

Forward Township Newsletter

Issued February 8, 2021

1. A Better Christmas: In the November 29, 2020 issue was an article announcing an effort by the Forward Township Police Department to gather donations for the purpose of helping families with financial issues to have a good Christmas.

What an outstanding success! The residents of Forward Township really stepped up. They provided enough donations to make sure every family who was identified as having a need got a gift and / or food.

The following was stated in the November 29th Newsletter:

“Chief Stoffer will be the only person who will know who got a gift of either food or toys. He will not divulge to anyone the identity of any family or child who received either food or toys from this program.” Because of that stipulation I cannot get into any detail regarding who got what gift(s), but the following summary provides some indication of the success the program achieved.**

Because of this restriction** noted immediately above, we are somewhat limited in detailing how the money collected was spent, and who it was spent for. However, the following gives the reader some idea of the impact this super effort had for some Township residents:

The amount collected was a little over \$5,800.00!! In addition to the cash donated, there were numerous bags and boxes of food, and numerous toys, brought in for distribution. There were 20 kids from five families who received both food and gifts. Two elderly families were provided food. All of the recipients were residents of Forward Township.

Thank you to everyone who donated. Your collective generosity is amazing. You all should feel very good about your what you did.

Thank you Chief Stoffer for coming up with this program. **And**, thank you for committing to having the Christmas Program again next year.

I had a very small part in helping with this Christmas Program, but it is one of my Township related efforts that made me the most happy!

2. Election Results – 45th Senatorial District: Senator Jim Brewster won the election on November 3rd !!! Jim will be the person who represents Forward Township in the Pennsylvania Senate for the next four years. That is great news.

As any Forward Township Newsletter reader can attest, I am a great supporter of Senator Jim Brewster. He, and his staff, have consistently, over the years, on a day-to-day basis, provided Forward Township with help every time we made a request. If I were to list the many efforts and

accomplishments we in Forward Township have benefitted from the list would take pages and pages. It is hard to imagine that we could have better representation.

As you know, the General Election was held on November 3, 2020. The Pennsylvania Secretary of State, Kathy Boockvar, certified the election results on December 17th. It looked like a done deal at that point, but a whole series of lawsuits** by Ms. Zicarelli delayed the Senator from being sworn in until January 13, 2021 – that is 71 days after the election!!

** for those who are interested in such things: the final ruling that ended the series of many many, many lawsuits related to this issue was issued by Judge Jagan Nickolas Ranjan, United States District Judge for the Western District of PA. Judge Ranjan was an appointee of President Trump.

The 45 Senatorial District is composed of municipalities located in both Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties. The vote totals for each are shown in the following schedule:

November 3, 2020 Election			
	Allegheny County	Westmoreland County	Total
James Brewster	57,782	8,416	66,198
Nicole Zicarelli	51,561	14,564	66,125
Total	109,343	22,980	132,323
Brewster Over Zicarelli	6,221	(6,148.00)	73

This information was taken from the Elections Divisions of the Counties listed on February 4, 2021. (For whatever reason many newspaper sources report the difference as being 69 votes.)

Some Comments:

1. This situation was a mess. The members of the PA Legislature need to take a look at insuring that a similar situation does not occur in the future!
2. I bet there were hundreds of people in the 45th District who said, “*I’m not going to the polls this year because **my vote doesn’t make a difference anyway**”.*
3. According to my undocumented source there was an unbelievable amount of money spent in this campaign. I hope to document the numbers I have and write an article about it in the future.

3. Board of Supervisors Monthly Meetings: For the year 2021, the monthly meetings of the Board of Supervisors, as usual, are scheduled for the second Monday of every month. That is about all we know at this point.

Due to Covid19: The meetings in 2021 may be held via Zoom. They may be held at different times of the day. Until we get back on a regular schedule, I will send an email to everyone on the Newsletter mailing list announcing information about the next upcoming meeting.

4. Get Timely Emergency Notices: Chief of Police Travis Stoffer started the “*Forward Township Police Department*” page on Facebook. It has turned out to be a super success.

The idea behind the page is the Chief post articles about road closings, traffic restrictions, water line emergencies, sewage line problems, etc. --- things people would like, and need, to know about quickly. Here is how it works:

If you “Friend” the “Forward Township Police Department” on Facebook, every time the Chief posts a notice it *automatically* shows up on your Facebook page.

Example: if tomorrow morning the Elizabeth Bridge is going to be closed for 15 minutes beginning at 9:00 AM you know about it as soon as the Police do.

A VERY, VERY IMPORTANT PART: If you are familiar with Facebook, you know that if you SHARE a posting every one of your Facebook Friends automatically sees that posting on their Facebook page. If everyone who sees a “Forward Township Police Department” posting on their page SHARES it, the number of people who receive the information is multiplied.

My request: “Friend” the “Forward Township Police Department” page on Facebook, and then **SHARE** it every time you see a posting.

4. Get Your Tax Returns Prepared – FREE: The two-page attachment** offering “Free Tax Return Preparation” by IRS Certified Tax Preparers was provided by the Human Services Center Corporation (a United Way agency). Note: to qualify for this program your total household income must be less than \$57,000. If you review the attachments and have questions, call **211** (yes, just dial those three digits).

** If you receive your Newsletter via the US Post Office the two-page attachment was not included in your envelope. If you want a copy of those two pages give me a call.

I will try to arrange for the Human Services Center Corporation to offer this free tax preparation service somewhere in the Township next year.

5. Did you use a Mail-In-Ballot in 2020? If you voted by mail last year you should have received a “Annual Request to Vote by Mail” letter from the Allegheny County Elections Division. There were two main statements included in that letter:

1. If you do not return the *Form* included in the “Annual Request to Vote by Mail” letter to the Elections Division, or take the action described in item 2 (immediately below) you will be removed from the list of people who will be sent a Mail-In-Ballot in 2021.
2. As an alternative to returning the completed abovementioned *Form* to the Elections Division you can apply for a Mail-In-Ballot at “**VotesPA.com/ApplyMailBallot**”.

Just a side comment: **VotesPA.com** is a very easy to use website where you can find the answer to almost any voting related question. On that site you can perform a number of functions such as: register to vote, check the status of your registration, change you address, etc.

3. If you received the Annual Request to Vote by Mail letter, and you do not want to vote by mail in 2021, just Do Nothing – you will automatically be removed from the list of people who will be sent Mail-In-Ballots.

If you voted by mail in 2020 and you did not receive that letter, or if you have any questions about voting by mail, you can call 412-350-4500.

6. Why A Newsletter: I included the information in this article in an issue of the Newsletter somewhere in the past. A bunch of new Newsletter recipients** have be added to the Mailing list since that past article was published, so I figured it might be time to provide the info again.

*** As noted in an article in this issue of the Newsletter, I recently reached a milestone of having 901 addresses on the Forward Township Newsletter mailing list.*

Reaching that milestone reminded me of a question I occasionally hear. It is basically as follows: “No other municipality seems to have a Municipal Newsletter, so why does the Forward Township publish one?” The answer is: “Forward Township does **not** publish a Newsletter. I do.”

To better understand what the “Forward Township Newsletter” is, and is not, I include the following information on the last page of **every** Forward Township Newsletter published.

This Newsletter is **not** approved by the Township of Forward or the Forward Township Board of Supervisors. It is **not** intended to fulfill any legal requirements of Forward Township. It is **not** intended to be a Forward Township advertisement or announcement of a position(s) taken by Forward Township. It is **not** funded or subsidized by Forward Township.

The obvious follow-up question is: Why do I personally, and not the Township, publish the Forward Township Newsletter? *Answer:* I Although I would have preferred the Newsletter to be a Township publication that option was problematic because of the many, many, many, legal issues involved.

Incentive for Newsletter: In days gone by residents had two ways of securing information about the Township:

- (1). attend the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Supervisors; and/or,
- (2). read the account of the Monthly Meeting in the Newspaper.

For many years, those were the two primary options available to residents. Needless to say, those two options were, at best, terribly inadequate. As a result, I decided to create and publish the Forward Township Newsletter.

7. Homestead & Farmstead Exclusions – Real Estate Tax Relief: The information in this article was largely taken from the following Allegheny County website - [“Real Estate | Act 50 Homestead-Farmstead | Application \(alleghenycounty.us\)”](#).

The Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion (Act 50) is a program that *reduces the Assessed Value of your Real Estate by \$18,000 for county taxes only*. To qualify, you must be the owner and occupy the dwelling as your primary residence. The application deadline is March 1 of each year. You do not have to reapply each year. Once you have filed, your exemption will remain in effect until you sell/transfer the property or change your occupancy – *You never need to file again!*

An Example of how the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion (Act 50) Works:

\$18,000 reduction in assessed value for County real property taxation results in an annual savings of \$85.14 in County taxes for most constituents.

The amount of real property tax owed by any taxpayer is the tax rate (measured in mills) multiplied by the assessed value of said property. Allegheny County's tax rate is 4.73. This means that for every \$1,000 in assessed value, a taxpayer will pay \$4.73 in taxes.

How much can Act 50 reduce the taxes of a qualified Forward Township resident? Act 50 Exclusion acts to reduce the basis of your property by \$18,000.00. The following example shows the computation of the COUNTY Property Tax Liability by with and without the \$18,000.00 exclusion for a home with an assessed valuation of \$100,000.00:

	<u>With</u> <u>Exclusion</u>	<u>With NO</u> <u>Exclusion</u>
Assessed Value of Home	\$100,000.	\$100,000.
Less: Act 50 Exclusion	- 18,000.	0
Basis for Computing Tax	\$ 82,000.	\$100,000.
Multiplied by County Tax Millage	<u>4.73</u>	<u>4.73</u>
Amount of Tax Due	<u>\$ 387.86</u>	<u>\$ 473.00</u>

In this example the Tax Payer saved \$ 85.14 (\$473.00 - \$387.86) on their County Taxes, and will do so every year they live in that house!

Although I am sure there might be exceptions, I would suspect **MOST Forward Township resident homeowners** qualify, and could have the County Property Tax on their home reduced by \$85.14 by using this Exclusion.

How do you apply for the Act 50 “Homestead and Farmstead Exclusion”? Complete and submit the Allegheny County Office of Property Assessments “Act 50 – Application for Homestead & Farmstead Exclusions” form to the Office of Property Assessments. That form, with detailed instructions is available at [Real Estate/Act 50 Homestead-Farmstead/Application alleghenycounty.us](#) **

** If you do not had internet access call me and I will get you a paper version of the application.

Some facts and comments re: Act 50:

Do I have to apply every year for the Homestead Exclusion? *No*, you don't have to apply again if you remain the property owner, you haven't filed a deed transfer, and it continues to be your primary residence.

Can a homeowner have more than one Homestead Exclusion? No, a homeowner is eligible for the Homestead Exclusion *only* for his/her primary residence. Any other Homesteads will be removed, and the owner is subject to interest, penalties and fines up to \$2500.

How do I get the Act 50 removed from a property I just sold? Act 50 will automatically be removed once the sale is processed through the Department of Real Estate, but it will remain on the property until the end of the year. We can research that information for you.

My neighbor has moved out and uses his former home as a rental property. It still has a Homestead Exclusion on it. Is that legal? No, the owner must use the property as his/her *primary residence* to qualify for the Homestead Exclusion. We can research that information for you.

How long does the Homestead remain on a parcel? The Homestead Exclusion remains on the parcel as long as the owner retains the property as his/her *primary residence*. When a sale or deed transfer occurs, the Homestead stays on the parcel for the remainder of the tax year and then is removed January 1 of the following year.

Can a homeowner have more than one Homestead Exclusion? No, a homeowner is eligible for the Homestead Exclusion only for his/her primary residence. Any other Homesteads will be removed, and the owner is subject to interest, penalties and fines up to \$2500.

Are Homesteads allowed on parcels that are deemed commercial in use? A Homestead Exclusion is allowed if the parcel is of "mixed" use, commercial and residential. Example: A dentist has an office on the first floor of a building and resides on the top floor. If this is the dentist's primary residence, the Homestead Exclusion will be allowed.

If you have any questions about Act 50 and the impact on your Real Estate Taxes: Contact the Allegheny County Office of Property Assessments at 412-350-4636. If you contact the Office of Property Assessments and still have questions, or need help with the Application, contact one of the following:

Senator Jim Brewster's Office	412-380-2242
Representative Mike Puskaric's Office	412-382-2009 ,

And, as usual, if you still need help, give me a call.

Because I am curious. I wonder how many people, due to this article, will use the Act 50 Exclusion and have their County Real Estate taxes reduced by \$85.14. If you did, would you send me an email and tell me that you did. I would not share that information with anyone, but as I said, I am curious.

8. Will the Newsletter be changing? **YES.** An issue of the Newsletter has traditionally been published once each month. That is going to change. Instead of an issue being published once each month, starting in 2021, the intended schedule will be to publish an issue once every two months.

Therefore, the intended schedule includes an issue being published on the following dates: February 10th, April 1st, June 1st, August 1st, October 1st and December 1st.

A second change: Because there will longer periods of time between Newsletters, there will be more news/announcements distributed between scheduled issues of the Newsletters. Examples: Free Flu Shot Clinics, Fund Raisers by local organizations, etc. Because of the cost of postage, copying, etc. these Newsletter Supplements will typically ONLY be sent to addresses on the EMAIL portion of the Newsletter mailing list.

Note: I am a notoriously slow writer, and it is highly anticipated (by my wife) this change in the number of Newsletters issued each year will cause my “Honey Do” list to receive a more appropriate level of attention in the future.

9. A Milestone Reached: The Forward Township Newsletter mailing list now has an all-time high 901 addresses.

10. Free “Wheel In” Shower Chair: There is a plastic pipe shower chair available - Free. The brand name is MJM International Corporation. You can google the name and look at a



shower chair like this one. If you need this chair, there is no charge for it. The only stipulation is that when you no longer have a need for it, you do not sell it. When that occurs, you must give it to someone else who needs it..

If you are interested in this chair, please contact me.

11. Information for Articles: A lot happens in Forward Township that comes to my attention by way of your emails and telephone calls. If you think of something that you think that should / could be included in the Newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would very much appreciate it.

Dave Magiske
2003 Pond Lane
Elizabeth, Pennsylvania 15037
Home: 412-405-8738
Cell: 724-462-9178
dlmag@comcast.net

Disclaimer: The Forward Township Newsletter and / or a Forward Township Newsletter Supplement (including any attachments) is **not** approved by the Township of Forward or the Forward Township Board of Supervisors. It is **not** intended to fulfill any legal requirements of Forward Township. It is **not** intended to be a Forward Township advertisement or announcement, and it is **not** intended to present any official or unofficial position(s) of Forward Township or its Board of Supervisors. It is **not** funded or subsidized by Forward Township. It is simply a presentment of information, that as a Township resident, I thought might be of interest to other Township residents. There: That should take care of any legal issues. Signed: Dave Magiske