

Washington Township News

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



CENSUS 2020

April 1, 2020 will be the beginning of the next census. Found out more on page 3.

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Who needs a permit?

Zoning, Building, Sewerage, Driveway permits, why do we need them? What happens if we build without them? Who should I call with questions?

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Mailbox Issues!

The mail carrier told me to contact the township because they cannot get to my mailbox, but is it the township's responsibility to repair the issue?

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What does the road crew do?

Ever wonder what the road crew is doing? Turn to page 4 to see some of the things they are doing to prep for the fall and winter seasons.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

Washington Township is a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). As such, the Township agrees to abide by federal rules and regulations designed to protect the community from some effects of flooding.

Several areas within the Township are located within federally recognized floodplains and are subject to restrictions on development and use. In return for our participation in this program, property owners are eligible to obtain flood insurance from the federal government (typically issued through an independent insurance broker).

Since the Township participates in the NFIP, we are required to govern regulations regarding development in floodplain areas. Ordinance 2014-1 identifies what restrictions apply when developing within a floodplain. Please check before beginning any work in a floodplain or near any waterways such as creeks and streams. If your project does involve development in the floodplain, a permit application must be submitted to the Township office.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the NFIP, is in the process of updating its Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The purpose of updating these products is to reflect new Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) and floodplain boundaries for Schuylkill County communities. Preliminary FIRM panels and Flood Insurance Study (FIS) are available for review on FEMA's Map Service Center website <https://hazards.fema.gov/femaportal/prelimdownload/>. As a result of the updates, some floodplain boundary areas will change, causing properties that were once outside of the floodplain area to be located within a floodplain area. FEMA will be posting an ad in all our local papers on or around August 15, 2019 and residents have 90 days to appeal the changes. The appeal data must be submitted to FEMA during the 90-day appeal period. Only appeals of the proposed flood hazard determination supported by scientific or technical data can be considered before FEMA makes its final flood hazard determination at the end of the 90-day appeal period.

What this means for you. If you build within the floodplain without a floodplain permit and a flood occurs, any construction that cannot be proven to have a permit will not be covered under the insurance.

If you have questions regarding the floodplain, please contact the Township office at 570-915-6113 or visit our website www.washtwpschco.org for more information.

WHY DO I NEED A PERMIT?

The reason you need a permit to build is for the safety of you, your family and anyone else that enters the premises. It is also to protect future owners.

Washington Township adopted an ordinance in 1979 requiring all persons, partnerships, business and corporations to obtain a building permit for any construction or development. That ordinance was amended and replaced with ordinance 95-1 adopted in 1995. In June 2004, the Board adopted an ordinance to participate in the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). Then again in 2008, an ordinance was passed amending the 2004 ordinance. The minutes book states the ordinance was to appoint a code officer; however, that is not stated in the ordinance. The ordinance adopted in 2008 made tighter restrictions on obtaining a building permit for you the residents.

The UCC states any accessory structure under 1,000 square feet is exempt from a building permit; however, the municipality can adopt an amendment to this exemption. In 2008, the Board adopted an ordinance requiring a permit for any accessory structure 300 square feet or larger. If a structure under 300 square feet was to be built with utilities, then the utilities require a permit and inspections. The good news is the current sitting Board has not enforced ordinance 2008-One and has abolished it as of August 19, 2019, making the UCC rules the Township’s adopted rules and requirements.

The UCC is sometimes difficult to understand. Washington Township has appointed Light-Heigel as the code enforcement officer. If you have any questions regarding whether a permit is needed you can contact them by calling 800-257-2190. It’s better to ask than build without a permit, because in May 2019 the Board adopted a resolution doubling the fees if construction is started without a permit. You can obtain permit applications on our website- www.washtwpschco.org and clicking on the “Permits” tab.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS IN OBTAINING A PERMIT?

First, you need to obtain a zoning permit. This is done by contacting the Schuylkill County Planning & Zoning at 570-628-1415. You may also get an application on our website. All zoning applications and payments for zoning must be taken to the zoning office.

Second, if applicable, you need a sewerage permit. This can be obtained by contacting our appointed sewage enforcement officer, Jeremy Bentz of JB Environmental, Inc. at 484-662-3910.

Third, if applicable, you need a driveway permit. This can be obtained by downloading an application from our website www.washtwpschco.org (it is the same application used by the PA Department of Transportation). Complete it and mail the application, along with the \$250.00 fee to Light-Heigel. The fee covers the inspections and a \$50 township administration fee. Once you have your final inspection and all costs are covered, any remaining balance of the \$250 is returned to you.

Finally, you need a building permit. You can obtain a permit application for specific projects on our website. You may be wondering, “but do I really need a permit?”. Below is a non-exclusive list of items needing permits. If you do not see what you are doing on the list below, call Light-Heigel at 800-257-2190 to verify a permit is not needed.

Any one or two-family dwelling	Any addition to an existing house	New manufactured home
New modular home	Relocating & installing a used manufactured home	Any garage or carport that is attached to the house
Any garage, carport, shed, etc. not attached that is 1,000 sq. ft. or larger	Enclosing a porch or patio	Installing/building a sunroom or “three-seasons” room
Installing any deck less than 30” above ground level, if it has a roof	Installing any deck that is more than 30” above ground level	Installing an in or outdoor hot tub or spa
An in-ground swimming pool	An up-ground swimming pool (including inflatables) with a water depth of 24” or more	A fence higher than 6 feet
Installing a retaining wall higher than 4 feet	Structural alterations to an existing dwelling	Changes to an existing means of egress (exit door, stairs, handrails, guard system, ramps)

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If work is performed without a permit, not only does Washington Township's Resolution 2019-six apply, but you can also be subject to the UCC fines and penalties of up to and including \$1,000 per day for each occurrence.

The Department of Labor and Industry's website contains a broad range of information regarding the UCC, local enforcement, certified code officials, and third-party agencies. Feel free to visit their website at: <https://www.dli.pa.gov/ucc/Pages/default.aspx>

2020 CENSUS

The US Constitution says the USA must take a census every 10 years to count how many people live in the county. The last census was done in 2010 and Washington Township was counted with 3,033 residents. The reason for the census is to show the US government, state & local governments and other officials how many people live in each city, township and borough of the country. It helps set the number of political representatives for each region. It helps the government decide how much money to give to programs in each area and affects funding for hospitals, schools and roads.

By April 1, 2020, you will receive an invitation via US Postal Service to participate in the 2020 Census. You can respond by phone, mail or online. If you do not participate by a certain date a Bureau worker will come to your home to remind you. The census asks who lives in your home, what ages, race and the ethnic origins of everyone.

The US Census Bureau is recruiting thousands of workers for temporary jobs available nationwide in advance of the Census. Applicants can apply for a wide range of positions, including recruiting assistants, office operations supervisors, clerks, census field supervisors and census takers. To apply go to <https://2020census.gov/en/jobs>.

The Board of Washington Township ask that each of you participate in the next Census.

Washington Township

225 Frantz Road
Pine Grove, PA 17963
Ph: 570-915-6113
Fax: 570-915-6482

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8AM-4PM
Closed Saturday & Sunday

website: www.washtwpschco.org

MEETINGS

The Board of Supervisors of Washington Township meet the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm in the office building conference room.

OFFICIALS

Leon L. Lutz - Chairman of the Board
Wendell S. Gainer Jr. - Vice-Chairman of the Board
Lynn A. Brown - Supervisor
Dawn A. Koch - Township Manager
Lynn A. Brown - Road Master
Richard J. Wiest - Solicitor
JB Environmental LLC - Sewage Enforcement Officer
484-662-3910
Light Heigel & Associates, Inc. –
Building Code Officers 800-257-2190
Carl Stump - Emergency Management Coordinator
Mike Stalnecker- Fire Marshall

AUDITORS

Sal Varacalli - Chairman of the Board
Barry Newswanger - Vice-Chairman of the Board
John Krause - Auditor



Mailbox Issues? When to call the Township.

We've received several calls this year and last regarding mailbox maintenance. Because we have had more than normal rainfall the past two years there has been an increase of right of way damage, runoff and erosion.

The photo to the left is a picture of a mailbox in a stone/dirt right of way and the picture below is of a macadem gutter right of way. One the township is responsible for repairing, and the other it's not. The Township has the right to use the right of way, but the Township does not own it.

If your mailbox area looks like the picture above, then you are responsible for anything to the left of the red line. Which means, if it rain and washes the stone down the road to your neighbor, it is your responsibility to repair the right of way near your mailbox.

If your mailbox area looks like the picture to the right and the macadem road connects to your driveway and there is a gutter, give us a call and we will evaluate it and repair it.

Why do we fix one and not the other? The township owns the road and any drainage attached, but as previously stated we do not own the right of way.

There are some exceptions that will be reviewed on a case by case basis. If you receive a letter in your mailbox from a postal worker now you can determine if it's your responsibility before calling the Township.



What is the road crew doing?

1. **Shoulder Cutting-** this removes excess material & debris from unpaved shoulder areas. Its purpose is to improve drainage and allows water to leave the roadway. When this is not done, water collects on the roadway creating potential icing conditions in winter, thereby weakening pavement and causing potholes. Each day the road crew can finish up to 3 miles of roadway with cleaning and hauling.
2. **Vegetation Management-** doing this maintains visibility on roadsides. The road crew mows each side of the roadways not kept up by residents and trim trees. Mowing is a long process because it is done at 3 mph with a 4-foot-wide mower that makes two (2) passes on each side of the roadway. This process takes two (2) guys, usually getting 4-5 miles done in a day.
3. **Clean out drains/pipes-** this is done to maintain the effective flow of water around the roadways. During the winter some of the cinders gather in the pipes and need to be cleared out. During spring and heavy rains lots of debris gathers in the inlets and pipes. Controlling water flow is very important in maintaining pavement surfaces as well as under. Depending on the angle of the pipe the road crew will either use a vacuum truck or dig out by hand.
4. **Winter prep-** having limited equipment and trucks that need to be used for all seasons each time a piece of equipment is used; it needs to be prepped. When a truck is used to haul blacktop, the crew must first prep the box so that cleaning the blacktop off is somewhat easier. That same truck will need to carry the salt mixture in the winter to maintain the roads during a snowstorm. Along with prepping trucks and equipment, the crew also has to check signs to make sure all are accounted for, put out winter markers so when we have a heavy snow they can see the side of the road and begin ordering supplies to ensure we do not run out of anything during a storm.