YOUR TOWNSHIP TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Our Fellow Township Residents:

Residents may often question how their tax dollars are used. The following article will provide an overview of the annual Township budget. The primary focus and responsibility of the Board of Supervisors is the financial oversight of Township’s revenues and expenditures, including the millage rate. The Township tax rate of 3.062 mills was again maintained in 2019 without reducing services. Township taxes have not increased since 1998, and the Township has lowered the tax rate on several occasions to the current millage. A balanced budget in the amount of $7,346,811 was adopted for 2019, and reflects an increase of $84,166 from 2018. Property taxes are paid to annually to three taxing bodies: South Park Township, Allegheny County and South Park School District. The following chart reflects the amount of taxes that will be paid in 2019 by property owners to each taxing entity using a home with an assessed value of $150,00 and the current millage rates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxing Body</th>
<th>Millage Rate</th>
<th>Dollar Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Park Township</td>
<td>3.062 Mills</td>
<td>$459.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny County</td>
<td>4.73 Mills</td>
<td>$709.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Park School District</td>
<td>25.38 Mills</td>
<td>$3,807.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Township officials recognize that tax dollars are limited and every attempt is made to effectively allocate funding and utilize revenues to meet the diverse needs of our residents without increasing taxes. Annual operating expenses include an Administrative staff, Public Works Department, Police Department, Recreation Department and Library.

Infrastructure improvements remain a priority, particularly Township streets. In 2017, Township officials significantly increased the expenditure for the annual road repaving project to $500,000, and have maintained this figure in subsequent budget years, including 2019. Streets under the control and ownership of the Township are repaved based upon a long range, 20-year maintenance plan. South
Park Township is not responsible for the condition/maintenance of streets under the control of Allegheny County or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (PennDOT).

Sewers, both storm and sanitary, are also important components of the Township's infrastructure that require continual maintenance. Bids were recently opened for the 2019 Township-Wide Sanitary Sewer Program, which is scheduled to begin within the next three months. The cost of the project is expected to exceed $300,000. South Park Township is required by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to maintain and upgrade the Township's sanitary sewer system in areas that are found to be deficient. If the Township does not comply with these requirements, DEP can impose a moratorium on the issuance of sanitary sewer taps for new construction, and levy fines and penalties on the Township for noncompliance. South Park Township is billed by three separate sewage authorities a combined total of $1.5 million annually to treat the Township's sewage waste at various treatment facilities: Bethel Park Municipal Authority, Pleasant Hills Municipal Authority, and Clairton Municipal Authority. The costs have significantly increased the past several years in part because of substantial upgrades to plant operations. However, the Township has maintained the sewage user rate of $6.50/1,000 gallons of use since 2005. The Township is finalizing the repair of damages that occurred during the flood of June, 2018, the final component being major repairs to the Sleepy Hollow Interceptor line at a cost of $135,000.

The MS4 (Municipal Storm Sewer System) mandate imposed by DEP has become more costly each year. The intent of the initiative is to efficiently control storm water runoff and to keep pollutants out of the freshwater waterways. Field work, water testing, the mapping of manholes, the installation of stormwater management facilities and detailed electronic recordkeeping has led to escalating costs. The directive, which becomes increasingly restrictive each year, has placed an additional financial burden on the Township’s financial resources.
Public safety is also of primary importance to Township officials and the community. Police officers are trained on a continual basis in all aspects of law enforcement. The changing dynamic of community policing is challenging and has led the police department in many directions to meet the demands of the job and, most important, officer safety. In addition to training, the Township's police officers are furnished with the best equipment, including weapons, body armor, and vehicles to keep them as safe as possible while performing their duties. South Park Township is frequently recognized as one of the 10 safest communities in Pennsylvania, and was presented with the AAA Platinum Community Safety award in 2019 for the 8th continuous year. The award is reflective of the combined efforts of all Township departments. The police department continues on with the Motor Carrier Safety Assistant Program efforts, as coordinated by PennDOT and the Federal Department of Transportation. Traffic details under the program address safety issues including but not limited to overweight vehicles, valid driver's licenses, and safety inspections of commercial truck traffic in an effort to prevent catastrophic truck incidents in our community. Officers are also engaged in investigations, traffic issues, interaction with the various schools, drug violations, etc. on a daily basis as a routine part of their jobs.

Snow removal is the major role of the Public Works Department. South Park Township invests considerable financial resources in the purchase of salt, as well as plowing Township streets. Annual winter maintenance costs average approximately $400,000 in labor and materials. The Public Works Department's numerous duties also include pothole patching on Township streets, park maintenance, and sanitary and storm sewer repairs. Equipment repair and maintenance are essential to the efficient operation of the department. The Township continues to budget for the replacement of aging vehicles and the purchase of new equipment to meet the department's varied maintenance needs. The most recent purchase in 2019 is a skid steer that will be used in areas where space is restricted such as backyards and retention ponds.
Recreation is an important component in the services offered to Township residents. As previously mentioned in the article, the Township maintains the following parks: Evans Park Complex, Wilson Field Complex, Grove Road Park, Highland Park and Whitewood Park. The Township works in conjunction with the various athletic associations relative to field improvement requests. In addition to maintenance activities, the Township recently completed the following projects at Evans Park: installed additional pole lighting in the vicinity of the batting cage and children’s playground near C and D Fields, installed guiderail on the main access street into the Evans Park Complex for pedestrian safety, replaced fencing and a backstop, upgraded existing lighting to LED, poured new concrete pads for the port-o-johns and a new pad at the soccer concession stand, and installed new metal roofs on the A Field pavilion and the storage building. A major drainage project is underway at Wilson Field. Several playground pieces will be replaced at Highland and Grove Road Parks, and extensive repairs were made to the Highland Park picnic pavilion. South Park Township also offers many recreational opportunities and events to residents throughout the year: the 9/11 Ceremony, Community Day, Brunch with Santa, Brunch with the Easter Bunny, the Annual Halloween Party, and the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. A particular favorite of Township children is the Summer Recreation Program which offers diverse programming at a reasonable cost for seven weeks during the summer months. The numerous program options include those offered by the Allegheny County Park Rangers, which have proven to be extremely popular and have been expanded in 2019. The Montour Trail is a significant and growing presence in the community. The Trail will traverse the new Summit Station development at the site of the former Consol location, and includes a pedestrian bridge that will arch over the main entranceway into the development. Recreational fishing also receives financial support from the Township with assistance given to stocking efforts at Peters Creek and Piney Fork Creek.

The Township library is another amazing asset available to residents. In addition to traditional books and magazines, the library offers a wide array of CDs, DVDs, launch pads, playaways, ebooks and
eaudio. Computers are available to the public, including instructional classes in various software applications, and other classes such as online shopping, the use of ebooks, and social media. Day Trips and Destinations programming will continue in 2019, as well as the afternoon Lunch and Learns for adults. Programming for children and teens is particularly active during the summer months. Favorites such as Story Time and Read to the Dogs are offered to younger children, in addition to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). Additional programs include tutoring, and a unique array of activities that is constantly changing depending upon the season. Teen programming includes STEM, college counselors giving presentations several times per year, arts and crafts, cooking classes, and the opportunity for teens to take practice SATs. Future projects include a community created mosaic tile wall that will be placed on the outside of the library reflecting the Township’s past and future. The memorial paver project will be resurrected as a fundraiser in the future and the beautification of the library’s grounds will be completed.

New residential construction will continue in 2019. Residents are aware of the Summit Station development located at the former site of Consol Energy which is a mixed use, Transit Oriented Overlay Development (TOOD) presently under construction. A potential Planned Residential Development (PRD) is the Villas of South Park to be located off of Snowden Road. The project is continuing through the planning process. The developer of the 100-acre site is projecting 96 residential dwellings with a substantial amount of green space.

The Rt. 88 (Library Road) intersection has long been a concern to Township officials. Plans are underway to upgrade the intersection and to remove a number of blighted structures on Rt. 88. The project is estimated to cost $1.3 million. A public informational meeting is scheduled for April 22nd at 7:00 p.m. Additional information about the project is provided in a separate article in this issue of the Park News. Another major project on the Township’s drawing board is the installation of two storm water retention ponds by South Park Township that will be located on property owned by Allegheny
County in the Broughton area of the Township. The function of the ponds is to help control water runoff that is contributing to flooding in this area. The cost of this project is estimated to be approximately $1 million.

Blight conditions are being addressed as the Township budgets funds each year to demolish abandoned, unsightly structures. South Park Township continues to participate in Allegheny County’s Vacant Property Recovery Program which provides a mechanism to gain control of abandoned properties and vacant lots under a specific set of criteria. Litter is routinely collected from Township streets by a part-time employee hired for this purpose. All Township streets have been adopted under the Keep PA Beautiful Program and routinely cleared of litter by the South Park Proud volunteers.

The objective of this article is to provide an overview of annual expenditures related to tax revenues, as well as the maintenance of our community’s assets, and goals moving forward into the future. We thank the residents for their support and assistance throughout the year and for making South Park Township a wonderful community.

Board of Supervisors: 
Dave Buchewicz, Walt Sackinsky and Ed Snee

Township Manager: 
Karen Fosbaugh