilities and fiscal management. Protection of historic resources and preservation of the attractive scenic character of the Township, especially the Brandywine Battlefield in the Meetinghouse Road Corridor, were identified as being of great importance to residents of the Township.

Addressing the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan was placed on hold while the efforts to preserve the Sullivan and O'Dell parcels proceeded to a successful conclusion. Now, thanks to the efforts of the Township's Planning Commission, the review and comments of the Chester County Planning Commission, and input at public hearings, Ordinance 07-02 was adopted on November 19, 2007, which addresses these recommendations. The ordinance increases setbacks along roadways; adds regulations for the preservation and protection of historic resources; and authorizes the creation of a Historic Commission. The Historic Commission will include individuals who have demonstrated an interest in history or related fields.

The function and duties of the Historic Commission are as follows:

- Maintain a system for the survey, inventory and photographic documentation of historic buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts in the Township.
- Conduct research on and nominate significant resources to the National Register of Historic Places and any other appropriate lists or programs.
- Advise on the issuance of demolition and building permits for historic resources.
- Review and comment on subdivision and land development applications that affect historic resources.
- Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors concerning revisions, updates or corrections to the Inventory of Historic Resources and related documentation.
- Maintain an updated list that clearly identifies buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts and their respective classifications.
- Advise on all requests for conditional uses or variances affecting historic resources.
- Review applications for the rehabilitation, enlargement or alteration of historic resources.
- Photograph ongoing changes to the physical landscape throughout the Township.

For more detailed information, the entire text of Ordinance 07-02 can be viewed on the Township's Web site. If you have an interest in helping with the formation of the Historic Commission for the Township, please call the Township Office for volunteer opportunities.

Township Open Space

by Al Bush, Supervisor

In 2007, the Brandywine Conservancy successfully completed the purchase of 100 acres of historic open space from the O'Dell family. This was accomplished with federal, state, and county grants, as well as with generous private donations. The property was the last large parcel available for development in the Township. Going forward, only a few small parcels, yielding 2 or 3 lot subdivisions, can be further developed. We thank the O'Dell family for their interest in conserving the property by selling to the Brandywine Conservancy.

This property, bordered by Meetinghouse, Birmingham and Wylie Roads, has both historic and scenic significance. It is part of the Meetinghouse Road Corridor, where some of the fiercest fighting between the Continental Army and the British took place during the Battle of the Brandywine on September 11, 1777. The vistas are spectacular from the high point near the intersection of Birmingham and Wylie Roads, looking north toward the adjacent Marshall and Roach properties and west toward the Brigham and Worth properties. This acquisition creates a virtually contiguous conserved open space area stretching from the Brigham and Worth properties to the west, across Birmingham Road, through the Wylie and Spackman properties to the east, and south to the Township's Sandy Hollow Park.

A contingency of the Chester County grant toward the acquisition requires the construction of a trail on the property. The Brandywine Conservancy envisions a grass trail along the edge of the property, beginning at the western border of the Worth property, along Meetinghouse Road to Birmingham Road, and continuing along Birmingham to Wylie Road. A small gravel parking lot and path to an overlook point will be located off Birmingham Road. The Conservancy has asked that the Township's contribution toward the overall acquisition be in the form of constructing the trail. Thanks to the efforts of David Shields from the Conservancy, an application was prepared with the Township and submitted to the County for a matching funds grant for construction. The Township has provided for these funds in the 2008 budget. If the grant is awarded, the work on the trail is to be completed this year.

Birmingham Township has been particularly successful in preserving open space. The Conservancy's David Shields was able to provide some preliminary data to support this observation. The restricted open space in the Township includes:

- Brandywine Conservancy held conservation easements (352 acres)
- Brandywine Conservancy owned lands (187 acres)
- Government or other non-profit lands or easements (191 acres)
- Developed open space (392 acres)
- Deed restricted land (64 acres)
- Floodplain (170 acres).

This totals 1,356 acres that are permanently preserved as open space, which represents roughly 33 percent of the Township's 3,936 acres (6.2 square miles).

We, as residents, should feel a sense of community pride in this accomplishment. Open space is one of the key reasons why Birmingham Township is such a great place to live.

Permits

Birmingham Township underwent a major change during the past two years. The last two large parcels of open space have been "protected": the 113-acre Sullivan Property on Birmingham Road through the owner's easement with Natural Lands Trust, Inc. and the 100-acre O'Dell Property on Meetinghouse Road, which was purchased by the Brandywine Conservancy. This means that construction in the Township will no longer be new homes, but will be additions, modifications, and alterations. You or your contractor **MUST** apply for a building permit for work **BEFORE** the work commences

and all contractors must be registered with the Township.

In 2004, the Township opted to participate in the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code, which is the law that gives the Township the right to enforce the International Building Code (IBC) Series. The Township was previously operating under the 1993 Building Officials & Code Administrators National Building Code. Currently, the Township is enforcing the 2006 IBC.

If you are considering a change of any type to your property or home, you should check the ordinances and codes before you start work to ensure

that you are complying with the new regulations. The Township code contains enforceable ordinances that require building permits for many of the types of work that residents or their contractors undertake to maintain and improve their homes. The permit requirement is designed to ensure that all commercial and residential construction, excavation, roofing, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, decks, pools, and out-buildings meet the Pennsylvania construction codes. The codes and permits are not intended to be onerous but are designed to ensure that our homes, businesses and infrastructure are

safe for residents and their families, as well as for emergency responders.

The Township Web site is a good place for information as all ordinances and building permit forms can be found online. If you still have a question, call the Township Office to get answers and to get the process started. These permits are inexpensive and the revenue is used to underwrite the cost of your Township code enforcement official. Birmingham is serious about the enforcement of its building codes and will act against violations.

by William Kirkpatrick, Supervisor

Birmingham Environmental Stream Team

by Marlou MacIver, B.E.S.T. Coordinator

What is the earth's most valuable natural resource? Get down to the basics and it's water. Birmingham is fortunate, with four lovely streams and usually enough groundwater to get through the dry spells. However, there are concerns such as stormwater runoff, increasing sediment in stream beds, bank degradation, high nitrate readings, and lack of tree-cooled waters; factors that add up to one impaired stream within our boundaries and signs of decreasing stream life in others.

Since 2004, the Birmingham Environmental Stream Team (B.E.S.T.) has tested our primary streams: Radley, Renwick, Wylie and Brinton's Runs. This program began as a result of a Pennsylvania DEP study that concluded Birmingham had no "high quality" streams. In fact, two streams, Radley and Wylie, were impaired.

B.E.S.T. members test streams for chemicals, such as phosphates, nitrates, pH, and dissolved oxygen, as well as water temperature. Macro invertebrates are temporarily collected

and identified. The presence of macro invertebrates, along with chemical testing, can give a very accurate picture of a stream's health. The third criteria, habitat study, is also a valuable tool. In general, this involves stream bed characteristics; stream side use; velocity, depth and breadth of the stream; and bank conditions.

This latter has grown in interest and applies directly to Birmingham as the sediment depth in several of our streams has increased markedly. This makes it impossible for many macros to reproduce. The most desirable macros, such as the stone flies, May flies and caddis, need a stony stream bed to reproduce. Quality drops as mud deepens, nitrate counts soar, or water temperatures rise. Here, it takes a tough critter, such as gnats and black flies, to survive.

Through testing, B.E.S.T. has found that Brinton's Run continues to hold quite well. Last year's high reading of nitrates and low reading of macros reversed itself in the fall of this year. This might be due to the tree planting in the Reserve at Chadds Ford development a

year ago.

Wylie's stream, despite its problem areas of sedimentation and width restriction at some points, tested extremely high in quality of macros and low in nitrates. Although accurate, this result is surprising and needs further investigation.

Radley Run is being studied by the Brandywine Valley Association, as part of the county-wide Red Stream to Blue Stream program. This year, B.E.S.T. collaborated with Rettew Associates to study Radley Run. The findings indicated very high nitrate readings in both upstream and downstream locations. General stream conditions were fair to good.

A new venture outlined by Rettew and initiated on Samuel Walker's property is a system of bank markers that will be read quarterly to determine collapse and deposits of soil. Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Marsh, owners along Brinton's Run, have also volunteered to participate in this program.

There are some basic ways that residents can help preserve and improve our streams. For instance, residents can control

stormwater runoff and neutralize chemicals by planting riparian buffers (trees and bushes). Funds, volunteers and advice are available. Residents should also use fertilizers and herbicides judiciously. Use an organic or slow-release type, only as needed. Helpful in-depth information is available on the Web sites of the Brandywine Conservancy, the Brandywine Valley Association, the Stroud Water Research Center and the National Wildlife Federation

Membership in B.E.S.T. is open to anyone interested in preserving our streams and environment. We need hardy hands and keen minds to maintain the amazing beauty and natural habitat of our Township. For more information, contact Chairman Doug Marshall (dkmarshall2@verizon.net); Team Leader Michael Langer (tentines@aol.com); or Coordinators Marlou MacIver (marloumac@verizon.net) or Jacquie Roach (jroach1025@aol.com).



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1040 W. Street Road
West Chester, PA 19382-8012

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Household Hazardous Waste Collection Dates

Birmingham Township residents may bring unwanted hazardous household and automotive products to the 2008 Regional Southeastern PA Household Hazardous Waste Collection.

Collection dates are April 5 at CAT Pickering Center for Arts and Technology (1580 Charlestown Road, Phoenixville) for household hazardous waste and computers; May 17 at Owen J. Roberts High School (981 Ridge Road, Pottstown) for household hazardous waste; September 13 at New Garden Township Building (8934 Gap Newport Road, Landenberg) for household hazardous waste; and October 11 at the Government Services Center (601 Westtown Road, West Chester) for household hazardous waste and computers.

For more information about the program and acceptable materials, visit www.chestercountyswa.org or call (610) 273-3771 ext. 228.

Birmingham Police Department

by John Conklin, Supervisor

One of the key responsibilities of the Township is to protect the health and safety of the residents. We share this with all levels of government. This includes a police department in Birmingham.

Birmingham was one of the first Townships of its size in the county to start its own police force. This is the highest level option for local service and based upon experience over the years and response from residents, one that is supported and has been within our means, even though we have a relatively low tax base. Our force has grown over the years as our population has grown.

Most small towns of our size don't have their own police force. They may rely on the emergency response of State Police, which has no direct local cost, or they may join a regional or multi-municipal force in which costs and coverage are shared.

The model that is currently working here is a balance of full- and part-time officers. Patrols are based on local needs. We have four full-time officers, including a Chief, and as many as four part-time officers. Turnover is one of the results of having a small force with part-timers. We neither have multiple supervision levels nor specialization, so newer officers often train here and later find opportunities elsewhere.

While we try to minimize turnover, standards of certification and training have not been compromised and remain at approximately 1,000 hours of required training before anyone joins our force and works on their own.

It takes much attention to provide 24-hour coverage at a cost we can afford. While the Board of Supervisors oversees the operation, we rely on trusted professionals day to day.

The Birmingham Police respond to a wide variety of incidents. When residents compliment our officers, they most often mention the very timely response and courteous service.

The Board uses salary surveys of many towns of similar size and regular public reports of police activity to manage this significant cost area. Total compensation includes benefits, training, equipment, court pay and other factors. All of these must be considered.

We are continuously making adjustments and listening for suggestions. We can be grateful that we have people who are dedicated to this important, sometimes dangerous, and always challenging commitment to the community.

Thank you to the members of our Birmingham Police Department.