



Municipal Reporter

Sustainability/Resiliency Edition



A waste-to-energy plant being constructed at the Altoona Westerly Wastewater Treatment Facility is one of the first co-energy facilities in west-central Pennsylvania.

See page 14

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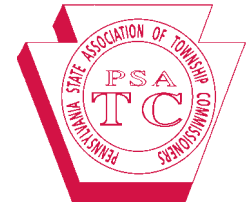
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Municipal Reporter



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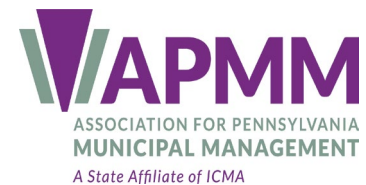
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To strengthen, empower and advocate for effective local government.

The League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1900 as an advocate for Pennsylvania's 3rd class cities. Today, The League represents participating Pennsylvania cities, boroughs, townships, home rule communities and towns that all share The League's municipal policy interests. Our Board of Directors oversees the administration of a wide array of municipal services including legislative advocacy (on both the state and federal levels), publications designed to educate and inform, education and training certification programs, membership research and inquiries, programs, and group insurance trusts.

We are continually monitoring the needs of our members and are committed to providing the Commonwealth's municipalities with cost-effective programs and services required to meet the distinct needs of their communities.

The *Municipal Reporter* is a publication of the Pennsylvania Municipal League, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners and the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management. It is published three times a year.

Opinions expressed by authors and advertisers are not necessarily those of the officers, members and staff of The League. Original articles on subjects of interest to municipal officials are welcome, but subject to review by editorial staff. The publisher has the right to reject unsuitable advertising.

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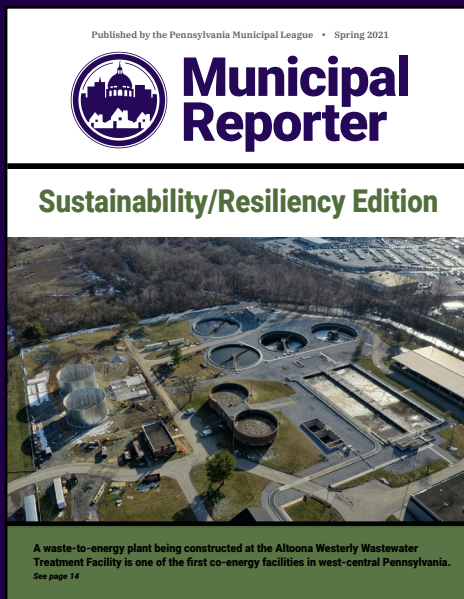


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COVER



SUSTAINABILITY/RESILIENCY EDITION CONTENTS

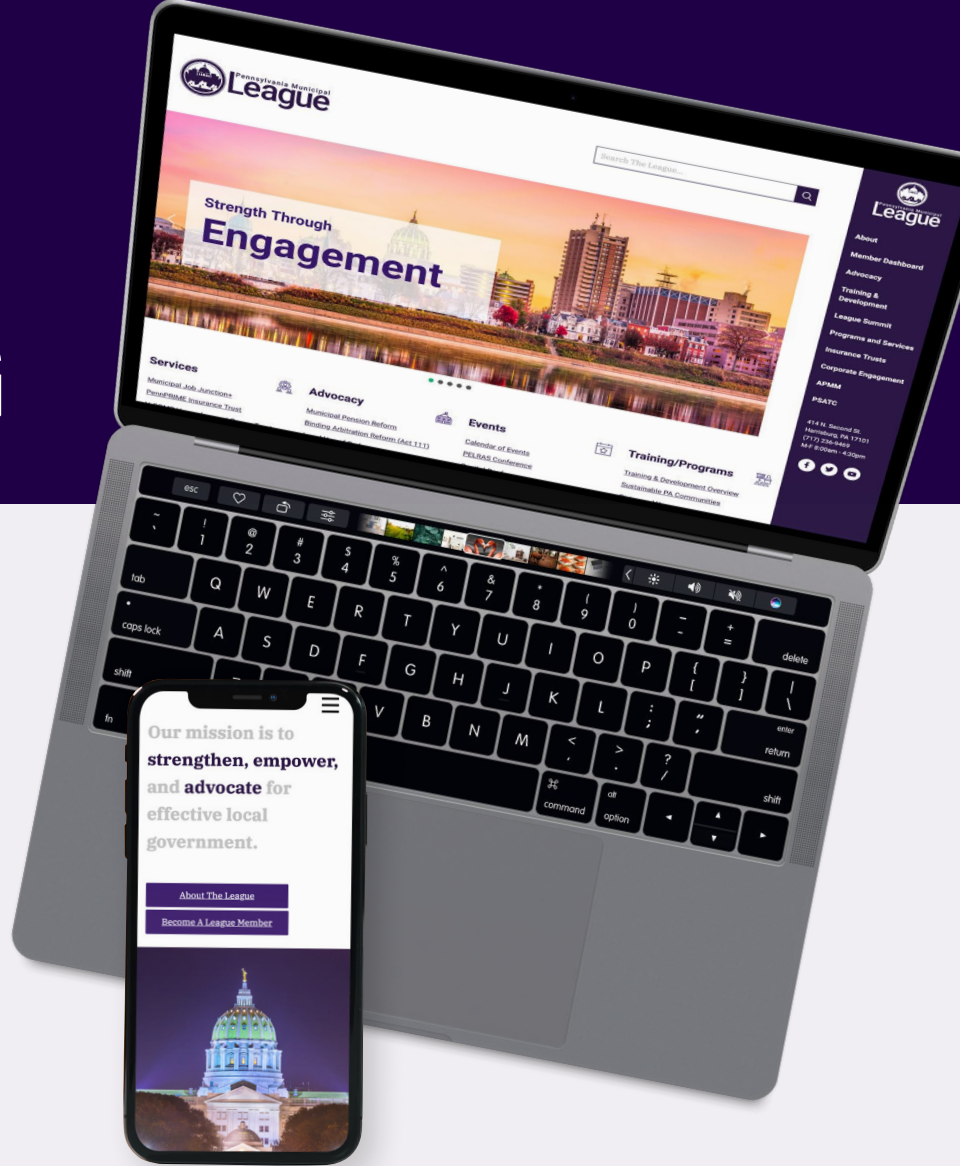
4... Association Officers and League Staff	40 .. Legislative Status Report – State
7... Calendar of Events	48 .. Legislative Status Report – Federal
8... League President's Message	50 .. Public Finance
9... League Executive Director's Message	52 .. Professional Directory
11 .. Inside The League	54 .. PSATC President's Message
12 .. League Leaders - Mayor Derek Slaughter	56 .. PSATC News
14 .. Sustainability/Resiliency Articles	58 .. APMM President's Message
30 .. Business Leaders Network	59 .. APMM News
32 .. PennPRIME	60 .. Book Reviews for the Leader in You
38 .. U•COMP	

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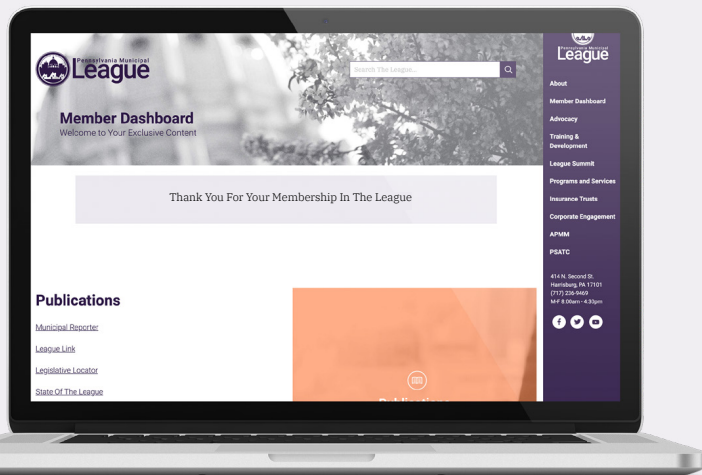
PML.org was built with our membership in mind. It's **easy to navigate** with the important information just a click away. **See upcoming League Events, Services, Training Programs** and have **access to the information your community needs.**

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STAY UP-TO-DATE

The latest and greatest news and events are easily found. With a constantly changing landscape, count on us to be your number one resource to stay on top of it all. No more hunting around different places. It's all at PML.org!



Mark Your Calendar

Please note that we are working to meet your educational/training needs during this pandemic. Some of our scheduled events will be virtual as noted and others are subject to change as needed. Please click the calendar link to our website above for additional/updated information.

League Capitol Web Conference
May 3–4

PennPRIME Board of Trustees Subcommittee Virtual Meetings
May 20

PennPRIME Board of Trustees Virtual Meeting
May 21

APMM Annual Web Conference
May 24–25

U•COMP Board of Trustees Virtual Meeting
June 4

League Sustainability Web Conference
June 15

League Board of Directors Virtual Meeting
June 25

U•COMP Board of Trustees Meeting
August 19
Omni Bedford Springs Resort

PennPRIME Annual Membership Virtual Meeting
September 21

PennPRIME Board of Trustees Subcommittee Meetings
September 23
Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square

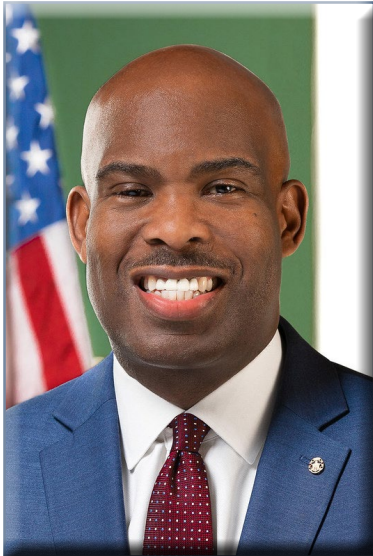
PennPRIME Board of Trustees Meeting
September 24
Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square

ICMA Annual Conference
October 3–6
Portland, Oregon

Municipal Leadership Summit
October 7–9
Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square

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The League President's Message



DEREK GREEN
COUNCILMEMBER
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA



Pennsylvania Municipal
League



Dear Members,

It's a privilege to officially greet you in 2021 – what I pray will be a much happier, healthier and prosperous new year! It is my hope that things are off to a smooth and productive start for you all.

In this season of renewal and rejuvenation, the Pennsylvania Municipal League is also renewing its commitment to a future of sustainability and efficiency. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have had to conceive of new, innovative ways to survive and learn how to make better use of what they have at their disposal. In this regard, resiliency helped us to defy odds and overcome adversity by moving forward and working together to achieve our goals.

The Spring Sustainability/Resiliency issue of the Municipal Reporter magazine highlights various aspects of this multifaceted goal, one that has essentially become the objective for us all. With the Nation moving full speed ahead on COVID-19 vaccinations and putting us closer and closer toward our pre-pandemic lives, we can focus our energy on economic recovery and getting Pennsylvanians back to work.

An industry that is sure to help get the economy back up and running is solar energy, now considered to be one of the fastest growing industries in the country. Jobs in solar installation are now labeled "High Priority Occupations" in my hometown of Philadelphia. Initiatives created by The Philadelphia Energy Authority (PEA), like Bright Solar Futures, Green Retrofit Immersive Training (GRIT) and others are driving interest at the state and federal levels in energy efficiency and resiliency training programs, providing vocational opportunities for hundreds of our students, as well as opening doors for returning citizens and those left unemployed during the coronavirus pandemic.

As an At-Large member of City Council, I have partnered with PEA Executive Director, Emily Schapira, on a number of successful solar initiatives over the last few years and look forward to further future collaborations and opportunities throughout Pennsylvania.

As we reset during this time of reinvention, I challenge my fellow League members to remain engaged and committed to our mission to strengthen, empower and advocate for effective local government. Let's take a page from the resilient stories of so many of our fellow Americans during this past year and get innovative in our efforts to create a more sustainable future for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Take care and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek S. Green".

Derek S. Green

The League Executive Director's Message

Members,

We are pleased to provide this Sustainability/Resiliency edition of our Municipal Reporter. Despite the pandemic, many of our members furthered their ambitious efforts. We applaud their efforts. You will find many forward-looking articles and information herein. Our Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification program will hold a webinar on June 15. If you have not yet sought certification under the program, I encourage you to do so. It is a great municipal exercise to guide an enhanced quality of life for your residents. Further, we trust the American Rescue Plan funds we collectively advocated for so strongly over the past year, will assist in stabilizing your municipal finances and allow you to maintain those vitally needed services.

In closing, I want to recognize a number of our colleagues:

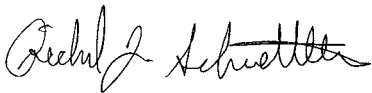
Chambersburg Councilman and Past League President Bill McLaughlin, who we recently lost, was a great leader and tremendous advocate for us. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sue and the McLaughlin family.

Mayor George Hood of Indiana Borough recently stepped down. Mayor Hood was an active board member of The League for many years and a great ambassador for Indiana. We wish him all the best.

Dave Montz, Green Tree Borough manager and League board member, was active in both The League and APMM. We appreciate all of Dave's efforts, especially in legislative advocacy.

Jim Ryan, longtime City Clerk for the City of Wilkes-Barre, recently retired. We recognize Jim for his great work in Wilkes-Barre and wish him an enjoyable retirement.

Be safe and take care,



Richard J. Schuettler



RICK SCHUETTLER



Pennsylvania Municipal
League



UPCOMING EVENTS

League Capitol Web Conference

May 3 - 4, 2021

Session Topics:

- Remarks from Governor Tom Wolf
- NLC Update/Federal COVID Emergency Funding
- Transportation Funding and Emerging Transportation Technologies
- Local Use of Radar Legislation
- Panel Discussion with House and Senate Local Government
- Committee Chairs
- Blight Remediation Legislation

League Sustainability Web Conference

Tuesday, June 15, 2021



2021 APMM Annual Web Conference

RENEW. REBUILD. REINVENT

May 24 - 25, 2021

Keynote Speaker: Nancy J. Lewis

Courageous conversations are needed in the workplace today around topics that make leaders and employees feel uncomfortable. The reality is we must get comfortable being uncomfortable and persevere to have the conversations that are needed to break down barriers so we can build bridges that foster collaboration and strong teams. This interactive workshop will help you see how unconscious bias influences our outcomes and actions.

The Retirement Epidemic

The future of local government is continuously changing. There is one constant: the need for good people. The municipal workforce—from managers to secretaries, police officers to department directors—is getting older. New talent is getting harder to find and retain. When you and your team retire, who will carry the torch? How can you recruit to better reflect the demographics of your community? Hear stories and ideas about how others are reinventing municipal governments for the next generation before the next epidemic arrives.

Mindfulness & Meditation: A Self-Care Strategy for the Busy Manager

COVID-19 caused managers to put their jobs first in an unprecedented Emergency Management Crisis that has lasted for well over a year. We have to care for ourselves before we can be amazing leaders of our communities. Join us for this session that will help Managers renew and restore our sense of mindfulness and purpose. Avoid burn out and fatigue and learn to breathe deeply and handle all that the job of Municipal Manager throws at you.

How Did I Get Here?

This session will involve a panel of our colleagues who will discuss their professional journeys that brought them to their current positions, and how they may have needed to reinvent themselves to succeed in these new roles.

Finding and Focusing on Your "Why"

With the many distractions, competing priorities, and never-ending to-do lists, municipal managers have numerous responsibilities to juggle as public servants. We often find ourselves focusing on what we must do and seldom think about the why that motivates us to persevere. For this hour, we are going to work together to shift our perspective. We will look at our tasks and challenges through the scope of why we pursue them rather than focusing on the actual task/challenge. Join your colleagues for a focused discussion on your personal why!

Helping Our Team Find Their Wh(y)!

For most public servants, their service is more than a paycheck, job or even career. It is a calling to serve their community, make a difference or be part of something. However, the pandemic has distanced us from the residents we serve, halted projects and isolated our employees. How do we help them reconnect with why they do what they do? What strategies have others used to motivate their employees and re-energize them in their commitment to public service. Join us for this roundtable discussion of Managers and a Professor of Human Resources as they help us understand ways we can recharge our team's commitment to service.

Strategic Planning

The focus of this session will be on increasing community connectivity and buy-in by involving them in the Strategic Planning process, and putting together a high quality, high functioning, non-partisan citizen team that is focused on involving the community. Participants will learn from successful case studies, and take away tools, tips, and strategies for involving more citizens in a meaningful and mutually-beneficial way including a renewed sense of purpose, buy-in, and budget simplification.

League News . . .

Inside The League



JOHN BRENNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DESIGNATE

"Resilience – the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness or the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape."

As the ball dropped in a largely vacant New York City New Year's Eve celebration and our own family's uniquely special "good-bye and good riddance" to 2020, by raising a large 24 multipack of Charmin from our patio to the 2nd floor of our home took place, resiliency was not the first thing on my mind.

Breathing a collective sigh of relief of even reaching this past New Year's without losing a family member or having a direct family member impacted by the ravages of the pandemic all around us, we cautiously and optimistically looked for the new year to be better.

Each year, thanks to my wife's determination and focus, we, as a family write down our own goals for the coming year as individuals and as a family. It's a harder exercise than you might imagine. It forces you to review the past year and thereby "check-off" the items you have successfully or partially completed. It also plainly shows the areas left unfinished. This past year was fairly good as we were able to do a few more home projects – since we were home nearly every day in 2020! One area of improvement we listed for 2021 was to do more in the community.

In January, on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we organized a litter cleanup for our neighborhood. Over 40 people showed up and our amazing group filled dozens of bags in the entire southwest quadrant of the city.

In February, we decided to volunteer at the York County Food Bank Drive-Thru Emergency Food Distribution Center. Our day coincided with our 19th wedding anniversary. The center is located in an old K-Mart on the east end of town. Weekly, since the pandemic began, volunteers gather to help distribute boxes of food, personal items and sundries. We helped for over 2 hours wearing our reflective vests, masks and gloves. We helped pack car after car. Over 1,000 vehicles. Many picking up for multiple families. Veterans, seniors, men, women and children, every race and background. You could see the relief in their eyes as they pulled up, popped their trunk or hatchback, or as we loaded into beat-up, pick-up trucks. It was heartbreaking and it was amazing at the same time. These folks were gonna make it thanks to a giving and generous community, Giant Foods employees and AmeriCorps volunteers. Single moms and couples celebrating an anniversary worked hand-in-hand to serve.

Resiliency can mean different things to each one of us. For me, it means forging ahead despite the challenges. As communities, we have to move forward together. We have to work together to help our neighbors as we build better neighborhoods. Local officials are uniquely positioned to set examples and be a catalyst for positive change. You have a responsibility to help build a resilient community. As we have seen recently in Texas, planning, prioritizing and preparing are all critical components of helping communities prevent a crisis – and when one comes – to be ready to respond. Across Pennsylvania this past year, so many of you have led by example and are working harder than ever to serve your city, town, borough or township. Ask the right questions, stay engaged and together let's make our communities safer, cleaner, more welcoming and certainly more resilient.

From Inside The League,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "John S. Brenner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent.

John S. Brenner

Q&A with League Leader Derek Slaughter Mayor City of Williamsport Legislative Committee Co-Chair



This Q&A feature section of the Municipal Reporter highlights an individual local leader who has been involved and engaged with their community and The League.



Pennsylvania Municipal League

Q: Derek, thank you for your service as Mayor of the City of Williamsport. How did you get involved with local government?

I became involved with local government a number of years ago. I was teaching at the high school and local college, as well as coaching varsity girls' basketball. During this time, the city administration began removing basketball hoops in our city parks in a misguided attempt to curb crime. Naturally, I became involved in the conversation and the more involved I became, the more involved I wanted to become. My involvement led to a leadership role which increased both my visibility and my desire to make positive changes in the city that I love. Community folks began approaching me about running for City Council. I attended a campaign training in Harrisburg, really liked it, and decided to run for City Council. After spending time on City Council, I decided I could have an even greater impact as Mayor. The voters put their trust in me, and now I am in my second year as mayor.

Q: What leadership advice do you have for other local leaders?

Always do what you know to be the right decision even if it is not always the most popular decision. Ethics and integrity are so important in today's political climate that we must stay true to ourselves and these values. Equally important is that you must be willing to explain your decisions to the public so that they can gain a better understanding of what drives your decision-making.

Q: What has been your most rewarding experience as an elected official?

It sounds cliché, but being able to help people in their daily lives has been very rewarding. I am in a position to drive positive change in our community. If I had to point to one specific experience I have had as mayor, it would be the resurrection of our Williamsport Youth

Commission. I worked alongside our County Judge, who oversees the juvenile courts, to reinstitute this diversionary program. The goal of the Youth Commission is to intervene early in a juvenile's life so they do not become a repeat offender. The Youth Commission holds the juvenile accountable while connecting them with positive mentors in our community. The Commission is for first-time offenders and, if they complete the Youth Commission, charges are withdrawn. This is a win for our city and a way to build better, positive engagement with our youngest community members.

Q: What has been your greatest challenge in your position?

2020 was a challenge, as we all know. The challenge is to ensure our community and local economy is resilient and sustainable. It is particularly important that our small businesses and working families have what they need to be successful coming out of this public health and economic crisis. My administration has worked aggressively to make sure Williamsport is in a position to capitalize on opportunities for growth coming out of this economic downturn.

Q: Thank you for serving on The League Board as our Legislative Committee Co-Chair. How has your involvement with The League helped you and your community?

My involvement with The League has connected me with leaders throughout the Commonwealth. Organizations such as this give political leaders access to a diverse group of practitioners managing the daily operations of cities, boroughs, townships and towns. I learn from this group. These partnerships and relationships have allowed me to be a stronger advocate on behalf of Williamsport.

Q: What advice do you have for people considering municipal government as a career or in an elected role?

I strongly encourage anyone who wants to serve and believes they have something to offer to consider running for a position in government or working in government. It is by no means easy, but it is very rewarding to work on behalf of residents, employers, cultural institutions and the diverse stakeholders of their communities.

Q: As this is our Sustainability/Resiliency Issue, can you please share some of Williamsport's sustainability/resiliency practices and/or accomplishments?

The City of Williamsport is working to reduce our sediment that runs into the Chesapeake Bay as part of our Pollution Reduction Plan. We have five years to reduce the sediment by 10%. We are collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and with Lycoming County to resolve flooding from streams that run through and border our city. Williamsport participates in a County-led effort to recertify our levees. Because we are about to embark on ADA renovations at our historic City Hall, we will also do an energy-use assessment at the same time. As we find funding to do so, we will roll out energy audits at all of our facilities. Once we know what we have, we will work with Council to develop plans to modify our buildings to be more energy efficient and resilient. We currently review new development for green infrastructure and other sustainable options that can be part of new construction. Other sustainability and resiliency changes are being discussed with key committee leaders on Council, but those discussions are still informal, while we do a survey to locate the financial resources we may need to help us. Williamsport is the gateway to the Endless Mountains and has an environmentally-focused citizenry. Our goal is to get that reflected in administrative and public policy supported by our residents and businesses. ▣

Sustainability/Resiliency . . .



Aerial View of the waste-to-energy plant being constructed at the Altoona Westerly Wastewater Treatment Facility

Sustainability for Our Future: Food Waste & Municipal Biosolids Reuse

BY LARRY DOYLE, SENIOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ENERGY SYSTEMS GROUP LLC AND
MARK PERRY, GENERAL MANAGER, ALTOONA WATER AUTHORITY

The Energy Systems Group LLC (ESG) is constructing a waste-to-energy plant at the Altoona West-erly Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), one of the first co-energy facilities in west-central Pennsylvania. The \$36.6 million co-digestion process will use food waste and municipal biosolids as feedstock for biogas production to produce Class A biosolids via thermal drying and for future plant combined heat and power. The facility will be operated by the Altoona Water Authority (AWA).

The facility is an activated sludge plant with biological nutrient removal (BNR). The facility has a permitted capacity of 16.8 million gallons per day (MGD) with a peak flow allowance of 60 MGD. The AWA operates the plant along with a nearby companion facility (Easterly WWTF). About 1,350 dry tons of Class B biosolids are applied each year to agricultural land.

Why this is important:

AWA has had land-applied Class B biosolids since 1993, but lack of public acceptance has recently impacted this practice. The cost to dewater, store, test, transport and land-apply biosolids has rapidly escalated in recent years. Partici-

pation in the biosolids program by local farmers has declined because of physical farmland restrictions, application conditions that interfere with harvest times, excessive precipitation, conditioning requirements of Class B biosolids and complaints from neighbors. At this time, the AWA only has two farm sites remaining from eight permitted farms that existed five years ago which are insufficient for its total biosolids production. The AWA currently incurs high costs for landfill disposal at a site 65 miles away for those biosolids that cannot be land applied.

Future PA DEP land application regulations could include further restrictions on periods of application and application rates, tilling and planting practices, additional analytical testing, more effective odor control, greater radius for landowner notices, and enhanced vector control. The increase in regulatory standards for landfills restrict the amount of organic waste that can be accepted, and some landfills do not accept any biosolids or food waste.

The need for reliable and cost-effective biosolids disposal is becoming critical not only for Altoona but municipalities throughout

the state. Over 22 million tons of municipal biosolids are generated annually in Pennsylvania. At the same time, over 1.2 million tons of food waste is generated annually by Pennsylvania residents, businesses and industries that is almost entirely disposed in sanitary landfills. Less commonly used methods include composting, incineration and thermal drying with only a small percentage (2.2%) being disposed at waste-to-energy facilities.

Project Specific Benefits of Co-Digestion for Altoona

- **Biosolids Disposal** – Co-digestion addresses the immediate problem of a Class B biosolids disposal (agricultural land application) that has become impractical along with the costly and unsustainable alternative of landfilling.
- **Higher Grade Waste Solids** – A reduced volume of Class A solids residuals produced by co-digestion will allow for its potential resale as a soil-blending supplement along with a give-away program to gardeners and landscapers.

→

- ▶ **Surplus Revenue** – Co-digestion has the potential to generate surplus income by tipping fees from food waste producers and biosolids generators. This revenue generating potential can reduce overall WWTF operating costs and debt service payments.
- ▶ **Landfill Diversion** – Based on current projections, 570 dry tons/year of biosolids and food waste otherwise disposed at landfills would be diverted to a renewable energy source via co-digestion.
- ▶ **Waste Disposal Regionalization** – Once established, the project will allow other food waste and biosolids generators access to a centralized facility. While offering a dependable disposal option, co-generation can also meet the sustainability goals of these businesses and communities.

To address Altoona's costly biosolids disposal problem while offering a sustainable and energy efficient solution, ESG has designed a co-digestion process to process commercial food waste and wastewater sludge with the potential to easily expand the process to meet future high strength organic waste (HSOW) demands and to serve as the regional biosolids disposal center for municipalities.

Sustainable, Practical Benefits of Co-Digestion:

- ▶ **Food Waste Diversion** – Nationwide, organic waste remains the largest fraction of waste disposed at landfills and is often left out of recycling programs. Diversion of food waste from

landfills to a co-digestion system assists the state and municipalities in meeting recycling goals.

- ▶ **Climate Change Mitigation** – Landfills not equipped with co-energy systems often flare methane gas to the atmosphere. In addition to decreased landfill emissions, co-digestion reduces greenhouse gas emissions due to the energy offsets from an on-site, renewable energy source.
- ▶ **Easily Biodegradable Waste** – Food waste is highly biodegradable and has a much higher volatile solids content (86-90%) than biosolids (55-65%). After co-digestion, high strength organic waste occupies a smaller fraction of total solids residual when compared to biosolids.
- ▶ **Existing Infrastructure** – Wastewater treatment plants are ideal locations for co-digestion systems. Existing infrastructure is available for receiving and mixing biosolids and food waste and their subsequent processing in existing anaerobic digesters.
- ▶ **Operational Expertise** – Plant operators have the on-site expertise and experience in biosolids handling and waste solids digestion.
- ▶ **Regionalization of Biosolids Disposal** – As noted, satellite WWTF's will have an opportunity to dispose of their biosolids at a regional co-digestion plant. Co-digestion offers a beneficial

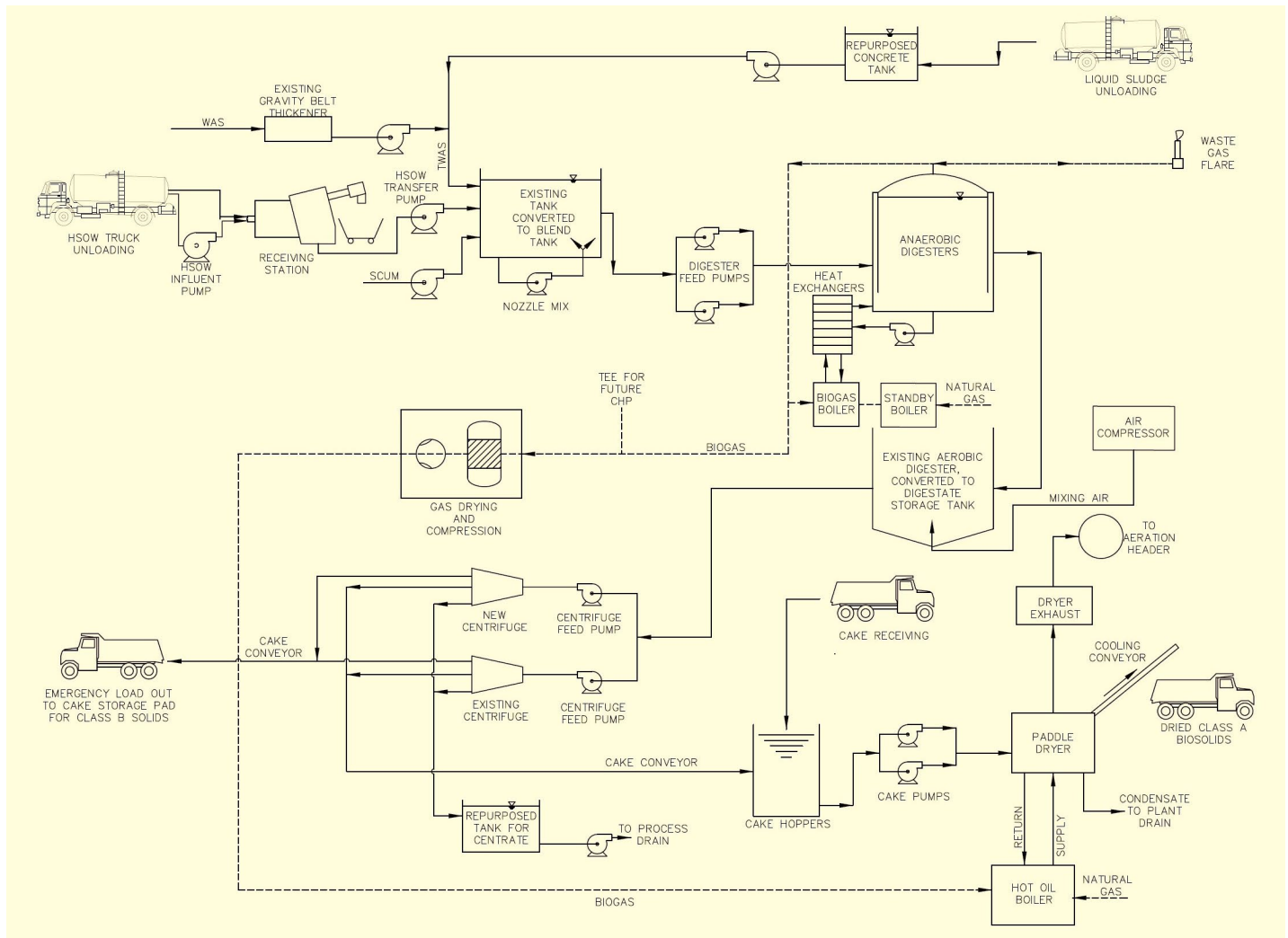
solution to a regional biosolids disposal problem by fully capturing the energy potential of all biosolids. This also eliminates individual WWTF's biosolids disposal via landfilling.

- ▶ **Centralization** – Located in an urban area near an interstate highway interchange (I-99), the Altoona co-digestion plant offers the benefits of centralization not only in terms of transportation but as a load center of food waste production. These have both environmental and financial benefits to the system operator and facility users.
- ▶ **Economic Benefits** – Wastewater treatment operators can expect cost savings from co-digestion by on-site power and tipping fees from food waste suppliers and biosolids producers.

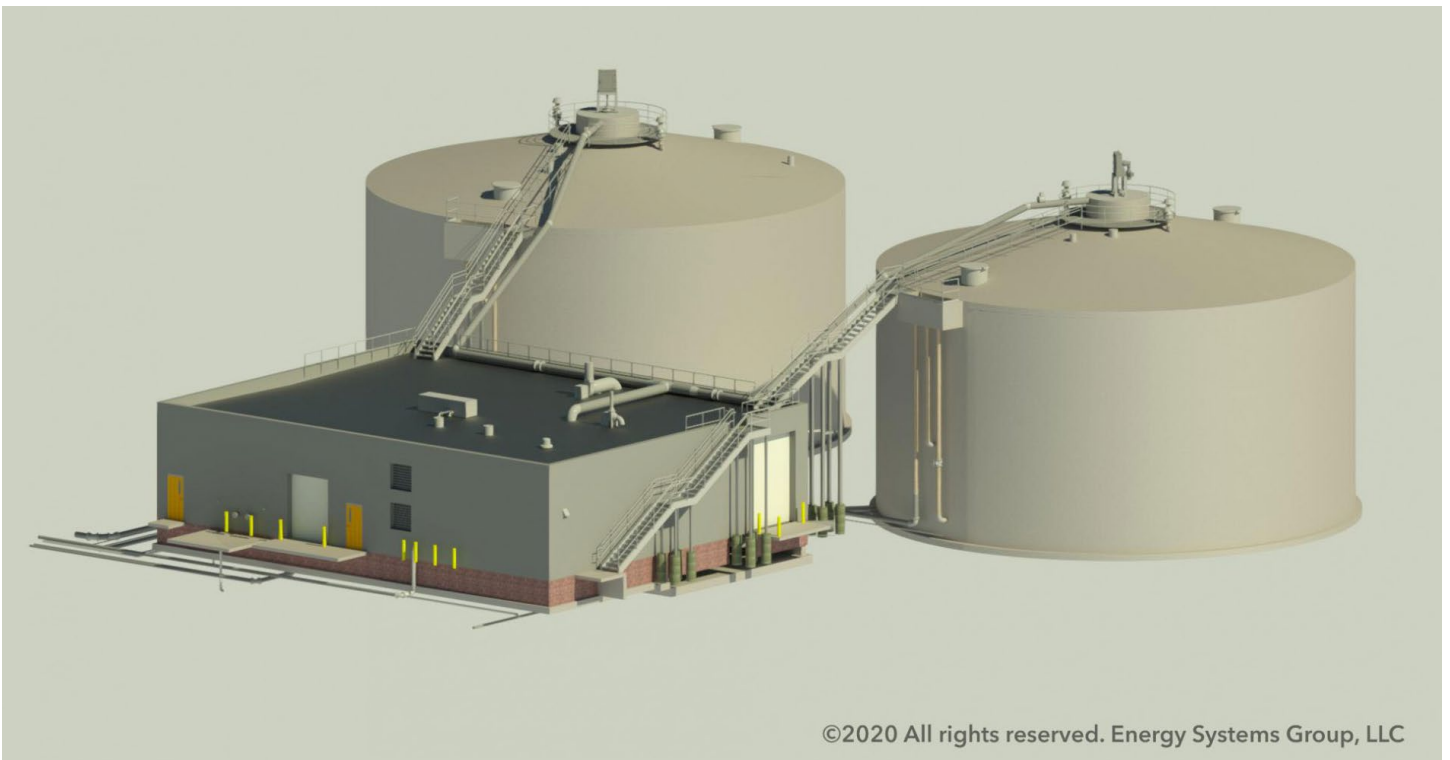
The Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority financed the \$36.6 million project through a 1%, 20-year loan. The Altoona co-digestion process is currently under construction. Startup and commissioning of the facility is expected in mid-2022. ESG performed project design and construction services and obtained all necessary environmental permits and approvals.

Lawrence Roth, ESG Senior Vice President of Sustainable Infrastructure and Operations Service, stated, "We commend the AWA for their leadership and commitment to promoting sustainability, economic growth, and efficiency." □

Altoona Co-digestion Process Diagram



Altoona Digester Complex Rendering



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All facts and figures are as of December 31, 2019.

Heart. Resiliency. Grit. Determination. Respect.

BY MIKE GREENE, PRINCIPAL, INTEGRITYWORKS COACHING

I always loved watching our son Mitchell play tennis.

When he was just 15 years old, he might have had the match of his career. Coaches generally say that if you just return the ball successfully 3 times, you'll almost always win the point. Yep – in most cases. Nope – not this time.

It was sunny, 80ish degrees, and they were playing their nemesis team. Mitchell was to play an 8 game set (first to 8 wins) in singles. He was matched against a common foe, though they had developed a healthy respect for each other over the years. Points were lasting far beyond the average 3-time return standard as the boys were committing very few unforced errors. And they weren't just returning; they were being aggressive, placing, spinning, charging the net – all of the above. They were both scrapping! I've played in rallies like this with Mitch, and it's very difficult to keep your form and footwork with that much energy being expended so quickly. And I'm a runner. These kids never gave in.

In fact, at one point, with Mitchell down in games 5-7 (his opponent needed one more game to win the match), a rally went for at least 40 or 50 shots – almost unheard of in tennis. It was eternal for us, the spectators; I cannot imagine how these boys felt! But, again,

neither gave in. So impressive. Mitchell won the point and dropped on the court. He had forced his opponent to his far right with a strong forehand shot, then charged the net and closed the point with a winner to the opponent's far backhand. What none of us knew is that Mitchell had an asthma attack at the end of this rally. He told us later that he had 2 shots left, at best, and that's what prompted his aggressive closing shots at the end.

They eventually were tied at 7-7, leading to a tennis tie breaker. Mitchell high fived his opponent just prior to the tiebreaker, saying, "Are you ready for this, Noah?" and off they went. Well, I'm glad to say that Mitchell won the tie breaker 8-6 and consequently the match. It was remarkable to watch. An opponent's father came up to Mitchell after the match and said, "That was the best match I've seen in years!" Amy asked Mitch who he was and he said, "I don't know, I don't care, but I like him!"

I share this because I'm probably a little proud . . . and because there were so many lessons these boys taught us from the court. The heart they displayed was the best I've seen all year, and maybe ever. They just did not give in – physically or mentally. They were resilient – ever pushing through. They both showed great respect for each other – never disrespecting the game with poor attitudes, play call or

effort. They even encouraged each other, commenting on great play as they went.

Heart. Resiliency. Grit. Determination. Respect. That's what they showed. They did their best, never gave in, managed their attitudes and emotions, showed mutual respect, and they were focused and poised, playing to the very end. They left it all on the court.

Leaving 2020 behind and moving through 2021, what lessons from these young boys can we apply in our lives, careers, community, relationships and personal mindset to ensure our best year ever? Just imagine if we applied that level of resiliency, heart and grit to every challenge we meet in this coming year.

Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." And that clearly starts with the person in the mirror.

Mike Greene is owner, IntegrityWorks Coaching, Certified Everything DiSC Trainer, The 5 Behaviors of a Cohesive Trainer and Leadership Coach. Dedicated to building a better you, better team and better workplace. For in-person or virtual training or coaching, please contact mike@integrityworkscaching.com or visit www.integrityworkscaching.com 

Financial Resiliency During Uncertainty

BY LEEANNE CLAYBERGER, CEO, PENNSYLVANIA ECONOMY LEAGUE

You successfully shepherded your municipality across 2020's uncertainties – civil unrest, a high stakes election and a global pandemic. Your budget is in place. You made it through. Congratulations!

Now it's time to sit back, watch for signs of spring and take a break, right? Well, not quite.

While uncertainty is not uncommon in local government, 2020 ushered in a whole new level of unknowns with COVID-19 that will continue to impact municipalities going forward. And planning for that uncertainty is an important part of your 2021 strategy.

COVID-19 related factors that may impact your municipality but are outside your control include:

- ▶ Will there be another wave of virus spread in your community?
- ▶ How quickly will the vaccine be rolled out, and will individuals in your community get the vaccine?
- ▶ Will a new federal administration offer additional guidance or relief? Will new state guidelines respond to the pandemic's ever-changing status?
- ▶ What is the impact on the businesses within your

community? On your residents?

How will you navigate through these unknowns? We take a look back at 2020 to see how municipalities were faring then and what initial steps they took, and we offer a checklist with some tips to remain resilient financially during ongoing uncertainty.

Municipal Survey Offers Insight

More than one-third of municipalities that responded to a Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) survey on COVID-19 indicated it was too early to tell the full impact from the pandemic on municipal revenues. The September 2020 survey, conducted in partnership with the Pennsylvania Municipal League and other municipal associations, was before the second wave of COVID-19 hit the more rural areas of the state. As a result, it's not surprising that densely populated urban municipalities indicated the most impact:

- ▶ Almost 20 percent of urban and suburban municipalities eliminated positions, compared to only 1.5 percent of rural municipalities
- ▶ Three-quarters of cities and first-class townships were considering or had implemented a spending freeze

Urban and suburban municipalities were more likely to report a decrease in revenue (59 percent) versus their rural counterparts (31 percent). Most municipalities realized or anticipated a loss of EIT revenue and a decrease in liquid funds.

Approximately 40 percent of municipalities reported no significant change in expenditures, while the same number had some increase in costs. About 20 percent reported a decrease in expenses. Legal costs associated with policy changes and personnel issues were among the expenses – in addition to costs of cleaning, altering workspace and public space, and investment in technologies to promote remote work and meetings.

Municipalities expressed interest in programs such as DCED's Strategic Management Planning Program (STMP) and Act 47 to help mitigate pandemic impacts. Other actions to control spending include:

- ▶ Institute a spending freeze on non-essential or capital items (40 percent)
- ▶ Partially or fully cut funding for some non-essential programs (18 percent)
- ▶ Restructure existing debt (less than 10 percent)
- ▶ Obtain a line of credit or issues a Tax Anticipation

Note (TAN) (less than 10 percent)

- ▶ Additional actions including borrowing from reserve or rainy-day funds to fill unanticipated gaps

Tips for Managing During Uncertainty

Here is a checklist to make your municipality financially resilient in 2021 and beyond.

- ▶ Watch local indicators. There is usually a lag on the impact to municipal revenues. You can anticipate impacts on revenues by keeping a careful eye on the community:
 - How is real estate tax revenue compared to this time in recent years? Are there more inquiries about deferment or inability to pay?
 - How have local businesses and industries been impacted? Plan for the impact on the municipality's revenues.
 - Has local unemployment increased? How are income-based revenues compared to prior years? Is there greater need for community assistance?
 - Have you seen a decline in revenue from parking or other fees or an increase in refuse or other costs?
- ▶ Plan for the best- and worst-case scenarios. Manage to the middle.

▶ Consider spending controls

- Preserve cash for hefty and essential payments such as pension and TANs due toward the end of the year.
- Implement purchasing controls to avoid unnecessary spending.
- Postpone large capital projects and purchases.
- Reach out to surrounding communities to identify opportunities for shared services or payment for services your community already provides, such as police and fire support.

▶ Look for revenue opportunities

- Consider negotiating with nonprofits in your community regarding Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements. Approach negotiations with a justifiable and specific request that reflects the cost of services provided.
- Make sure PILOT agreements are documented and tracked.
- Work closely with DCED to identify grant opportunities. For example, consider technology investments that may lead to safer operations and long-term cost savings and efficiencies, such as web-enabled payment systems.

- Identify funding sources such as CARES funds to help pay for COVID-related expenses.

▶ Have a backup plan

- Keep in contact with your bank lender about a line of credit, should one become necessary.
- Consider using a new ability that allows multi-year repayment of TANs until the end of 2022. This provides some breathing room for municipalities to recover.

Finally, remember what drew you into local government in the first place and explore new ways to serve the community. Consider reaching out to nonprofits serving your area to see if there are opportunities to partner. For example, work with your local foodbank to host a food drive or provide volunteers.

About the Pennsylvania Economy League

The Pennsylvania Economy League is an independent nonpartisan voice for good government.

We provide technical assistance and independent and impartial consulting to local governments, including DCED's STMP program and Act 47 programs, studies on mergers and consolidation options, assistance with asset sales, and more.

Additionally, we conduct independent research and provide civic education on policy issues impacting PA's communities.

Visit our website at www.pelcentral.org to learn more and to sign up for our weekly e-alerts. □

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Community Resilience Building Workshops

BY ADAM W. WHELCHER, PH.D.

Building resilient communities is more relevant now than it has ever been. Extreme weather events and related hazards are forcing municipalities, corporations, nonprofits and government agencies to adapt quickly to new and sometimes unpredictable situations. For example, extremely heavy storms have increased in the Northeastern United States by more than 70% since 1958. These storms often bring flooding, power outages, landslides and other potential calamities. These ongoing and threatening events reinforce the need for action and compel community leaders to plan and implement mitigation strategies.

The Pennsylvania Municipal League and [Sustainable Pittsburgh](#) are teaming up with [The Nature Conservancy](#) to help municipalities in Pennsylvania work on local strategies through [Community Resilience Building](#) workshops. By proactively exploring the risks that a community is experiencing and making a plan, they can reduce the vulnerability of residents, employees, businesses, infrastructure and the environment. Leaders who understand the need to look ahead and plan can serve as examples

of what is possible to other communities. It was with that in mind, that the Nature Conservancy and numerous partners including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) came together to create the [Community Resilience Building](#) process.

More than 400 communities across the United States have used the Community Resilience Building process to start or strengthen their resilience planning and mitigation efforts. The CRB process provides communities with an “anywhere at any scale” method for creating actionable plans for increased resilience. During the pandemic, itself a testament to the threats communities are facing, these community resilience building workshops are being held online one community at a time.

The Community Resilience Building Workshops are focused on a collaborative process to advance stakeholder education, planning and accountable implementation. A risk matrix is used to center the process, capture community dialogue about the issues and capture the momentum created by

the discussions. It is the goal of the community workshops to:

- ▶ Define extreme weather, and natural and climate related hazards.
- ▶ Identify strengths and vulnerabilities (future and existing).
- ▶ Develop and prioritize actions for the community and relevant stakeholders.
- ▶ Identify opportunities for actions that reduce risk and build resilience.

Pennsylvania communities have already seen an increase in flooding, expansion of tick and insect borne illnesses, increase in ground level ozone, and other serious threats. This initiative to bring Community Resilience Building Workshops to municipalities in Pennsylvania can provide leaders and stakeholders with the information and tools they need to make a plan and build fortitude. If you are interested in participating in the next series of community workshops, please contact Leslie Rhoads at lrhoads@pml.org. □

Keeping You Connected

BY TODD EACHUS, SR. DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS, COMCAST

Looking back over the past year, COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on nearly every aspect of our daily lives. We saw an increased need for streaming to accommodate online learning, remote work, and simply connecting virtually with family and friends. This past year has also highlighted the digital divide in our communities and the need for connectivity, now more than ever. In addition to connectivity challenges, we saw many small businesses impacted in ways that feel insurmountable. In this new reality, Comcast rose to the challenge, building on our existing network capabilities and commitments, to meet the needs of the pandemic in order to better serve our communities.

Our Network

2020 was historic. In the span of four months in the wake of pandemic lockdowns, Comcast's network experienced almost two years' worth of traffic growth. Thanks to a decades-long commitment to investing, building and evolving technology to meet the needs of our customers and the capability to meet unexpected challenges, we've built a powerful network with a simple purpose: keeping customers connected – always. Years of strategic investment, combined with advancements in network software, were among the

principal factors that allowed our network to perform at such a high level throughout a year marked by historic growth in Internet usage and demand. The strength of this network meant that we were able to lean in to programs like Internet Essentials and the launch of our new Lift Zones.

Digital Equity + Internet Essentials

Ten years ago, Comcast launched a journey of addressing digital inequities in under-resourced communities. In 2011, we launched Internet Essentials, our signature digital inclusion program to help connect as many low-income families as possible to broadband Internet at home. Internet Essentials is the largest and most comprehensive program of its kind. Now in its 10th anniversary year, we celebrate that Internet Essentials has helped connect a cumulative total of more than 10 million low-income Americans over the last decade to the power of the Internet at home. But as we look back on our decade-long commitment to connecting the unconnected, we're also looking ahead to expand beyond connectivity to help communities realize their opportunities. Comcast recently announced an investment of \$1 billion over the next 10 years to help further close the digital divide and provide the tools and resources to even more low-income

Americans to succeed in the ever-evolving digital world.

Building on our work with Internet Essentials, late last year, Comcast also announced a plan to invest in education and digital equity. We know that access to the Internet is not where the story ends. True digital equity also means ensuring individuals have the skills and abilities to put that access to use for education or work. Comcast is pledging to provide connectivity to the communities we serve through access to the Internet, programs to support creativity and digital literacy, and skills training for young people and workforce development opportunities for adults. Our dedication to leveling the playing field and making a lasting impact for generations to come has never been stronger.

In addition, we are working with community partners to support an ambitious plan to launch 1,000+ Comcast Lift Zones in underserved communities by the end of 2021. We have opened sites that provide free WiFi in a safe environment like YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, churches, community centers, LGBTQ centers, Salvation Army sites and more. These Lift Zones are an amazing opportunity for Comcast to give back to our neighbors and friends in the communities we serve, help bridge the digital divide and support children nationwide during this challenging time. All told, we

estimate these sites will enable students to complete more than 25 million hours of schoolwork before the end of the year and help close the “homework gap” in America.

Lift Zones are a multiyear effort designed to connect families to the Internet by complementing the Internet Essentials program. In the coming months and years, these centers will enable low-income students, adults, seniors and veterans to connect to the Internet within their neighborhoods, providing an equal opportunity to participate in distance learning, job opportunities and digital skills training. While each Lift Zone will vary by size and connectivity needs, each one will be outfitted with robust WiFi powered by our Comcast Business team.

RISE

In addition to our Internet Essentials and Lift Zone efforts, Comcast launched a new program in 2020 to address the impact of

the pandemic on struggling small business owners. Called RISE, which stands for “Representation, Investment, Strength and Empowerment,” this new effort provides the opportunity for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) small businesses nationwide to apply for marketing and technology services from Comcast Business or Effectv, the advertising sales division of Comcast Cable. Comcast RISE is part of a larger \$100 million Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative Comcast launched last summer to fight injustice and inequality against any race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or ability.

Our Continued Commitment

For more than a decade, Comcast has been on a mission to address digital inequities in under-resourced communities through Internet Essentials. Now, more than ever, there is an even greater need. Lift Zones and RISE offer additional

solutions to help the communities we serve during these difficult times. We are making a long-term commitment to these future leaders and lifelong learners. Our resolve has never been stronger and we are rededicating ourselves to making a lasting impact for years to come.

As local governments look to address connectivity and adoption issues, Comcast looks forward to partnering with the Association and individual municipalities to lend our expertise and invest in our collective future. □



Real, sustainable community change requires the initiative and engagement of community members.

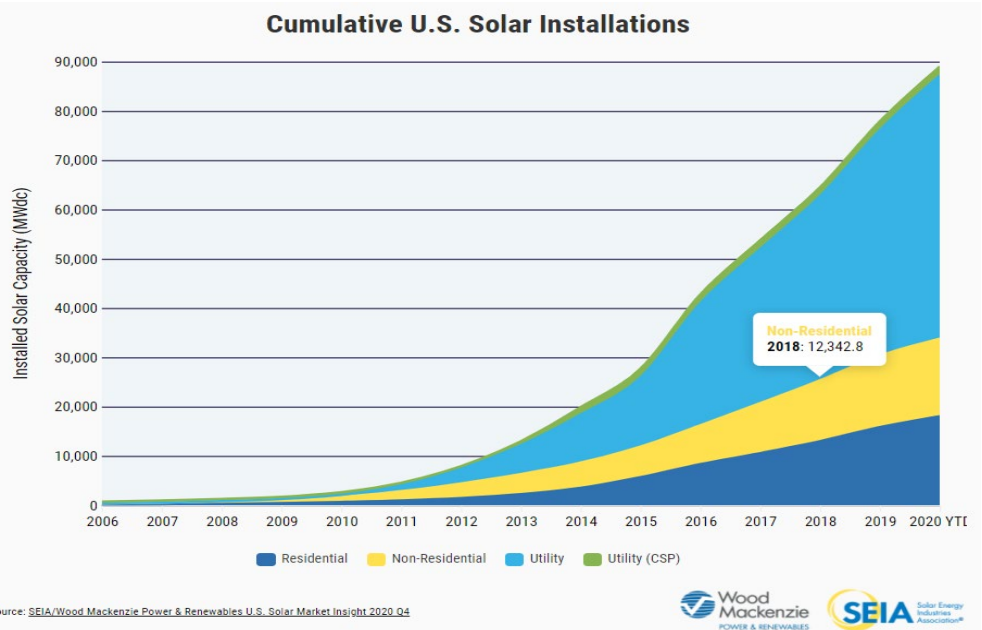
- Helene D. Gayle

Technical Assistance for Your Community to Attract More Solar Investment

BY EMMA PIERSON, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE, COMMUNITIES, GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE AND
JIM PRICE, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER, SUSTAINABLE PITTSBURGH

Sustainable Pittsburgh is working with the [Great Plains Institute](#) and the [Solsmart](#) program staff to bring technical expertise and recognition to local municipalities looking to improve their potential for attracting solar investment. Solsmart, a program of [The Solar Foundation](#) and the [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#), is a voluntary recognition program for municipalities that uses objective criteria to assess and guide local governments seeking to streamline the process of reviewing and approving solar photovoltaic energy systems.

Installing solar voltaic energy to power a home or business is an excellent way to save money, lower carbon pollution and improve regional air quality. But one of the most significant barriers to installing photovoltaic solar energy is not the cost of the system itself, but the soft cost related to obtaining permits, waiting for reviews, and navigating the inconsistent and sometimes dated regulations of local government. The solar landscape has changed dramatically over the past 15 years and [Sustainable Pittsburgh](#) is working with the



Source: [SEIA/Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables U.S. Solar Market Insight 2020 Q4](#)

[Pennsylvania Municipal League](#) and national partners to assist local governments in updating and streamlining their processes.

In the last decade, solar energy installations exploded across the country, with the industry experiencing an average annual growth rate of 50% according to the [Solar Energy Industry Association \(SEIA\)](#). The largest driver behind solar's explosive growth over the past half-decade has been shrinking costs, and in places

around the U.S. where those costs are prohibitive, solar does not get installed. There are three main cost barriers that can be preventative in Pennsylvania; lack of solar education, lack of policy support and high upfront costs.

The good news? Municipalities can help with the first two costs with minimal effort. Education is a cost to solar companies because they have a more difficult time 'selling' solar to customers who don't have much experience with

solar and/or don't see solar in their communities. The simple act of having solar relevant information on the community website can make this process easier. Policy support can impact the costs positively or negatively. Incentives make solar more affordable, but red tape makes solar more expensive by creating hurdles for installers that are passed along to consumers in the form of more expensive solar. By focusing on streamlining the solar installation review process and providing better information on municipal websites, community officials can significantly improve the prospects for solar investment. The Solsmart program and technical support provides up-to-date information about what to do.

There are two different pathways for earning recognition through the Solsmart Program. The first is the Standard Pathway that is designed for municipalities that control permitting, planning, zoning and/or the inspection process. This

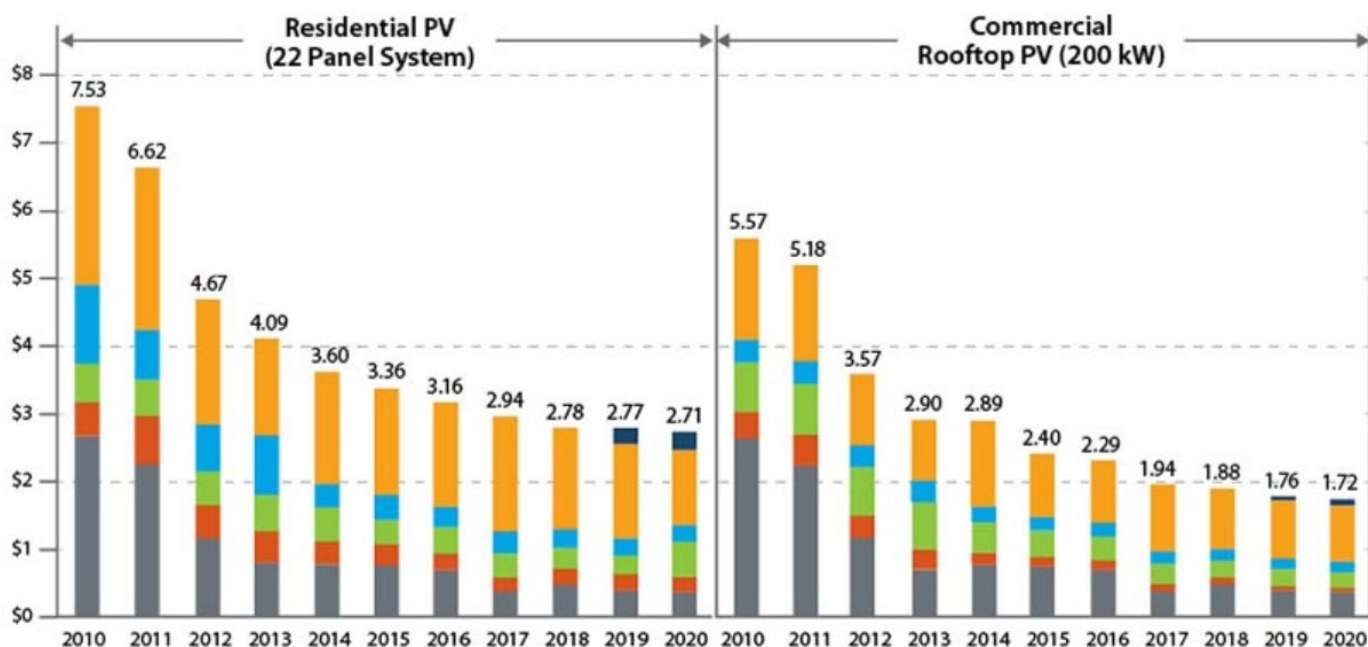
is the most common way for a community to earn recognition. A community can earn one of three designations; Bronze, Silver or Gold. And there are a number of special focus categories including Solar Rights, Utility Engagement, Community Engagement, Market Development and Finance, Permitting and Planning, and Zoning and Development. The other pathway is a modified pathway for regional governments or counties that do not have control (or only have limited control) over zoning and/or permitting.

Sustainable Pittsburgh is looking first to communities who've previously earned recognition through the [Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification](#) program, a program managed in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Municipal League. Municipalities who are selected to participate in this effort will receive technical assistance from local and national solar experts and support from

local graduate students. A team of graduate students, assisted by Sustainable Pittsburgh staff, will help community leaders assess which criteria in the Solsmart program the municipality is currently eligible for and work with them to develop a work plan to achieve maximum potential. The municipality will also have access to Pennsylvania specific training and resources.

In addition, Sustainable Pittsburgh and the Pennsylvania Municipal League will be adding the Solsmart program as criteria to the [Sustainable Pennsylvania](#) program. This means that communities who earn the Solsmart designation will also benefit from a higher score in the Sustainable PA program.

If your municipality is interested in participating, please contact Jim Price; jprice@sustainablepittsburgh.org ☐



Source: [National Renewable Energy Laboratory \(NREL\)](#)

More Resources, Better Reporting and a Bigger Challenge - *The Sustainable Pennsylvania Update*

BY JIM PRICE, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER, SUSTAINABLE PITTSBURGH

The Sustainable Pennsylvania program is a voluntary certification program managed by the Pennsylvania Municipal League and Sustainable Pittsburgh. The free program empowers municipalities to assess, report on and earn recognition for their sustainability efforts. This summer, we are unveiling a new version of the program that has undergone a major overhaul. The updated program will provide municipal leaders with numerous resources and a few new challenges meant to help communities achieve new levels of sustainability.

Sustainable Pennsylvania's completely redesigned interface will make subject related resources available at the user's fingertips. For example, if a user is working on a question about energy efficiency, there will be a page of resources related to energy efficiency linked directly to the question itself. Those resources might include a thorough explanation of the question or provide more information about why the actions are important. The linked resources will often include funding opportunities,

links to relevant state, federal, and/or regional programs, and/or examples of best practices or case studies. The idea is to provide Pennsylvania municipalities with the tools they need to create sustainable communities.

The Sustainable Pennsylvania program will have several new or expanded topic areas to address community and regional challenges. Two such areas are community resilience and social equity. The community resilience section will assess what a community has already considered and provide resources on what steps a Pennsylvania community can take to build a more robust and resilient community. Social equity is an issue that has been at the core of Sustainable Pittsburgh's work since they were founded more than 22 years ago, and this update brings to bear the latest information and resources to make equity improvements both as an organization and community wide. Users will find additional questions and resources throughout the program in almost every section related to social equity. And this

brings us an additional feature of the updated program.

The ten topics of the Sustainable Pennsylvania program broadly address areas that community leaders focus on in daily municipal management. Economic development, transportation, land use and planning, and operations are a few of those topics. In addition to questions being categorized into these municipal topic areas, a user will also be able to filter questions within each topic by what impact the actions will have. For example, a question in the economic development section might address how a community deals with blighted properties, but that question will also be tagged as having equity and/or climate mitigation impacts. This will allow leaders to pick and choose actions that impact what their community wants to focus on.

The criteria for the updated program were created with the assistance of more than 60 experts and practitioners from across Pennsylvania. In addition to that depth of expertise, there are some

continued on page 37 →



Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification

The Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification, a project of the Pennsylvania Municipal League and Sustainable Pittsburgh, is a voluntary performance recognition program to help municipalities achieve their sustainability goals to save money, conserve resources, and encourage innovation. It is intended to bring recognition to municipalities that are applying the policy and practice of sustainability as their way of operating in order to advance community prosperity. Focused on municipal operations, policies, and practices, the certification also serves as a mechanism for sharing best practices for creating a more sustainable Pennsylvania.

The program provides communities with an online structure and performance platform for recognition as they adopt sustainable policies and practices. The certification – Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Associate level – is free and strictly voluntary. The program helps municipalities progress from whatever their municipal practices are or have been in the past toward achieving a Sustainable future.

League Member*

Platinum Certification

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On the Horizon

BY CHERYL LEES, FORMER PENNPRIME MANAGER OF LOSS CONTROL SERVICES

Resiliency can be characterized as building back better. The events of the past year certainly provide the impetus to be resilient and recover. Rather than looking back at previously set metrics, a better approach is to look forward and set goals for new and improved outcomes. By focusing on issues that are just now starting to develop in the insurance world and have the potential for emerging into opportunities or challenges, resiliency can be proactive rather than reactive. While not all of the following issues are currently incipient in Pennsylvania, these national trends could eventually impact Pennsylvania workers' compensation, group healthcare, and property and liability insurance.

ON THE HORIZON: Workforce Evolution

The pandemic has changed the landscape of the workplace forever. Organizations quickly and creatively adapted to conducting the majority of their services remotely and found many of these changes to be more cost effective and more efficient while

maintaining or improving upon the level of customer service. Studies show that many employees are thriving while working from home and have achieved higher productivity.

On the flip side, some professionals are struggling with working longer hours and their work/life balance is suffering. With the challenges of online K-12 schooling and tending to aging parents, many find that juggling these duties with work is simply too stressful. After decades of struggling to assert their place in the workplace, some women are leaving their jobs, or considering leaving, which will certainly impact the economy. In an attempt to retain these trained and valuable staff in the workforce, employee-forward businesses are incorporating permanent teleworking, flexible-hours, job-sharing, split-schedules, enhanced leave benefits, assistance with child and elder care, flexible holidays, and other innovative solutions.

The challenge to recruit and keep new police officers continues. Civil unrest and demand for police reform have edged the

more experienced sector of this workforce toward retirement with younger officers leaving the profession completely. Lack of qualified law enforcement will put pressure on an already stressed system. Those who remain will be required to work more hours, intensifying the potential for work-related mental and physical injuries. Municipal budgets, already stretched, will have to absorb the additional overtime and workers' compensation costs. Pension issues remain a financial burden, and with the trend toward retirement, the system will be strained further.

Employee-forward businesses continue to develop and promote wellness initiatives that address all aspects of mental, physical, social, spiritual and financial health. When personnel leave their jobs, businesses lose the time invested in hiring and training, not to mention a wealth of institutional knowledge. By providing health education, creative programs and benefits, and other novel Human Resource options, a foundation can be built for a solid, healthy workforce that is less stressed, more productive

and more committed to the organization and its goals.

ON THE HORIZON: Expanding Regulations

Coverage for workers' compensation has grown from its original intent of covering traumatic accidents to encompass occupational diseases, specific industry exposures, and cumulative and continuous trauma. In the past decade, Pennsylvania adopted Act 46, "Cancer in the Occupation of Firefighter" which presumes a work-related illness, thereby shifting the burden of proof to the employer. State legislation is evolving in Pennsylvania, as well as in many other states, which would include PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) in the definition of presumptive illnesses for certain occupations. In some states, the definition of illness for particular job classifications is being expanded for suicide. New terms like "essential workers" are being added, with definitions that are often unclear and shift over time. Historically, payroll audits for workers' compensation occur annually. Some states have started requiring weekly reports in order to receive more timely information on deferments, layoffs, leave, unemployment, downsizing, disability and early retirements.

The federal government is looking to expand benefits using existing systems, such as workers' compensation. However, standard underwriting procedures that determine rate-setting and fund reserves cannot account for, and therefore do not incorporate, mid-year government mandates. As the lines between benefits continue to blur, some employers are considering 24-hour integrated coverage which would combine worker's compensation, healthcare benefits and disability income.

ON THE HORIZON: Healthcare

Telemedicine, previously on the slow track of adoption, has blossomed in both the group health and workers' compensation arenas. It has now been widely adopted for initial appointments, follow-up appointments, return-to-work appointments, patient education sessions, physical therapy, mental health consultations, and more. The future of telehealth is dependent upon government regulations that are in the offing.

Pharmaceutical expenditures increased in 2020, while there was a decrease in ambulatory care and non-COVID hospitalizations and health screenings. The reduction in preventative diagnostics could cause an uptick in future health problems and a rise in employer healthcare costs resulting from health issues that were not treated in the early stages and will require higher-cost treatments. The reduction in health screenings might also affect work-related injuries manifesting as aggravation of pre-existing conditions. Even if not work-related, a decrease in the overall health of employees could reduce the workforce temporarily, or even permanently, requiring organizational resources to search for and hire replacements.

In the United States, a huge percentage of antibiotics, ibuprofen and acetaminophen, as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used in hospitals, and most of the components needed to manufacture pharmaceuticals, are sourced from China and India. National disasters, trade sanctions, political unrest, pandemics and other disruptions can exacerbate reliance on limited suppliers. When these products are difficult to obtain, there can be detrimental impacts on the healthcare and workers' compensations systems.

It is expected that the new administration, which supports the Affordable Care Act (ACA), will build upon it, providing Medicare-like health plans while continuing private health insurance options. These and other changes will set the framework for the future of group health.

ON THE HORIZON: Insurance Industry Transformations

Artificial intelligence, improved robot technology, cloud computing and other technology innovations will shape the future of the insurance market and client offerings. Complex property assessments, which previously took days or weeks after a catastrophic event and could be risky endeavors, are now being completed safely by drones in a few hours. Providing online, on-demand tools for clients is becoming the norm.

Underwriting relies on statistics to analyze past performance as a reasonable prediction of future exposure which, in turn, determines rates. This process assumes that past models on workers' compensation claim frequencies will be the same going forward. Last year was substantially different with delays in treatment, litigation and return-to-work. With such massive disruptions, the metrics must be reevaluated going forward to account for the pandemic anomaly.

Even prior to the pandemic, courts were backing up, causing postponements and rising costs. The delays due to the pandemic only aggravate this situation, triggering employers and insurance carriers to carefully scrutinize which claims should be litigated and which should be settled.

→

The shift to virtual events in 2020 is likely to have a lasting effect with client interactions transitioning away from in-person appointments. Even prior to the pandemic, organizations were questioning the cost/benefit of conferences and culturally, people were prioritizing being with family above traveling for business. To accommodate virtual fatigue, smaller, local events might be the wave of the future. Which trends become permanent will certainly impact both the economy and how the insurance industry engages with its customers.

There is pressure due to historically low interest rates on investment income. For first-dollar carriers (guarantee cost market), frequency is the driver. For the reinsurer (retention market), severity is the driver. The cost of catastrophic claims is increasing faster than medical inflation. Catastrophic injuries did not decline even though there was a decrease in claims frequency overall. COVID-19 catastrophic claims added to catastrophic claims from traditional accidents causing coverage gaps when reinsurers tightened the language surrounding communicable diseases. More physicians are seeking to be added to healthcare systems' General Liability and Professional Liability which some states' laws might block.

Natural disasters, civil unrest and the pandemic have caused adverse loss developments in commercial auto, general liability, umbrella liability, errors and omissions, and property lines. On the workers' compensation side, the expansion of legislative-mandated coverage beyond original underwriting intent, coupled with drops in payroll, are leading to less premium income

for primary insurers. Reinsurers are necessarily reacting with a combination of decreasing policy limits, raising retention levels and rates, and adding exclusions.

ON THE HORIZON: Public Health

U.S. Department of Labor changes are anticipated, some of which are likely in the area of OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) enforcement regarding pandemic containment measures in the work environment. Pennsylvania is in the minority of states that do not have a state OSHA plan which requires safety measures for public sector employees. However, the best practice for reducing workplace accidents and injuries is to follow OSHA's widely-recognized and universally-accepted standards. Additional safety and health requirements can be expected from state governments incorporating guidelines from other federal agencies as new information regarding COVID-19 is learned.

Not only does COVID-19 continue to be an ever-changing threat as new variants are discovered, but other novel viruses might also pose a risk in the future. Local governments must develop preparedness plans, response capabilities and multi-media communications systems to inform and educate their communities and improve the public trust that has waned over political division. PennPRIME members can access tools for crisis plan development at www.pennprime.com or through the contact information at the end of this article.

ON THE HORIZON: Cyber Risk

It is well-known that cybersecurity threats are escalating at an

alarming rate. Since the onset of the pandemic, the FBI has found computer viruses being generated from what appears to be valid COVID-19 communications and these continue with the rollout of vaccines. Hackers are creating methods which do not require cutting edge technology including audio and video messaging designed to steal both intellectual and financial property. In addition, a whole new array of computer security issues has surfaced with personnel continuing to work from home. Security efforts are more challenging in a remote environment as employees use their personal devices and work devices interchangeably to get the job done. Local government has the responsibility to ensure that the sensitive data they store regarding law enforcement, tax collection, personnel records and other areas are protected through continually evaluating and addressing cyber threats. Now, more than ever, discussing your current cyber coverage with your insurance carrier is paramount to ensure financial recovery from a security breach.

ON THE HORIZON: COVID-19 Vaccine and Claims Development

Now that vaccines are being distributed as a critical component in fighting the pandemic, organizations need to weigh the benefits of requiring vaccination as a condition of employment. Like with any human resource issue, there is much to consider, with developing case law eventually playing a critical role. Non-vaccinated employees present a risk to other staff. Conversely, if employers require vaccination, and an adverse effect is realized, this could be deemed work-related. Compensability depends upon case-specific

facts; however, Pennsylvania's workers' compensation judges favor the claimant. On the liability side, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has provided detailed technical assistance questions and answers titled, "[What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#)." The League's legal partner, Campbell Durrant, P.C., has provided the following guidance "[COVID-19 Vaccinations and Employment Considerations](#)."

In Pennsylvania, COVID-19 claims are being processed largely through the group healthcare system with some exceptions for first responders and essential workers. Once a COVID-19 claim is accepted under the workers' compensation system, any complications associated with it must also be accepted. These include medical treatments for long-term lingering effects such as, heart, lung, and brain complications and mental health issues, all of which have the potential for partial or total disability.

On the liability side, trending issues consist of coverage for business interruption which need to be documented thoroughly, employment practices suits regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), general suits for unsafe working conditions and failure to take necessary precautions. These cases are working their way through the courts and will impact employers' policies.

ON THE HORIZON: Economic Recovery

While the economy is not technically in a recession, this is a recession-like time period and forecasters expect the GDP might take up to another year or more to bounce back. Some jobs that were lost due to the pandemic will not come back. Some workers who were permanently displaced might have trouble finding work in a different sector. The travel, hotel, retail and restaurant industries are among the most affected. Organizations must rise to these challenges with fresh approaches.

ON THE HORIZON: Resources Provided by The League and PennPRIME

For further assistance and additional resources on any of these issues, consult with your insurance carrier. PennPRIME members are encouraged to contact Angela Tennis, Director of Insurance Services, at (717) 236-9469, ext. *258, or atennis@pml.org. The League is dedicated to advocating for and serving the interests of the membership at both the state and federal levels. The Legislative Department analyzes legislation, alerts members when pertinent legislation unfolds and promotes legislative action according to the policy established by the membership each year. □



Our state's promise for prosperity is organized around the institution of local government. Like the old adage "all politics is local," sustainability takes root close to home in the way we organize as communities.

- Sustainable PA website





Risk

BY MR. KEN PORTER, CPCU, ARM AIAF, PORTER & CURTIS

Overview

“Whatever you do, do it well.” – Walt Disney

This attitude by Walt Disney applies to everything, including to organizations and in particular to risk management.

Most organizations, and a lot of good companies, view risk management as a necessary evil – something imposed upon them by taskmasters like regulators, auditors and insurance companies. It’s just another thing to do. These companies typically delegate the “job” of risk management to managers or to certain departments, like risk management or internal audit. Here, the goal of risk management is preserving value by striving for risk compliance.

Some organizations embrace risk management. They view it as a fundamental part of everything they do. In fact, in these organizations, risk management is used to improve operating efficiencies and service quality and the very best companies use it to optimize strategic decisions. The difference is that risk management is not what they do, but it’s how they do it. Or in other words, risk management is not the “job,” the

job is the job, but rather it describes how the job is done. This means everyone is managing risk – from the mailroom to the boardroom. Here, the goal of risk management is creating value by striving for risk excellence.

There are many good organizations that strive for compliance, but only the great ones strive for risk excellence.

Leading by Example

The irony is that most of us, in our personal lives, embrace risk management. It’s something we do personally every day without even thinking about it. It’s just second nature. For example, we slow down when driving in snowy conditions or cancel our travel plans entirely. We diversify our investments. We lock our doors at night. All of these actions are examples of risk management and most of us do them without thinking. In our personal lives, we strive for risk excellence.

That’s why it’s strange there aren’t more risk-excellent organizations. Why is that? The blame likely goes to an organization’s penchant for specialization. The search for the holy grail of operating efficiency. They make risk someone’s responsibility. However, when

it comes to risk management, risk must be managed where it’s created.

That means drivers must prevent auto accidents (just like they do when driving to and from work), Human Resources must avoid wrongful terminations, and maintenance staff must prevent slips/falls.

Everyone is involved and everyone is responsible for the risk under their immediate control. And you, personally, can use your risk excellence experience to lead by example.

The Five T’s

“Leadership is unlocking people’s potential to become better.” – Bill Bradley

The place to start down the road of risk excellence is at the top. Senior management must embrace risk management and advise staff, at every level of the organization, that preventing accidents is everyone’s responsibility. However, to make it actually happen, an organization must follow the guiding principles of the five T’s.

Teaching – Set the bar and set it high. Staff must be taught that preventing accidents is everyone’s

responsibility and standards of excellence must be established for every activity.

Training – Nobody is born an expert. Experts are made, through training and experience. The organization must provide training resources that allow its staff to do their jobs safely and effectively.


Trying – Nothing happens without effort and accountability. Staff must commit to safety. That means adhering to the standards of excellence but also going the extra mile in everything they do.

Tracking – You get what you measure. The organization must track progress toward reaching its goals. In the area of risk management, some of the goals worth tracking are standards compliance, claim and incident reporting, transitional duty for injured employees, and accident count.


Troubleshooting – Nothing is perfect and things change. Accidents will still happen and every accident must be used as a learning opportunity with root causes corrected. Otherwise, history will repeat itself.

The risk management program is designed around these principles. The goal is to help every location unlock their potential to become better. □






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Managing Principals:
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Jason E. Stanton, P.E.

More Resources, Better Reporting and a Bigger Challenge *continued...*

topic areas where the user can earn points from earning recognition in national programs like Solsmart (Solar Foundation) or the Complete Streets Coalition (Smart Growth America). Information about these additional certifications are embedded in the Sustainable Pennsylvania program to recognize communities that have done the extra work to earn recognition through these national programs or recognize communities that have taken similar actions.

The new program has a number of other useful tools that we are excited to share with municipal leaders. For example, the program will allow the user to pull and print reports based on the sustainability performance of the municipality. If a report is not available but the data is, we can customize the system to create that report. Another new feature: Municipalities of different sizes will be placed into tiers so a community with 30,000 people and a large professional staff will have to do a bit more than a community with 1,500 people and a part-time staff. And communities who don't have certain amenities or services may not have to answer questions related to those issues.

The goal was to create a certification program that provides communities with the tools they need to succeed, while allowing those who do good work to be recognized for their efforts. We look forward to sharing the program with you this summer and joining you on your journey towards creating a more Sustainable Pennsylvania. □



Unemployment Eligibility

BY DEBBIE GROSS, U-COMP MEMBER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

When is a claimant eligible for unemployment benefits?

We have often heard that in order to be eligible for unemployment benefits, you must be unemployed and be able and available for work. Under Pennsylvania law, there are more requirements and those will be outlined below. Any unemployed individual may file an unemployment claim. Please keep in mind that all unemployment claims are as different as claimants themselves.

Per Pennsylvania Unemployment Law, the following criteria must be met:

- ▶ The claimant must have lost their job through no fault of their own.
- ▶ *Credit Week and Financial Eligibility* – The claimant must meet minimum requirements of credit weeks and wages under PA Unemployment Compensation Law. The PA Department of Labor

and Industry (L&I) looks back over the claimant's work history in terms of the quarters they have worked. When an individual applies for unemployment, L&I reviews the last six quarters of work history and focuses on the last four of those. Those four quarters are called the "base year." If the claimant has worked at least 18 weeks in their base year, they are then considered for financial eligibility.

- ▶ If the claimant has earned \$116 or more in any week during their base year, that week is known as a credit week. The \$116 threshold is the minimum amount a claimant must have earned in order for that week to be considered an eligible credit week.
- ▶ *Benefit Eligibility* – The next criteria will be the reason why the claimant has lost their job or the separation

reason. Information is collected from the claimant as to why they are no longer working as well as from the separating employer. As an employer, you may have received a questionnaire from L&I asking about the separation of an employee. It will be important for the employer to complete and return this questionnaire in a timely manner to L&I so that they may adjudicate the claim.

- ▶ Generally, separation reasons such as voluntary quits, discharges, being self-employed or school employees with reasonable assurance of being called back to work at the end of a vacation period will not be eligible for benefits. We have, in the last year, seen exceptions to these separation reasons during the period of the COVID pandemic.
- ▶ If you have an employee who was recently separated

from your municipality, please provide them with information on how to file an initial claim:

- Online at <https://www.uc.pa.gov/unemployment-benefits/file/Pages/File%20an%20Initial%20Claim.aspx>, available 24 hours daily, seven days a week.
- By phone at the toll-free number of 1-888-313-7284.

- By mail. The application is at [https://www.uc.pa.gov/Documents/UC_Forms/UC-42\(I\).pdf](https://www.uc.pa.gov/Documents/UC_Forms/UC-42(I).pdf).

- Videophone service at 717-704-8474, available every Wednesday from noon to 4:00 p.m. for sign language.

Further guidance for employers can be obtained as a U•COMP member by requesting a non-binding quote. Please contact:

Debbie Gross
U•COMP Member Service Representative
Email: dgross@pml.org
Phone: 1-800-922-8063, ext *254 ☐



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Legislative Status Report STATE



PREPARED BY AMY STURGES, LEAGUE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS – asturges@pml.org
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All legislation can be found on the General Assembly's website:
legis.state.pa.us

The 2021/2022 legislative session is now several months underway as of Spring 2021. The General Assembly swore in 31 new members and experienced a shake up in leadership in both the House and Senate. Much of the legislative discussion has focused on Governor Wolf's 2021/2022 budget, which is due on June 30, as well as recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recently Enacted Legislation

Act 1 of 2021
Senate Bill 109 (PN 144)
Signed: February 5, 2021
Effective: Immediately

[Act 1](#) amends the Fiscal Code regarding COVID relief including:

- ▶ Providing that business owners who received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness are

not subject to PA Personal Income Taxes.

- ▶ Providing that federal stimulus payments are not subject to Pennsylvania Personal Income Tax.
- ▶ Providing \$145 million in funds for the Hospitality Industry Recovery Fund.

DCED and counties will administer this grant program with the assistance of local economic development organizations. This program is funded by a loan from the state's Workers' Compensation Security Fund and is to be repaid by July 2029 or by federal stimulus dollars from the federal government.

- ▶ Providing emergency education relief through the PA Department of Education for various educational entities aside from public K-12 districts.
- ▶ Establishing a new Rental and Utility Assistance Grant Program of \$570 million to be administered at the county level (based on population) through the PA Department of Human Services. The former rent assistance program administered by PHFA with CARES funds is repealed.

Ballot Questions Passed by the General Assembly

[Senate Bill 2](#) (PN 86) is a joint resolution setting out three amendments to the PA Constitution:

- ▶ **Article 1** – prohibiting the denial or abridgement of rights on the basis of race or ethnicity.
- ▶ **Article 3** – authorizing the passage of a concurrent resolution that does not need to be presented to the Governor for the termination or extension of a disaster emergency declaration.
- ▶ **Article 4** – requiring passage of a concurrent

resolution by the General Assembly in order for the Governor to extend an emergency declaration beyond 21 days (currently a declaration may be renewed every 90 days). The Governor may not declare a new emergency declaration based on the same or similar facts without passage of a concurrent resolution by the General Assembly authorizing the extension.

Legislation proposing to amend the Constitution must pass the General Assembly in two consecutive sessions, be advertised after each passage, and approved by the voters. Senate Bill 2 has passed both the House and Senate in two consecutive sessions and the questions will appear on the May 18 primary ballot.

2021/2022 Budget

Governor Tom Wolf presented his 2021/2022 budget on February 3, making history as the first ever virtual budget address in the Commonwealth due to the pandemic. The budget proposal would spend \$37.8 billion, an increase of \$3.8 billion, or 11.1 percent, over last year's budget.

The budget prioritizes education and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor's proposal requests a total of \$7.6 billion for basic education (pre-k to 12), almost a 22 percent increase. His education platform also includes increasing fairness and equity, requesting a \$45,000 minimum teacher salary, an ad-

ditional \$36 million for student scholarships by adjusting tax credit programs, \$229 million in savings resulting from charter school reform and \$199 million in needs-based scholarships for PA State System of Higher Education students.

Economic recovery, a key theme of the Governor's address, resulted in a \$3 billion request to fund initiatives meant to stabilize the economy and help those most affected recover from the pandemic. It also includes a pathway to increase the minimum wage to \$15 by 2027. The Governor, in an effort to create equal tax burdens, proposed an expansion of the special tax forgiveness to \$15,000 for single filers and \$30,000 for married filers, with a \$10,000 allowance for each dependent, while also increasing the Personal Income Tax rate to 4.49 percent.

Several provisions of the budget could potentially impact local governments. The budget includes a proposed expansion of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) to allow for the building of broadband and provides \$1 billion through RACP to schools for lead and asbestos remediation. It also includes a request of \$8.4 million for the 10 county and municipal health departments, as well as the creation of an eleventh department in Delaware County. Lastly, the Governor once again proposed a fee assessment on all municipalities for State Police support.

The League encourages our members to visit the [Governor's Budget Webpage](#) for more information on these proposals.

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General Assembly Leadership

Senate	
Democratic Leadership Floor Leader: Jay Costa Caucus Chair: Anthony Williams Caucus Secretary: Wayne Fontana Appropriations Committee Chair: Vincent Hughes Caucus Administrator: Judith Schwank Policy Committee Chair: Katie Muth	Republican Leadership President Pro Tempore: Jake Corman Floor Leader: Kim Ward Caucus Chair: Bob Mensch Caucus Secretary: Ryan Aument Appropriations Committee Chair: Pat Browne Caucus Administrator: Camera Bartolotta Policy Committee Chair: Mario Scavello
House	
Democratic Leadership Leader: Joanna McClinton Whip: Jordan Harris Appropriations Committee Chair: Matthew Bradford Caucus Chair: Dan Miller Policy Committee Chair: Ryan Bizzaro Caucus Administrator: Michael Schlossberg Caucus Secretary: Tina Davis	Republican Leadership Leader: Kerry Benninghoff Whip: Donna Oberlander Appropriations Committee Chair: Stan Saylor Caucus Chair: George Dunbar Policy Committee Chair: Martin Causer Caucus Administrator: Kurt Masser Caucus Secretary: Martina White

Legislation of Interest

Legislative Budget and Finance Committee Police Studies

[House Resolution 43](#) (PN 363), introduced by Austin Davis, and [Senate Bill 207](#) (PN 176), introduced by Senator Christine Tartaglione, would direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct two specific police studies.

The House Resolution would direct the committee to conduct a study on the salaries and training of municipal police officers in the Commonwealth. The committee would be responsible for measuring the disparities of salaries between departments, as well as between full- and part-time officers, studying discrepancies in police officer

training and providing recommendations to address the salary and training discrepancies.

The Senate Bill would direct the committee to conduct a study on the budgetary impact on the PA State Police as a result of providing law enforcement services to municipalities that do not have their own police departments, enforcing the Medical Marijuana Act and enforcing laws that prohibit illegal marijuana and illegal gaming.

Location: House Resolution 43: House Judiciary Committee, February 3, 2021

Location: Senate Bill 207: Senate Law and Justice Committee, February 10, 2021

Preemption of Local Labor Mandates

[House Bill 46](#) (PN 25), introduced by Representative Seth Grove, would amend Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) prohibiting a municipality from regulating employer policies or practices or enforcing any mandate regarding employer policies or practices as defined in the bill.

The bill would provide for exceptions of this prohibition, including a mandate enacted by a municipality affecting an employee or class of employees of the municipality, an ordinance authorized by the PA Human Relations Act and the terms and conditions of collective bar-

gaining agreements. An ordinance, rule or policy enacted by a municipality before January 1, 2015, would not be invalidated by this bill. This bill would further provide circumstances for when a person adversely affected by a violation of the provisions of the bill can seek relief.

Location: House Local Government Committee, January 11, 2021

Clarifying Municipal Remote Meeting Authorization

[House Bill 79](#) (PN 54), introduced by Representative Joseph Ciresi, would amend Title 35 (Health and Safety) clarifying that the provisions added to Title 35 by Act 15 of 2020 regarding remote meetings during a disaster emergency applies to the boards and commissions of political subdivisions in addition to governing bodies.

Location: House Local Government Committee, January 11, 2021

Municipalities Planning Code - Nonbuilding Lots

[House Bill 141](#) (PN 107), introduced by Representative David Maloney, would establish the Family Heritage Open Space Protection Act by amending the PA Municipalities Planning Code.

This bill would allow for the creation of a nonbuilding lot, which would be exempt from the typical regulations of a subdivision and land development ordinance. For a nonbuilding lot, the property owner would need to obtain a waiver from the Department of Environmental Protection declaring there is no present need for sewage disposal facilities on the site.

If the owner or applicant of a subdivided parcel granted a nonbuilding waiver subsequently decides to develop the property, that individual would be required to comply with all applicable statutes, regulations and ordinances in effect at the time of development or construction. A nonbuilding lot would be defined as a parcel of land that does not contain any structure or building that produces sewage, provided that a structure or building not producing sewage is allowed on the site.

Location: House Local Government Committee, January 13, 2021

Expanding Municipal Authority to Deny Permits

[House Bill 160](#) (PN 128), introduced by Representative Gerald Mullery, would amend Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) expanding the authority of a municipality to deny issuing municipal permits to an applicant that owns real property in the municipality.

This bill would allow a municipality to deny a permit to a limited liability company (LLC), incorporated inside or outside the Commonwealth, with delinquencies in real property taxes, or municipal charges or for a failure to abate a serious violation of state or local code on its real property. The LLC or its principal would be required to disclose in writing when submitting a permit application any tax delinquencies, or unpaid municipal charges or failures to abate serious violations. Failure to disclose this information would result in a \$500 fine payable to the municipality.

Location: House Urban Affairs Committee, January 14, 2021

Extension for Unemployment Compensation Appeals

[House Bill 178](#) (PN 146), introduced by Representative Lee James, would amend the Unemployment Compensation Law extending the number of days for a claimant, last employer or base-year employer to file an appeal of a determination from 15 days to 21 days. This legislation would extend appeals of referee's decisions. It would apply prospectively to determinations and decisions made after notice has been published in the PA Bulletin as specified in the bill.

Location: Senate Labor and Industry Committee, February 11, 2021

Restriction on Local Regulation of Agritourism Act

[House Bill 216](#) (PN 182), introduced by Representative Todd Polinchock, would create the Restriction on Local Regulation of Agritourism Act.

An "agritourism activity" would be defined as a farm-related tourism or entertainment activity that takes place on agricultural land that allows members of the public to tour, explore, observe, learn about, participate in or be entertained by an aspect of agricultural production, harvesting, husbandry or rural lifestyle on the farm. The term would not include overnight accommodations, weddings, concerts or provisions for food and beverage.

The bill would restrict a local government from prohibiting the use of agricultural land for any of the following: agricultural purposes or construction of structures for agricultural purposes; an agritourism activity; a limited seasonal event; an activity that requires a limited license; a retail food facility; a wedding; or a musical event ac-

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companying any of the previously listed activities. Local governments would be able to regulate the size of the structure used for an activity, the size of the parking lot, the property line setback for the activity's structure, and where necessary, to ensure a safe egress and ingress for the public.

Location: House Local Government Committee, January 22, 2021

Pre-registration of Tax Sale Bidders

[House Bill 264](#) (PN 1003), introduced by Representative Doyle Heffley, would amend the Real Estate Tax Sale Law requiring potential bidders at tax sales to appear and register 10 days prior to each tax sale in which they wish to bid.

Registration would require providing contact information and an affidavit stating the applicant: has no delinquent real estate taxes in the Commonwealth; has no municipal utility bills that are over one year outstanding in the Commonwealth; is not acting for a person barred from participating in the sale; and has not failed to correct housing code violations or maintain property in a safe, legal and sanitary manner for three years preceding the application to bid.

Tax claim bureaus may establish registration fees and must provide the list of potential bidders to all municipalities within a county at least seven days prior to the scheduled sale. The bill would bar repurchase by the property owner or immediate family members. It also expands the time frame a municipality can petition the Court of Common Pleas to prohibit the transfer of any deed for any property to 15 days before or after any sale.

Lastly, the bill would authorize a tax claim bureau, with the consent of all taxing districts where the property is located, to establish a minimum purchase price for sales of property in repository.

Location: Passed House April 5, 2021

Dedicated Property Taxes for Police

[House Bills 276](#), [277](#) and [278](#), introduced by Representative Jack Rader, would amend the First Class Township Code; Second Class Township Code; Borough; and Third Class City Code respectively. These bills would authorize a dedicated three mills of Property Tax specifically for police departments. The legislation would require a local referendum before levying the additional millage.

Location: House Local Government Committee, January 27, 2021

UCC Third-Party Inspector Agencies Mandate

[House Bill 428](#) (PN 405), introduced by Representative Doyle Heffley, would amend the PA Construction Code Act concerning the use of third-party inspection agencies.

The bill would clarify that a municipality designating an employee to serve as its municipal code official may use a third-party agency to supplement its current program and to perform plan review and inspections in categories where the program does not possess the necessary personnel.

For municipalities or groups of municipalities that exclusively use third-party agencies, the bill would require the retention of two or

more agencies starting January 1, 2022.

The bill would require the services of third-party agencies be performed under a written professional services contract. When entering into a contract with a third-party, the bill would mandate that a municipality consider: the qualifications of the third party; the fee schedule; the availability of services; and the input of affected stakeholders. Third-parties contracting with a municipality may not be affiliated with each other. A professional services contract may not exceed three years. A permit applicant shall choose from the third-party agencies approved and contracted by the municipality.

A waiver of the minimum two agencies mandate would be allowed if a municipality is unable to find two agencies. The bill would provide a process to apply for and demonstrate the need for a waiver from the Department of Labor and Industry.

Finally, municipalities using third-party agencies must ensure the following notifications are on their building permit application forms:

- ▶ the third-party agency is acting on behalf of the municipality;
- ▶ the applicant may inform the governing body of complaints related to the performance or service of a third-party agency including failure to abide by time periods specified, unprofessionalism, or bias against the applicant;
- ▶ the Department of Labor and Industry certifies third-party agencies and investigates complaints; and
- ▶ the form for filing a complaint can be found on the

Department of Labor and Industry's website.

Municipalities would be required to keep a record of any complaints received against third-party agencies.

Location: House Labor and Industry Committee, February 8, 2021

Clarifying PennDOT's Responsibility for Drainage Facilities on State Highways

[House Bill 489](#) (PN 452), introduced by Representative Karen Boback, would amend the State Highway Law establishing that the Department of Transportation, at the expense of the Commonwealth, shall construct and maintain all surface and subsurface drainage facilities connected with state highways within boroughs and incorporated towns.

Location: House Transportation Committee, February 9, 2021

Local Use of Radar

[House Bill 606](#) (PN 1027), introduced by Representative Greg Rothman, would amend Title 75 (Vehicles) authorizing the local use of both radar and LIDAR by any police officer. Prior to municipal use, a municipality, or each municipality in a regional police department, must adopt an ordinance authorizing the use of radar and/or LIDAR. Police officers would also be required to complete an approved training course.

Municipal police officers would be able to enforce speed using these devices from or adjacent to a clearly marked vehicle that is visible to those driving, and official signs warning drivers of local

police radar enforcement would need to be installed along the main roads within 500 feet of the municipal border. During the first 90 days of radar enforcement, individuals pulled over for speeding would only receive a written warning. The bill would further provide for speed enforcement restrictions.

Lastly, the municipal share of revenue generated from the use of radar shall not exceed more than 10 percent of the municipality's annual budget. All other revenue would be placed into the Motor License Fund.

House Bill 606 was amended in the Transportation Committee to, among other things, allow the State Police to use moving radar. The amended bill passed out of the Committee unanimously. When the bill received Second Consideration, the moving radar addition remained intact, as did the authorization for local use of radar. Additionally, two roads in Philadelphia were added to a current automated speed enforcement pilot program in the City. The bill is now in the House Appropriations Committee. Please see our recent Action Alert on this bill.

Senator Mario Scavello introduced similar legislation, [Senate Bill 419](#), which would also permit all police officers to utilize radar for speed enforcement.

Location: House Appropriations Committee, March 23, 2021

Nomination Petitions in Third Class Cities

[Senate Bill 117](#) (PN 90) and [House Bill 367](#) (PN 339), introduced by Senator Scott Hutchinson and Representative Lee James respectively, would add language to the Third

Class City Code concerning nomination petitions. This legislation would bring those running for office in third class cities on par with those in boroughs and townships by reducing the number of signatures required under the Election Code from 100 to 10 and reducing the \$25 filing fee to zero.

Location: Senate Bill 117: Senate State Government Committee, January 26, 2021

Location: House Bill 367: House Local Government Committee, February 3, 2021

Medal Programs Honoring First Responders

[Senate Bill 158](#) (PN 140), introduced by Senator Mike Regan, would establish three statewide medal programs to honor first responders: law enforcement officers; firefighters; and EMS providers.

The Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC), State Fire Commissioner and the Director of the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services of the Department of Health would assist the Governor in the administration of their respective medal programs and help develop each program's qualifications. MPOETC, the State Fire Commissioner and Director would review their programs' applications and provide the qualified applications to the Governor to issue a final decision.

The Governor, a General Assembly member or an employer may submit a nomination, and the cost of the medal shall be paid by the recipient's employer.

Location: House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, February 26, 2021

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Municipal Property Tax Relief in 2021

Senate Bill 162 (PN 146), introduced by Senator Scott Martin, would amend the Local Tax Collection Law providing for property tax relief. For property taxes due by December 31, 2021, a municipal taxing district would have the option to collect the tax at the prescribed discount rate through August 31, 2021, or to waive any fee or penalty otherwise associated with a late payment if payment is made in full by December 31, 2021. Such action would be accomplished with the adoption of a resolution that is then delivered to the tax collector within 30 days of the bill's enactment.

Location: Senate Finance Committee, February 5, 2021

Local Government Advertising Flexibility

Senate Bill 252 (PN 225), introduced by Senator John DiSanto, would amend Title 45 (Legal Notices) providing local governments with various methods of advertising.


When an advertisement is required by law, a local government would be able to choose from a menu of advertising options, including: a county newspaper of general circulation; a newspaper printed in the local government unit; a legal newspaper designated by the rules of the county court; the public website of the local government; the public website of a newspaper; and a locally circulated printed publication that is at least four pages long. In addition to the required publication, a local government would be required to post a copy of the advertisement at its principal office or building in which they meet. If a local government is unable to post the advertisement at their principal office or meeting location,

the county would provide a space where the local government would be responsible for posting the advertisement.

Local governments would also be required to adopt a resolution declaring their intent to use one or more advertising methods listed in the bill. The local government would provide public notice regarding the passage of the resolution and intent to use alternative advertising methods in one or more newspapers of general circulation within the jurisdiction of the local government.

Representative Ortity has introduced identical legislation in the House – **House Bill 955**. It is in the House Local Government Committee.

Location: Senate Local Government Committee, February 22, 2021 □



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Legislative Status Report FEDERAL



President's American Jobs Plan is Critical to Local Economic Recovery

BY IRMA ESPARZA DIGGS, SENIOR EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL ADVOCACY, NLC

On March 31, in Pittsburgh, President Biden announced the [American Jobs Plan](#) to rebuild our economy and create good-paying jobs for workers in America's cities, towns and villages through investments in infrastructure and workforce development.

The American Jobs Plan is the first of two recovery packages, with a second announcement expected in mid-April, focused on additional recovery priorities, including but not limited to: helping families with challenges such as health care costs, childcare, paid leave and education.

In response to the President's announcement, [NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence Anthony](#) said:

"Cities, towns and villages of all sizes, urban and rural, applaud President Biden for putting forward a significant plan to jumpstart a post-COVID economic recovery with investments in community infrastructure and the people who will build it. Our

country needs good jobs that rebuild sustainable, equitable and innovative infrastructure to connect and serve our residents. We cannot be shy as a country about investing in our people and in our communities to build a better quality of life in every place we call 'home.'

"Local leaders are ready to rebuild and deliver far more than the bare minimum on infrastructure. Fueling our economic growth requires innovation and bold planning. This includes bridging the digital divide to deliver reliable internet access to American households and businesses and investing in essential workforce development and training programs to create pathways to employment for local workers. As debate in Washington begins, NLC and its members are eager to discuss the initiatives that can deliver for cities, towns and villages across the country."

Joining President Biden, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto said:

"Pittsburgh is pleased to host President Biden today. We stand with the President and his vision of building America from the ground

up. Investment in infrastructure is an investment in the American people, a demonstration of our ingenuity, and our ability to solve big problems. There is no better place to show how America can lead by regenerating our economy, while rebuilding our communities and addressing the climate challenge by making investments in places like Pittsburgh and the Ohio Valley."

Local Priorities for Recovery

Recently, NLC sent a [letter](#) to President Biden and Congressional leaders outlining local government priorities for a bipartisan recovery package that invests in the infrastructure, workforce and economic rebuilding our nation needs. NLC outlined [seven key goals](#) for Congress and the Administration to consider as they work together with cities, towns and villages to advance this critical legislation:

- ▶ Rebuild Transportation Connectivity
- ▶ Support Water Infrastructure
- ▶ Support Broadband Access for All Communities

- Build Community Resilience
- Enhance Parks, Neighborhoods and Housing
- Invest in Workforce and Skills Development

- Update Local Infrastructure Financing Tools

American Jobs Plan Highlights

The American Jobs Plan hits many of these local government

priorities for recovery, as well as additional areas such as school/childcare facilities and small business support. Here are some key highlights by category:

Transportation	<p>\$115 billion for bridges, highways and roads.</p> <p>\$20 billion for roadway safety.</p> <p>\$85 billion to modernize existing transit and for expansion.</p> <p>\$174 billion for domestic investments in electric vehicle and battery manufacturing, including tax incentives and grants for state and local government and the private sector in support of the installation of 500,000 new electric vehicle charging stations by 2030.</p> <p>\$20 billion for a new equity program that provides transportation accessibility in disadvantaged areas.</p> <p>\$25 billion in dedicated funds to support large and complex projects with regional and national economic benefits.</p> <p>\$50 billion for infrastructure resilience including rail, roads and other transportation assets.</p>
Rail	\$80 billion for Amtrak and other passenger and freight rail to improve the rail network.
Airports	\$25 billion in airport improvements.
Ports and Waterways	\$17 billion for inland waterways, coastal ports, land ports of entry, and ferries, including a "Healthy Ports" program to mitigate the cumulative impacts of air pollution on communities near ports.
Water	<p>\$111 billion to ensure clean, safe drinking water and upgrade and modernize wastewater and stormwater systems, including:</p> <p>\$45 billion to eliminate all lead pipes and services lines through grants and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund;</p> <p>\$10 billion to monitor and remediate PFAS contamination in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields; and</p> <p>\$56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, Tribes, territories and disadvantaged communities across the country.</p>
Broadband	<p>\$100 billion for affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband infrastructure.</p> <p>Build broadband infrastructure to reach 100% of the population.</p> <p>Remove barriers to municipal broadband and prioritize support for networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and electric cooperatives.</p> <p>Promote price transparency among broadband providers and work towards affordability for all households.</p>
Climate and Energy	<p>\$50 billion to improve infrastructure resilience by targeting investments in those communities most vulnerable physically and financially to climate-driven disasters and to build back above existing codes and standards, including through FEMA's Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program and HUD's Community Development Block Grant program among others.</p> <p>\$100 billion to build a more resilient electric transmission system, modernize power generation and promote clean electricity, including:</p> <p>Establish an Energy Efficiency and Clean Electricity Standard,</p> <p>Support for clean energy block grants for state, local and tribal governments;</p> <p>\$10 billion to mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers through a new Civilian Climate Corps to conserve public lands and waters, bolster community resilience and advance environmental justice.</p>
Housing and Community Development	<p>\$213 billion to build and rehabilitate affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents.</p> <p>New competitive grants to incentivize ending local prohibitions on multi-family housing (duplex and fourplex).</p> <p>\$40 billion for public housing maintenance, repair, and capital improvements.</p> <p>\$5 billion to remediate and redevelop brownfield and superfund sites.</p>
Workforce Development	<p>\$100 billion in workforce development programming to ensure workers have the skills to succeed, including:</p> <p>\$40 billion in a new Dislocated Worker Program and sector-based training including wrap-around services, income supports, counseling and case-management;</p> <p>\$12 billion in targeted workforce development programming for underserved communities and communities hit hard by a transforming economy; and</p> <p>\$48 billion to build the capacity of the existing workforce development system and worker protection systems.</p>
School/Early Learning Facilities	<p>\$100 billion to upgrade and build new public schools through \$50 billion in direct grants and an additional \$50 billion through leveraged bonds.</p> <p>\$12 billion to address physical and technological infrastructure needs at community colleges and to identify strategies to address access to community colleges in education deserts.</p> <p>\$25 billion to upgrade child care facilities and increase the supply of child care in areas that need it most.</p>
Main Street and Small Business Support	<p>\$31 billion to create a national network of small business incubators and innovation hubs that give small businesses access to credit, venture capital, and R&D dollars.</p> <p>\$20 billion Community Revitalization Fund to support at least ten regional innovation hubs to link urban and rural economies, close gaps in racial equity, and create new businesses in distressed regions. □</p>

Public Finance

Supporting a Remote-Working Reality

How PLGIT's streamlined services help local government managers work from wherever they are

BY BRIAN SANKER, PLGIT SENIOR MARKETING REPRESENTATIVE

With any luck, Spring 2021 might bring with it the first signs of a receding COVID-19 infection rate. Even so, as the virus begins to fade, the United States will still have to deal with some lingering realities.

One of those realities is likely to be that many industries will not return to the same working environment that existed at the beginning of 2020. The drastic employment shift that came with the critical act of social distancing showed employers and employees that remote working could be done conveniently and in many cases more productively with the help of effective technology.

Fortunately for local government managers, PLGIT has been ahead of this trend for much of its 40 years of serving local governments in Pennsylvania. We've always understood that municipalities and their residents want the ease and efficiency of performing municipal financial transactions remotely without sacrificing accuracy or control.

PLGIT has made it possible for municipalities to leverage technology to schedule, perform and monitor critical transactions for years, even before it became

a necessary part of our daily way of working. Here are just a few examples of what hundreds of local governments have been using to help them get things done.

Electronic Transactions

Electronic financial transactions are typically more efficient than traditional checks for those on both sides of the transaction. With a check, multiple parties must physically handle a document during a transaction, increasing the opportunities for delays or errors. With electronic payments, the process is automated, and moves forward with fewer steps, and without the need for in-person contact.

Pennsylvania municipalities have also discovered that electronic transactions are much easier to reconcile than traditional checks. They provide an audit trail for accounting purposes. And in some cases, they can improve cash flow because they automate payments from vendors, and provide residents with more payment options like credit and debit cards.

By learning about the different types of electronic transactions available through PLGIT and other

institutions, local governments can take full advantage of their benefits:

Direct Debit of State and Federal Payments

– A municipality can specify direct payments to be made from its PLGIT account to a specific recipient. These automatic transfers are offered at no cost by PLGIT, and can be established for Pennsylvania state payroll tax payments, federal tax payments and other automated transactional needs between the municipality and state or federal programs.

Direct Deposit of Funds – Local governments may elect to have regular subsidies from the state such as State Liquid Fuels payments and payments from other state and federal programs directly into a designated PLGIT account (or different accounts for audit purposes). These funds begin earning interest on the day they are deposited.

Same Day Wire Transfer

– Through this transaction, a municipality may transfer funds by wire from a PLGIT account to another financial institution, or vice versa. For incoming transfers, the PLGIT investor must notify its financial institution to send the

funds to PLGIT and notify PLGIT to expect an incoming wire on a certain date for an exact amount. For outgoing transfers, the PLGIT customer service center initiates the transfer or it can be initiated from our Easy Online Network (EON), PLGIT's online transaction platform. This option gives PLGIT Investors the flexibility to move money quickly. Even better: there are no PLGIT fees for incoming wires, and no PLGIT fees for the first two outgoing wires each month.

Procurement Cards (P-Cards) –

Just like the EON, procurement cards such as the PLGIT P-Card enable a local government's staff to conduct secure, remote transactions – to and from approved personnel and vendors – from any work location.

Next Day Transfer – Using this process, municipalities can transfer funds overnight to be made available in the designated account the next business day via the Federal Reserve's Automated Clearing House (ACH) system. Funds can be transferred to another financial institution, or even from one municipality's PLGIT account to another municipality with PLGIT. PLGIT offers unlimited ACH transfers at no out-of-pocket cost, though fees could apply at the institution receiving funds.

Detailed Reporting and Oversight, 24/7 – In addition to streamlined transactions, PLGIT has developed reporting and oversight capabilities to help local government officials keep track of their financial records wherever they are working.

Specific Reporting – Local governments can use EON to select very specific criteria for reports. For example, if you want to access financial transactions related to a specific vendor or from a specific project, a manual records search can be very time consuming, and in the case of a work-from-home environment,

extremely impractical. By contrast, an electronic search can take just a few minutes and can be performed from any location with a secure internet connection. You can also run a report that shows dividend earnings over a period of time.

Municipalities can also download transactions from a specific time period, which can help identify any trends in income or expenditures. This information can be incredibly useful during the budgeting process or when making decisions about large purchases.

Increased Employee Efficiency

– Multiple users within a municipality can be granted varying degrees of access to PLGIT accounts. Employees can have the speed of accessing specific records and creating reports, or they may be granted the ability to conduct transactions. In expanding the functionality of the PLGIT online account to multiple staff members, an entire department can work cooperatively, even from disparate locations.

Increased Security – Working remotely does not automatically translate to working with a heightened security risk. PLGIT's electronic capabilities such as EON, enable local government officials to have greater oversight of sensitive information, including a better knowledge of who has access to what records, and who has permission to conduct specific transactions. For example, a person who needs to have access to records for one particular construction project can be given limited access just to that account, thus giving the municipality greater control over records and comfort in knowing that information is confidential.

PLGIT has always made efforts to provide the electronic tools to enable municipalities to improve efficiency and put their money to work more quickly. In this unique period of social distancing and remote working, those tools have also been able to preserve

local governments' ability to serve their communities with minimal disruptions.

To learn more about PLGIT's electronic financial transactions, visit www.PLGIT.com, or contact your PLGIT representative.

Brian Sanker is a senior marketing representative with PLGIT, working with investors in the central region of the state. He can be reached at sankerb@pfm.com.

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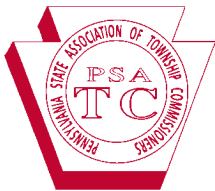
www.NLC.org/serviceline

4000 Town Center Blvd, Ste 400, Canonsburg, PA 15317

PSATC President's Message



[NATE SILCOX](#)
[COMMISSIONER](#)
[HAMPDEN TOWNSHIP](#)



PML.org/PSATC

In Memoriam/Our Legacies

This month, I come to you with a heavy heart, as three long-standing Township Commissioners that have contributed so much to their communities have recently been taken from us.

CAROL GRAHAM

On January 12, we lost Carol Graham, who served as an Aston Township Commissioner in Delaware County for the past 11 years. She also sat on the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners Executive Board as Secretary. Carol was married to her husband Jim for 50 years.

Aston Township Commissioner and Past PSATC President Mike Higgins remembers Carol as follows: "As the Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Committee, Carol was deeply involved with bringing the community together with the Annual Easter Egg Hunt & Bunny Brunch and the Christmas Tree Lighting & Winter Fun Festival. But it didn't stop there. She also organized Summer Movie Nights and our Hometown Concert Series for our residents. More recently and perhaps one of her biggest accomplishments was completion of her long-time dream, an all-inclusive playground at the Aston Community Center for use by both mainstream and physically challenged children. This project was near and dear to her heart and appropriately named 'Smiles in the Playground.' She was both a friend and a colleague and will sorely be missed."

KEN FETROW

On February 6, we lost one of my fellow Hampden Township Commissioners, Ken Fetrow. Ken was truly a legendary figure in our Hampden Township's history. He was involved in the founding of our first police force, rose to and served as Police Chief for 35 years, and then served as a Commissioner for four terms, where he helped transform our Public Works Department, providing efficiencies and ultimately saving our taxpayers money.

Fellow Hampden Township Commissioner and Past PSATC President John V. Thomas had this to say: "Ken Fetrow was a kind, humble man who spent his life in public service... A short story will help explain the reason the residents had such affection for Ken. While volunteering at a benefit golf outing, a golfer drove up in his cart, got out and came over and told Ken he wanted to shake his hand and thank him for turning his life around when he was a teenager. Ken had gone to his home and sat with him and his mom and dad, expressing his

concerns. This made a difference to his future. That was just a normal act for Ken, but he touched many people. He was my friend for over 40 years and is truly missed."

FRANK LINN

And finally, on February 10, we lost Frank Linn, Past President of our State Association. Frank served Lower Swatara Township for 36 years – 27 of which were as Board President. Frank was employed by the State House of Representatives for 45 years, serving as a specialist in intergovernmental affairs. While he is most proud of bringing an interchange to the Township to ease local truck traffic – later designated as the "Franklin D. Linn Interchange" – Frank will best be remembered for portraying Santa Claus for over 50 years in his community.

Past PSATC President Ginnie Anderson Kane stated, "Frank will be sadly missed by many of us. We go way back – 40 years of friendship... We worked together on too many PSATC conventions to even remember. We did have our differences but I... still considered him my good friend. On [the] one bright side he will finally be able to be with his loving wife, Paulette, who he sadly missed."

And Former Lower Swatara Commissioner and current State Representative Tom Mehaffie stated, "Frank Linn, Lower Swatara Township's own 'Santa Claus' was certainly well known for his many years of service while on the Board of Commissioners. Frank proudly supported Lower Swatara Township's Fire and Police Departments. There is no doubt that he will be sadly missed by his family, friends and Lower Swatara Township residents. God speed, my friend."

I also applaud these three selfless public servants for all they did for their communities. They will be missed, but more importantly they will be remembered for what they did for their communities. Please take a moment to reflect upon the lives of Carol, Ken, and Frank.

It is important for us all to realize that we are not promised tomorrow. And as such, to do our utmost every single day for our communities. Please think about your future legacy and what you will be remembered for within your Township. And if you have more to do, start taking those steps now, rather than later.

God Bless,



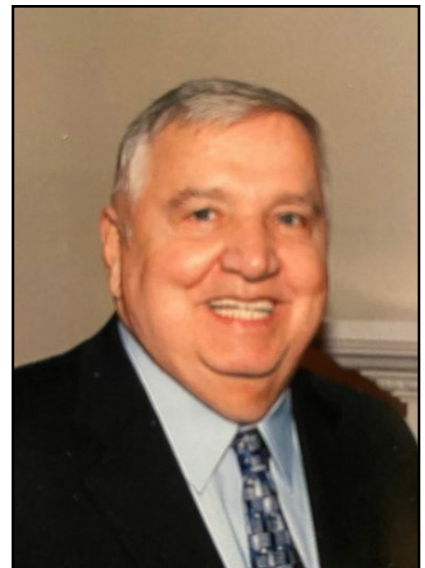
Nate Silcox



CAROL GRAHAM



KEN FETROW



FRANK LINN

PSATC 2021 Legislative Priorities

Mandate Relief

Unfunded mandates increase the local tax burden.

Municipal Public Safety Pensions

Public safety employees deserve pensions that reflect the services they perform. Likewise, taxpayers deserve predictable and sustainable pension costs. The current public safety pension statutes are antiquated resulting in an inequitable and unaffordable burden on taxpayers. PSATC seeks an equitable solution to ever-growing pension costs.

Binding Arbitration

For more than 50 years, binding arbitration has been the process to address public safety contract disputes in Pennsylvania. Over time, the process has weighed heavily in favor of the unions. PSATC is not advocating for the elimination of Act 111. Rather, it supports leveling the playing field with commonsense changes.

Public Notices

Making public information accessible should be efficient and affordable for those seeking the information, as well as for those providing it. PSATC supports a central depository for public notices in the form of a publically accessible, searchable website. A “one-stop” approach will increase access to public information while saving tax dollars.

Prevailing Wage

The more than 55 year old prevailing wage threshold of \$25,000 for public projects needs to be raised to reflect today’s costs. PSATC supports increasing the threshold and adding an annual inflation mechanism that will allow the threshold to keep pace with future costs.

Public Safety

Public safety is a basic local government function that can only be achieved with adequate tools.

Local Use of Radar

Speeding is a paramount issue for local elected officials as it is the number one complaint from constituents. Radar is a reliable, accurate and efficient public safety tool, unlike the antiquated VASCAR system local police currently use. PSATC strongly supports the authorization for local police to use radar.

Preservation of Local Zoning and Rights-of-Way Management

Zoning is an inherent right of local government used to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents and property. PSATC strongly opposes legislation that will preempt local land use decisions and limit rights-of-way management as it infringes on a local governing body’s duty to protect its citizens and their property.

Water, Sewer and Storm Water Infrastructure Funding

Upgrading basic water and sewer infrastructure is costly, but it is also a matter of public safety. Meeting state and federal requirements for nutrient reduction and storm water management are also costly with the added element of mandated compliance. To fund aging infrastructure repairs and meet mandates, PSATC advocates for new funding options and local flexibility.

Consumer Fireworks

The legalization of consumer fireworks in 2017 has resulted in a threat to public safety for both first responders and the general public. Municipal officials receive the bulk of resident feedback and complaints; however, municipalities have no authority to adopt regulations that are stricter than the state law in order to protect the public from the dangers of these aerial explosives. Furthermore, the law is an unfunded mandate on local government (requiring public safety resources) with no real teeth for proper enforcement. Short of repeal, this law must be amended with stricter enforcement penalties and more local control.

The PA State Association of Township Commissioners (PSATC) is a non-partisan association representing the Commonwealth’s first class townships. Over 1.5 million citizens live in first class townships throughout the Commonwealth. Please contact Amy Sturges, Director of Governmental Affairs at asturges@pml.org with any questions.



Dear Colleagues,

The year 2020 saw the COVID-19 pandemic take over our lives. Some businesses were lost and others struggled to adjust and adapt to survive the year.

In Upper Moreland Township (UMT), we started 2020 with a new Township Manager and, in June of 2020, we hired a new Police Chief. In March of 2020, UMT implemented a number of policies to carefully monitor Township spending while keeping an eye on Township revenues at the same time. This careful financial management paid off for us as we were able to control and even reduce our spending. Fortunately, many businesses in our township rebounded in the fall and did surprisingly well. Our Township's staff was very proactive in watching our budget.

This year, we finalized and began construction of the Township's Fair Oaks Park Storm Water Basin project. This ambitious project was only able to reach full funding through obtaining several grants while also using some of our special Storm Water fund. We hope to see this project completed later in 2021.

We also developed an Inter-Municipal "Master Trail Plan." Partnering with Hatboro Borough, UMT staff and residents, everyone worked together to finalize this plan and present it to both UMT and Hatboro and get it approved. Existing and new paths were developed for future trail development.

Recently, we have seen a number of large, high-density residential developments in the Township. We saw the opening of the Station at Willow Grove, which provided 275 apartment units focusing on Transit Oriented Development. Other development includes the new Willow Grove YMCA and Apartments at 2405 Maryland, which was an adaptive reuse of zoning (also 275 units).

We also have been working with College Station, which is a unique dormitory style housing development dedicated to students from the Penn State Abington Campus. This expanded last year consuming two more larger parcels to create more apartment buildings with a club house and other amenities in Upper Moreland Township.

In addition, we are working with SEPTA and moving the Willow Grove Train Station, making it wheelchair accessible, two tracks and a parking garage, which will help our redevelopment of Downtown Willow Grove. We also saw awards from the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) for three projects that have occurred over the past few years. The Thompson Lexus and the Jefferson/Abington Asplundh Cancer Center were both recognized for innovative storm water conservation design. The new Willow Grove YMCA was also recognized by the MCPC for its creative and sustainable design.

The Township also received a grant from the MCPC for wayfinding signage to our Town Center district. A Wayfinding Signage Committee was formed to determine location and design for gateway, interpretive and pedestrian signage which would direct motorists and pedestrians to various points and locations in the downtown area.

I am looking forward to leading PSATC in 2021-2022.

Sincerely,

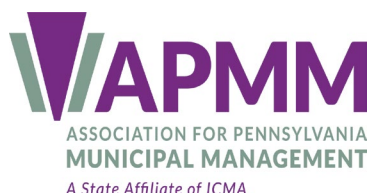
Sam Valenza

Sam Valenza
1st Vice President, PSATC
Commissioner, [Upper Moreland Township, Montgomery County](#)

APMM President's Message



RICHARD L. MELLOR, JR.
TOWNSHIP MANAGER
WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP



APMM.net



Municipal Managers are resilient leaders by nature, we adjust to the multitude of issues that face us on a daily basis. The past year has been challenging and tested everyone in many ways never thought possible. We did not back down from the challenges but worked in our communities to find positive ways to move forward. As we embark on the uncertainty of 2021, one focus is on sustainability. The way we implement policies for those environmental, social, economic and infrastructure projects is critical in improving the quality of life in all our communities and our planet.

A good way to get started in working toward goals for sustainability in your community is participating in [Sustainable PA Community Certification](#). This is a voluntary program that provides municipalities with goals centered around policy and practices to recognize sustainability in your communities. As you achieve more goals, your community is rewarded with more recognition from the program. Many communities, large and small, across the state have achieved various levels of certification for this program and I encourage you to consider it if you have not already. It is one way of showing your community's commitment to sustainability.

Clean air and energy, maintaining our natural resources, accessible food and water, accessible and safe transportation are just a few of the many sustainable ways to create a better community. We all must do our part in improving the environment for the generations ahead of us.

Lastly, I would like to report that the Executive Committee has been working hard this year in drafting amendments to the by-laws to better represent the APMM Committee structure. We believe this will give managers on committees goals and objectives to achieve throughout the year. We look forward to reviewing this with the membership at the annual meeting in May.

Speaking of which, Conference Chair Amanda Serock is meeting regularly with the Conference Committee and staff at APMM to plan the 2021 Annual Conference. While we hoped to be in-person with our colleagues across the state at Wind Creek Bethlehem, we will be 'resilient' and pivot to a virtual conference. The program's theme is Renew, Rebuild and Reinvent and I cannot wait to see the committee's hard work in planning this dynamic conference pay off!

Given this is my last message as APMM President, I want to say that I appreciate all that you do as municipal managers and leaders in your communities across the Commonwealth. I look forward to continuing to serve in any role that can help grow this important profession of municipal management. I look forward to seeing you all in person soon.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Mellor, Jr.

Richard L. Mellor, Jr.

APMM Membership Update

New/Reinstated Members

Ms. Brittany Forman

Borough Manager
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Delaware County
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610-566-5210 x 242
Email:
brittany@mediaborough.com
Full Member

Mr. Brian Harris

Township Manager
Muhlenberg Township
Berks County
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Reading, PA 19605
610-929-4727
Email:
bharris@muhlenbergtp.com
Full Member

Mr. Mario Leone, Jr.

Borough Manager
Ambridge Borough
Beaver County
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Full Member

Mr. John McMullan

Township Manager
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Full Member

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Full Member

Mr. Scott Piersol

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Full Member

Mr. Andrew Shaffer

Borough Manager
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Full Member

Ms. Tamara Twardowski

Borough Manager
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Full Member

Mr. Neil Vaughn

Township Manager
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Delaware County
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Gradyville, PA 19039
610-897-7451
Email: manager@edgmont.org
Full Member



Book Reviews

for the Leader in You...

A Pennsylvania Municipal League Leadership Book Series

There are thousands of books devoted to leadership, management and supervision, and more are being introduced every day. This area of our *Municipal Reporter* is a place where you can find summaries of books, both recent and older, that provide insight and information to enhance your leadership development.

We encourage you to share the books you have read that can help our members grow and develop as leaders.

His Truth Is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope

AUTHOR: JON MEACHAM

BOOK REVIEW BY: LEAGUE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DESIGNATE JOHN BRENNER

Renowned historian Jon Meacham takes you on the painful and prolific journey of John Lewis, pastor, civil rights leader and United States Congressman from Georgia. His remarkable experience and dedication to the non-violent cause of human dignity is a testament to how far we've come and how one person can help change the future.

His passing in 2020, not from the pandemic but from cancer, comes at a time that Americans are deeply divided. Meacham offers John Lewis and his uniquely American story as a powerful and real life example of how to move forward together.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a book in 1967 – “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” A relevant question in 2021 as we grapple with the aftermath of the insurrection on our Capitol and our Constitution; economic and social impact of the COVID-19 virus; mass shootings in Lewis' home state of Georgia and in Colorado; children flocking to our southern border fleeing poverty and violence in Central America; and dictators flexing their muscle in numerous foreign capitals. We have much to do as individual citizens and as the collective masses of humans sharing this planet. Dr. King inspired Lewis and an entire generation to work toward the “Beloved Community.” A place where, according to John Lewis, “an all-inclusive world society based on simple justice, the values, the dignity, and the worth of every human being, and that is the Kingdom of God.”

The march certainly continues.

The Pennsylvania Municipal League
provides support through its many training programs and services . . .



Training and Development

Training

- ⇒ Municipal Leadership Summit/League Training Events
- ⇒ Online Training
- ⇒ PA Construction Codes Academy (PCCA)
- ⇒ Energy Code Training
- ⇒ Floodplain Management Training
- ⇒ PA Training Hub (PATH)

Programs

- ⇒ Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification
- ⇒ Civics and You: Your Key to Pennsylvania Local Government e-book
- ⇒ University-Community Network (UCN)

Insurance Trusts

- ⇒ PennPRIME Property & Liability Trust/PennPRIME Workers' Compensation Trust*
- ⇒ Unemployment Compensation Trust (U-COMP)*

Programs and Services

- ⇒ Public Employer Labor Relations Advisory Service (PELRAS) – *free to League Members*
- ⇒ Municipal Utility Alliance (MUA) Electricity Procurement Program
- ⇒ EfficientGov GrantFinder Program – *free to League Members*
- ⇒ Local Public Procurement Program (L3P)
- ⇒ Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust (PLGIT)
- ⇒ Municipal Job Junction+ (MJJ+) – *free to League Members*

Members of these programs and services also receive newsletters and/or special publications designed to keep them up to date on the latest developments pertaining to these topics. For information on any of the above services, please contact us at 800-922-8063 or 717-236-9469 or visit our website.

*Members of The League enjoy reduced membership fees when joining these programs.

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