



EAST NOTTINGHAM TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008

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Letter from the Staff

Now that the nice weather is here, it is a good time to clean up that unsightly trash that is lying around the boundaries of our homes. Our community's landscape is so beautiful, so maybe you would like to organize a neighborhood cleanup day. If you do not know your neighbors, now is a good time to meet them. Introduce yourself and tell them what you would like to do.

Before you start, gather everyone together to review workday strategies, distribute supplies and to answer questions. Have a cleanup plan, such as starting at one end of the street and working to the other. Spread volunteers out so they have plenty to do, and follows these other helpful hints:

- Make sure everyone is aware of safety requirements and areas to avoid.
- Make sure children are assigned adult supervision.
- Know what to do in case of injury or emergency.
- Keep a positive attitude!

Remember to thank all your volunteers after the cleanup is done. Perhaps organize a post-cleanup picnic or gathering to let participants share their experiences and build new friendships while everyone takes pride in the beautiful landscape.



If you have a question or comment, please contact the editor at enteditor@zoominternet.net.



Rural Living

Most people have moved to this area because they wanted to have more space around them and pretty vistas to look at from their windows. Many of us just love the fact that we can walk out our doors and see a field with horses grazing. There are, however, some courtesies and responsibilities that people should take note of when they move into the "country," this section of the newsletter hopes to address these types of issues.

Last July while I was preparing my new pasture to finally bring my horses home, it became increasingly clear to me that they could be facing some new dangers. As I was walking around my property I kept finding spent fireworks in my field, my driveway, and some alarmingly close to my house and new barn. Then I read about the horse in West Nottingham that had to be put down because it broke its leg during a frenzy caused by the fireworks

going off around it. This really alarmed me. What can I do to keep my horse safe from these dangers?

I realize that asking my neighbors to refrain from setting off fireworks is not an option. That is what our Fourth of July is all about...celebration. But I needed to minimize the impact on my horses so they survive the summer holiday season.

It is important for our residents to understand the impact of these activities on their neighborhoods. The fireworks being sold to the average consumer have changed significantly through the years and now some are as powerful as those used by professionals. Keep in mind that professionals set off fireworks in a controlled area. If you live in a residential area, whether on a one-acre lot or larger, you can bet that the fireworks you send into the air are not going to come straight back into your own yard. They will be landing on your neighbors' yards and rooftops. This is a fire hazard.

My concern is for the horses. Horses will do one of two things when frightened, fight or flee. When the threat is something they cannot see, but only hear, they will bolt. If they cannot determine from which direction the threat is coming, they will keep running, looking for a safe place to hide. Now you need to understand that most horses barely have two neurons to rub together for a thought, which is why a horse will run into a burning barn when it is scared. Yes, I did say, "into a burning barn."

Horses weigh upwards from 1000 pounds, making it difficult, not to mention dangerous, to get close enough to keep him calm. We do have a better chance, however, if we are made aware ahead of time that fireworks are going to be discharged close by on a particular night.

My personal plan is to visit each neighbor and ask them to inform me when they will be using fireworks. My suggestion, to those residents who appreciate that horses live in their neighborhood is to stop by the owner's home a few days before the big night to inform them of your plans. The owners will have a better opportunity to protect their horses by putting them in the barn, and in extreme cases, sedating them.

As the "country" becomes less rural and more suburban, these kinds of courtesies will help us all live together in better harmony. It would really be a shame if in the end we've taken the "rural" out of rural living.

Township Government is Open Government

A recent newspaper editorial proclaimed that "the citizens of Pennsylvania for too long have been the victim of one of the least open governmental systems, both at the state and local levels." This is a popular sentiment in these reform-minded times. However, if you stop by your township office or attend a board of supervisors meeting, you will quickly learn that quite the opposite is true. Far from being shrouded in mystery, townships and the officials that serve them are an open book, conducting most business for all eyes to see and willingly turning over public records to citizens who request them.

This isn't something new. Townships have operated this way for many decades, guided by several state laws, including the Open Records/Right-to-Know Act, which passed in 1957 and made it possible for citizens to have greater access to state and local government documents. This information not only details the inner workings of government but also sheds light on how tax dollars are being spent.

"Lately, in Harrisburg and elsewhere, there's been a lot of talk about making government more open," says R. Keith Hite, executive director of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, which represents the commonwealth's 1,455 townships of the second class. "That's understandable. Ever since the controversy involving the legislative pay raises, which ushered more than 50 new legislators into the Capitol, change has been in the air.

"While openness may be a problem in some branches of government, it's not a problem in local government, particularly township government. Why? Because local officials live in the communities they serve and are just a phone call away from their constituents. Without question, the accountability of these public servants is unmatched." Still, lawmakers and special interests continue to question the effectiveness of the Open Records Law, which for the second time this decade has undergone significant changes.

Clearing up the Confusion The last time the Pennsylvania General Assembly rewrote the Right-to-Know Law was in 2002. This was done amidst feelings that the original act, passed more than four decades before, was antiquated and vague. There was some truth to that. For instance, the courts have spent years trying to sort out what exactly constitutes a "public record" under the previous law's convoluted definition. The act tested others, too, including township officials, who also had difficulty interpreting it. However, the irony is, when lawmakers approved the 2002 rewrite, they included a clear list of do's and don'ts for local officials but did nothing to clarify the definition of a public record.

All of that changed in February when Governor Ed Rendell signed an updated version of the Open Records Law, which, for the first time in the state's history, brings the Pennsylvania General Assembly under its wing. The new law, scheduled to go into effect in January 2009, also asserts that all government records are public unless specifically included on a list of exempted documents.

For instance, public officials and employees won't be required to give up their Social Security numbers, home or personal cell phone numbers, and certain tax documents, among other things. Police investigation reports, employment applications, drafts of bills, and grievance materials are off limits, too. "The exemption list is a good thing for townships and their residents because it takes the guesswork out the equation," Hite says. "Now, residents don't have to wonder: 'Is this document something I'm entitled to see?' If it's not on the list, then they have every right to request a copy of that particular record."

The new Open Records Law also requires your township to designate an employee as its open records officer to be your point of contact when seeking a record. The state will also be establishing an Office of Open Records in the Department of Community and Economic Development. This independent office will not only hear open records appeals but it will also train township officials on open records/meeting issues.

While the law includes several new provisions, it retains many of the same procedures that were established in the 2002 rewrite. For instance, townships are still required to have an open records policy, which must be posted prominently in their office; they must respond to all written requests for records within five business days; they must have a solid legal reason for denying a request; and they must put that denial in writing. The law also authorizes the courts to impose fines on local officials who willfully violate the statute and on violators each day they fail to comply with a court order to provide a record.

Support for Reform To a certain extent, the new Open Records Law is a direct result of the controversial legislative pay raise of 2005. Since then, reform-minded lawmakers, special interests, and citizen groups have been pushing for greater government transparency. Hite believes that the law sends a powerful message to Pennsylvanians: that officials at all levels of government support meaningful reform. At the same time, though, he points out that openness is nothing new for Pennsylvania's townships.

"Local government is the government closest to the people," Hite says. "That's why you'll always find the door to your township and its records open. That's just good governing. And that's what today's townships are all about."



For All You Tea Drinkers Out There, Listen Up!

A cup of hot tea brings warmth in the winter, and a cool glass of iced tea can be refreshing on a hot summer day. Tea is a great beverage all year round. Did you know that tea was “discovered” in 2737 B.C. by Chinese Emperor Shen-Nung when tea leaves blew into boiling water? There are so many different kinds of teas being offered in the stores today it almost mind boggling, so I do have one suggestion.

If you happen to be browsing around the North East, Maryland shops, include Campbell's little tea shop on the main street. They have such a wide assortment of teas to choose from—black teas, green teas, white teas and red teas. Black teas are known to be the most highly caffeinated of all teas. If you prefer a slightly milder flavor, a green tea should be your choice. The leaves are naturally caffeinated and they offer a high amount of antioxidants. These leaves are less processed and are not dried to full capacity. Also originating in China is white tea that is higher still in antioxidants. White tea is picked in bud for only two days a year in the Fujian Providence of China. White tea has a much milder flavor and is low in caffeine, but also high in antioxidants. Finally, red teas, produced only in South Africa, are becoming popular. They are and picked solely from the Rooibis bush. This tea is naturally decaffeinated and is said to have the highest levels of antioxidants.

There is also a wide assortment of herbal teas that have been gaining such favor among tea drinkers. Many include dried flowers and other natural ingredients. Among the wide selections available at the tea shop are Bella Coola, made of dried fruit, rose hips, flower pedals and hibiscus; Berry Berry, a blend of fruity sweetness, featuring raspberries, blackberries and blueberries; and Chamomile made famous for its calming properties. These are some of the most fantastic herbal teas, and they are all naturally decaffeinated. All of these teas, and others not mentioned, can be found at Campbell's tea shop. They also carry a line of handsome, unique teapots that can be purchased for yourself or for that special tea drinker you know. Personally, I think of it as an adventure when I visit this quaint little shop and believe me, it is very hard trying to decide what to purchase while you are there.



Planting a Summer Vegetable Garden

Studies have been done showing that the nutritional content, i.e. minerals and vitamins in the vegetables and fruits we eat, is diminishing over time. This is due to over-cultivation and increasing demand for food, placing a greater stress on our land. There's only so much fertilizer you can add to replenish the nutrient content within soil. So instead of having a backyard of grass, try starting your own vegetable garden.

When you slice a ripe cucumber from your garden it smells like a cucumber. It's crisp, extremely juicy and tasty. Tomatoes are red, juicy and full of flavor. Lettuce smells like lettuce. By growing your own vegetables you have the choice of growing them organically and free of pesticides. Now you can even buy seeds that are not genetically modified.

A U.S. study was done in 2001 examining 27 different toxins that could be present in our body and the study revealed that most people have detectable levels of pesticides in their bodies. Think of vegetable gardening as a natural way to detoxify your body of chemicals, at least for a few months of the year.

Vegetable gardens offer their owners a number of benefits, among which are fresh air and sunshine, exercise, stress relief and mental therapy, economic savings, and nutritious fresh vegetables. Gardening is a great way to get active by being outdoors. There are even gardening tools that make the planting and tilling easier. By having vegetables within reach and readily available for picking, you'll be inclined to eat more vegetables and thus meeting your daily intake requirements for a healthy lifestyle.

The township has a new ordinance that requires all building contractors engaging in business in East Nottingham Township to register with the township and pay a registration fee of \$50. The ordinance and the registration form are available on the township website, www.eastnottingham.org, under the Township Ordinances section. For more information, contact the township office at (610) 932-8494.



The fourth annual Relay for Life of Oxford is being held from noon June 24 to noon June 25 at the Oxford Area High School track. This 24-hour team event raises money for cancer research, education programs, and services for cancer patients and their families. Teams consisting of 8 to 15 members set up a campsite and take turns walking the track relay-style as a healthy demonstration of their commitment to the fight against cancer. Friday's evening events include a survivor celebration, caregiver lap, the beautiful luminaria ceremony, contests and musical entertainment.

To participate, form a team or join a team and plan an event to raise money for this wonderful cause. For more information, contact Tara at 443-309-3672 or e-mail twyatt@zoominternet.net.

Spring 2007

East Nottingham Township Newsletter

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2007 Meeting Dates

Supervisors	Monday, May 14
Planning Commission	Monday, May 28
	Monday, June 25
	Monday, July 9
	Monday, July 23

All meetings are at 7 pm at the Twp. Bldg.

Visit Us on the Web
www.eastnottingham.org



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