

WHAT DOES EAST BRADFORD TOWNSHIP DO?

Michael P. Lynch, Township Manager

Recently someone asked, “What does the Township do?” This is a good and fair question. But, be prepared because the answer unrolled below may be longer than the inquiring mind might have expected.

This introduction is intended to wet your whistle and feed your pump as the Township plans to spin off from this primer a number of profiles of Township programs, services, and operations over the course of 2011. Look for them at the Township web site – www.eastbradford.org and particularly in the “Did You Know” section. We hope they will provide informative insights.

Some Background

All of the states have at least 2 levels of government: state and county (or county-equivalents – like parishes in Louisiana). Some states – like Pennsylvania – have 3 levels: state, county, and local. There are various types of local government, including townships, boroughs, cities, and towns. This 3-tier system is somewhat unique. In fact, there are only a handful of states that have systems of local government similar to that in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania including New Jersey, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and several New England states.

As of 2002, Pennsylvania had 66 counties, 1,018 municipal governments, 1,546 townships, 516 public school districts, and 1,885 authorities (special districts). Each one is duly authorized and legally constituted. Under home-rule laws, municipalities may choose to draft and amend their own charter, like the Borough of West Chester. East Bradford Township does not employ a home rule charter.

East Bradford Township is one of 1,459 Townships of the Second Class, the most numerous category of local government in PA. The Second Class Township Code (a manageable read as official code tomes go and available for review at the Township Building or on the web <http://www.psats.org/townshipcode/index.html>) authorizes, directs and guides municipalities of this category – sometimes very specifically and sometimes very nebulously.

Given the sheer number of local units, it is not surprising that there are active proponents to consolidate local government. Over the years and current to this day discussion and debate continues as to the merits and efficiency (or lack thereof) of the local government structure and form of government (as a recent example, House Bill 2431 proposed to abolish local government). Some of the pundits of local government actually make a number of good points for regionalization and consolidation of government units, services and programs. There are however many compelling reasons that support the local government structure. Because of their small size, local governments are full-service, grassroots-driven communities overseen by the community neighbors who are dedicated to meeting the specific needs of residents while keeping taxes in check. Under the law, residents have the right to address the elected officials about matters before it. Local government officials and staff are intimately familiar with the community they serve.¹ (For additional information on the debate see: <http://www.psats.org/sept05coverstory.pdf> – The Great Debate - Are Fewer, Bigger Governments Better?, PSATS Article September 2005.)

In the years ahead this writer does expect that increased inter-municipal cooperation will be the norm and an important component to address both sides of the debate. East Bradford Township today embraces regional cooperation with numerous intermunicipal agreements with neighboring municipalities and active participation in organizations like the West Chester Area Council of Governments (WCACOG).

Townships represent self-governance in its truest and purest form. Townships are the oldest form of government in the United States, dating back to the 17th century. Townships are governed by a board of three or five supervisors elected at large by the voters for a six-year term. The township board of supervisors is directly accessible to the people of the commonwealth with no layers of bureaucracy in between. There are three Supervisors in East Bradford Township. Three-quarters of Pennsylvania's township governing bodies have three members. Conversion to a five-member board requires the approval of the township's electorate.

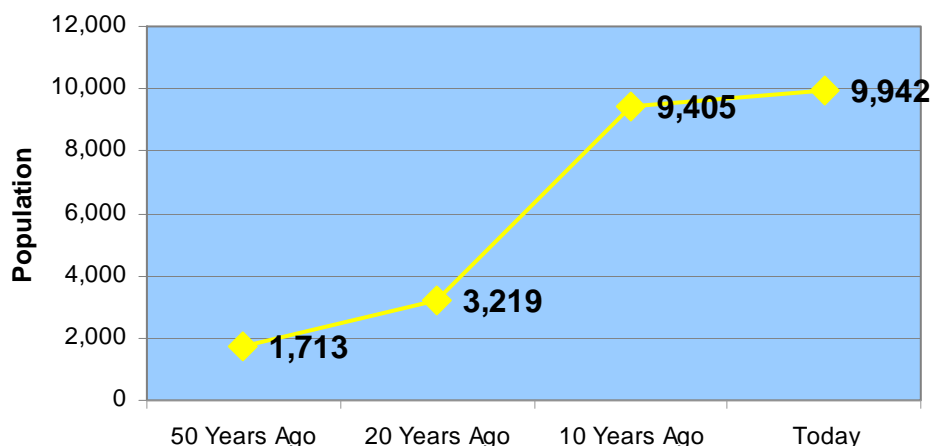
¹ Townships Today, Winter 2011.

Years ago, supervisors were mainly in charge of maintaining roads and bridges and plowing snow in the winter. Today, as the needs of township residents have increased, so has the role of township supervisor. Local leaders must be well-schooled in a wide range of complex issues, such as land management, budgeting, transportation planning, and environmental concerns.² Today's public servants assume an ever-greater role in providing services and facilities to respond to their citizens' needs and, especially, to meet the demands of a constantly increasing array of state and federal mandates.³

As for East Bradford Township

But let's now focus on East Bradford Township – after all this is where you live. Organized in 1731 as part of the post William Penn land divides that today shape the Commonwealth into this jigsaw puzzle of local jurisdictions, East Bradford Township of yore was a different place and government operation than that of the Township of the last 40 or 50 years. And what is different about East Bradford, from then to now, is quite similar to everywhere else – the post-industrialization and post-World War II baby boom resulted in increased development and population. In one word – suburbanization. The 2010 preliminary U.S. Census tells us the population in East Bradford Township is 9,942. The chart below illustrates how the Township has grown in the last 50 years – you see my point about change and development.

Population Growth in East Bradford



² Townships Today, Winter 2011.

³ PSATS, http://www.psats.org/about_townships.html, 2011.

You can learn much about historical East Bradford Township for starters by attending a Township Historical Commission meeting and / or reviewing the East Bradford Township Historic Resources Inventory that is available at the Township office.

What East Bradford Township Does

In 2011, under the leadership and direction of the Board of Supervisors, East Bradford Township employs a full-time staff of 12 (including the Public Works Department). The Township has regular business hours Monday – Friday and 24/7 emergency service coverage. The Township campus is located at the intersection of Frank and Copeland School Roads on a 3-acre property. The campus consists of an administration building, a public works garage and the Copeland School – a former 1-room school house adaptively restored for use by community groups.

Below is a summary of the various services, programs and activities provided by East Bradford Township:

Police Service & Emergency Management – The Township provides:

- Police services through an inter-municipal cooperation contract with the Borough of West Chester that supplies 24/7 patrol coverage and a full complement of police services.
- Fire Protection through regional volunteer organizations under contract with the Township, including West Chester Fire Department, West Bradford Fire Company and Minquas Downingtown Fire Company.
- Ambulance services – The Township supports Good Fellowship Ambulance Company and Minquas Ambulance Company, which provide professional medical transport for most of East Bradford.
- Emergency Management – The Township appoints an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) to plan (Township Emergency Management Plan) and oversee events and situations requiring multi-agency response.

Public Works – The Township Public Works Department:

- Maintains and repairs more than 53 miles of Township-owned roads. Maintenance includes stormwater drainage, rights-of-way sight distance, litter control, winter storm maintenance, and traffic controls (e.g. 5 traffic signals, signage and pavement markings).

- Maintains Township's fleet and equipment.
- Mows and otherwise maintains Township parks and trails.
- Maintains Township facilities.

Land Use Planning and Zoning Administration – These tasks include:

- Preparation and administration of the Township Strategic Comprehensive Plan (current plan dated 2004-2014). This plan is updated approximately every 10 years.
- Administration of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. This includes application administration and the review and approval of subdivision and land development applications. The Township, as mandated, complies with the Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247). This legislation directs and guides municipalities in the matters of land use planning, local authority and proceedings (<http://www.psats.org/mpc/index.html>).
- Continual review and update of Township legislation in the form of ordinances and resolutions.

Building and Codes Regulation and Permitting – The Township implements the PA Uniform Construction Code via the review/approval of building permits and construction inspections. The Commonwealth of PA mandated the use of the UCC by all municipalities in Pennsylvania http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/uniform_construction_code/10524. The Township processes, on average over the past 10 years, more than 100 building permits annually, each of which requires plans review and inspections administration.

Engineering – Civil engineering services are increasingly required in an active municipality with the state and federal imposed mandates for stormwater management, wastewater treatment, land development and related public works. Our Township Engineer:

- Reviews applicable building permits for stormwater management compliance.
- Reviews subdivision and land development applications against the Township Code (available on the Township website – <http://www.eastbradford.org/> - click on the "Code of the Township" link).
- Assists in the design of municipal facility improvements.

Open Space & Recreation – There are a variety of tasks associated with parks, trails and open space, including:

- Planning, development and maintenance of Township parks – The Township owns and maintains 16 sites, consisting of over 600 acres. These sites consist of active parks, passive open space, and undeveloped lands.
- Administration of the open space program – The Township has undertaken one of the most successful open space preservation efforts in Pennsylvania. Since the inception of the open space program in 1998, the Township has purchased over 400 acres and otherwise protected (via conservation easement) over 1,000 acres.
- Planning, development and maintenance of Township trails – Complementary to the open space program has been the development of an extensive recreational trail system throughout the Township. The Township currently owns and maintains over 20 miles of trails (it's worth noting that there are many more miles of trails consisting of private trails (e.g. HOA) and other public facilities (e.g. Natural Lands Trust's Stroud Preserve)). The Township trail system also is becoming an important link in the County Trail network. The recently completed East Branch Brandywine Trail (a 2.5-mile paved, multi-use trail that extends from West Bradford Township south to Route 322, just east of Skelp Level Road) is part of a larger regional concept (known as the Brandywine-Struble Corridor) that extends north-south through the entire county.
- Preparation and administration of the Recreation, Open Space & Environmental Resources Plan (current plan dated 2009). This is a component of the Strategic Comprehensive Plan and likewise is updated approximately every 10 years.
- Beginning in 2011, the Township will begin to take a more active role in property stewardship and resource management.
- Oversight of a wildlife management program on most Township lands.
- Administration of field permits.
- Volunteer coordination – To assist in the construction and maintenance of Township trails and other park facilities, the Township enlists the assistance of many local volunteers.
- Event planning associated with East Bradford Day – East Bradford's annual community event

Refuse & Recycling – The Township:

- Contracts and administers the collection of refuse and recyclables with a designated hauler – presently Allied Waste. Such administration is mandated by the Commonwealth through Act 101.
- Provides brush recycling through an intermunicipal agreement with West Bradford Township.

Sewerage

- The Township owns and operates a public sewer conveyance system for more than 1,100 residential and 40 commercial units in the Township with wastewater treatment provided by the Borough of West Chester through an Inter-governmental Cooperation Agreement.
- East Bradford prepares and administers our Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. This plan is mandated by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It is a planning document that provides the long term horizon for municipal management of sewage.
- The Township administers an on-site septic system maintenance program. This is another PA DEP mandated program with the objective of municipal maintenance monitoring and enforcement of individual on-site systems to ensure proper and safe operation, with the long term goal of avoidance of public sewer connections. There are approximately 2,450 on-site residential on-lot septic systems in the Township.
- Operation and maintenance of 6 pump stations.

Citizen Outreach and Education – Tasks include:

- Administration of the Township web site – www.eastbradford.org. The website is the primary medium for education these days.
- Preparation of the Township Newsletter.
- Contribution to and support of important cultural and environmental organizations in the area (e.g. libraries, senior centers).

Citizen Access, Participation & Accountability – While there are real tasks associated with this activity, citizen access, participation and accountability is less a service and more of an obligation by the Township and right of the citizens of East Bradford Township - it is uniquely local government. Citizens can see the government in operation, communicate and interact

directly with it and make a difference by participating in it. The Board of Supervisors and Township Staff are committed to following and promoting this professional standard of local government. Every day, the staff fields questions, hears concerns, addresses complaints, and receives input from Township residents. As my neighboring colleague, the long time Manager of West Bradford Township Jack Hines has said, “The best thing local government can do is listen to the citizen and act for the community”.

Organizational Business Administration – There is necessary administration of course to operate an organization no matter how large or small – public or private. General administration tasks include:

- Annual budget preparation, review and approval – The budget process typically commences in June with budget approval in December.
- Financial reporting – monthly financial reports, annual audit, and external audits by PA Auditor General, PADOT and other agencies.
- Tax administration – property tax, earned income tax (County-wide collection commenced under PA Act 32 in 2011), local services tax, and real estate transfer tax.
- Insurance – maintenance of business, liability, public officials and related.
- Payroll and benefits administration.
- Grant writing and administration.
- IT administration – website management, mapping, municipal information systems.
- Document management – The Township declared its intent to follow the schedules and procedures for the disposition of records as set forth in the Municipal Records Manual prepared by the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). The manual establishes minimum retention period for municipal documents.
- Administration of the Right-to-Know Law – As mandated by Act 3 of 2008, public entities are required to follow the guidelines for providing access to public documents when requested by a citizen. A designated Township employee appointed as the Open Records Officer administers the law and processes approximately 40 requests for public records annually.

Many of the above functions and activities are supported by a significant group of Township appointed volunteers:

- Planning Commission

- Zoning Hearing Board
- Historical Commission
- Open Space Review Board
- Environmental Advisory Council and Green Subcommittee
- Parks & Recreation Board and Trails Subcommittee
- Historical & Architectural Review Board
- Traffic Committee
- Agricultural Advisory Board
- East Bradford Day Committee
- Various ad-hoc groups of volunteers with special interests (e.g. trails construction and maintenance)

Funding for East Bradford Township

The total budgeted revenue in 2011 – all funds combined – is \$5,301,429.⁴ Of this, \$4,184,168 is received from taxes and fees (see chart below for break down). This averages out to approximately \$339-\$608 per resident, depending on whether or not the resident has public sewer.⁵ However, this average is somewhat oversimplified because not all residents are subject to real estate transfer tax, which is collected when a deed transfers owners.

The Township property tax rate of 0.71 mills, estimated to generate about \$58,800 in 2011, has remained the same since the property reassessment in 1998. Before that, the tax rate actually was higher – 1.0 mills – but it generated approximately the same amount of revenue. The Board of Supervisors has not raised taxes since the 1970's. The current 2011 property tax rate is the lowest among municipalities in the West Chester Area School District and in Chester County (9 municipalities of 73 in the County have a lower property tax rate and most are rural including Penn, Wallace and West Caln Townships).

To figure out how much you pay in township property taxes, you apply this formula: (assessed value x .000071 = township tax). So, someone with an assessed value of \$100,000 pays \$7.10 in property taxes to the Township; someone with an assessed value of \$250,000 pays \$17.75 in

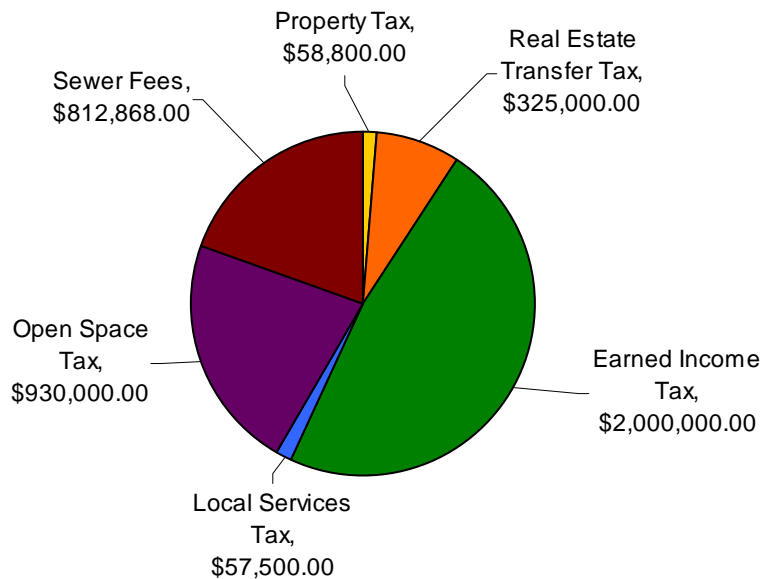
⁴ The Township operates six (6) distinct fund budgets – General, Sewer, Highway Improvement, Liquid Fuels, Capital, and Open Space.

⁵ Public sewer is provided to approximately 1,210 units in the Township. If we use a generic multiplier of 2.5 people per household, that equals 3,025 residents with public sewer.

property taxes to the Township; someone with an assessed value of \$500,000 pays \$35.50 in property taxes to the Township; and so on. The Township property tax is separate from county and school district taxes.

The Township receives half of the 1% Earned Income; the WCASD receives the other half of this local income tax.

2011 Budgeted Revenue from Taxes and Fees⁶



Now, let's talk about expenditures. Total expenditures for 2011 are estimated at \$5,974,415. (To clarify – and reconcile revenues v. expenditures – the general fund budget, the chief operating fund of the Township, is balanced with \$3,119,273 coming in and going out.) The chart below indicates the percentage of funding allocated to the categories discussed in this writing. Some of the most significant areas of budgeted expenditures are:

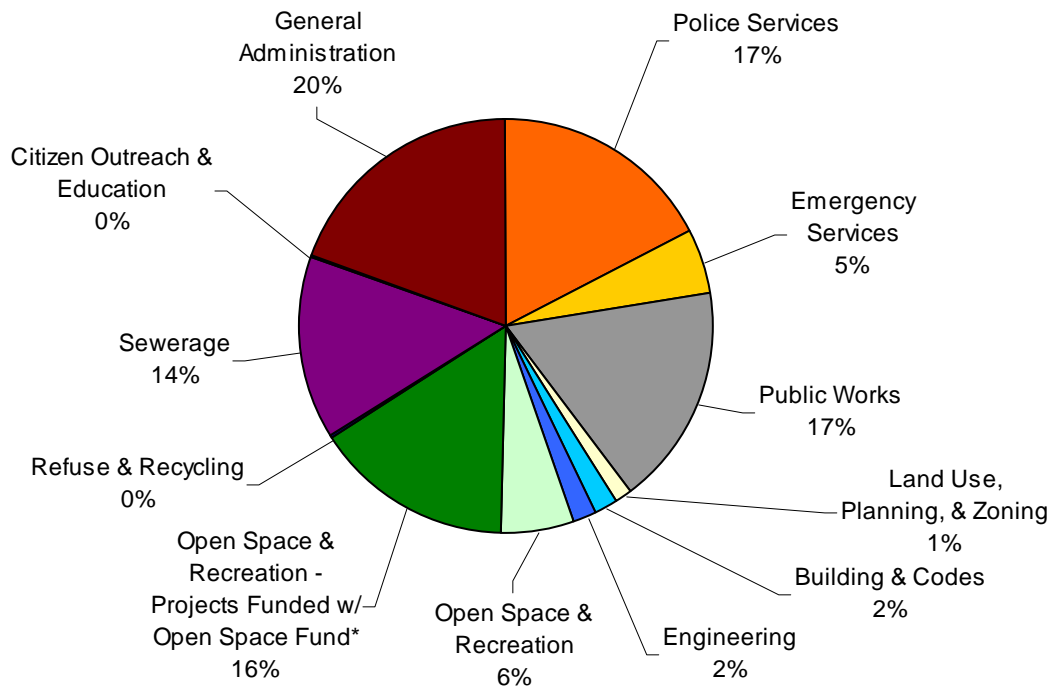
- Emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) = \$1,349,191 (\$136 per resident) (Police Contract 33% of General Fund Budget) (General Fund)
- General administration = \$978,442 (\$94 per resident) (General Fund)

⁶ Sewer Fees & Open Space Tax are proprietary revenue and cannot be used for other than the specific enterprise (i.e., to support the General Fund).

- Public works and roads = \$1,024,058 (\$103 pre resident) (General, Fund, Liquid Fuels Fund, Highway Improve Fund)
- Debt service for the open space fund = \$865,000 (\$87 per resident) (Open Space Fund)
- Sewerage = \$841,089 (~\$269 per resident with public sewer) (Sewer Fund)

It should be clarified that the Open Space Fund (marked with * below) consists of dollars derived from the tax revenues from the Open Space Tax enacted under the provisions of Act 153. This Act permits the Township, after referendum, to impose a maximum of ¼ of 1% on earned income within the Township. The Township initiated two referendums – in 1998 and 2000 – to authorize this tax. The revenue stream from this tax has been used to borrow \$16,150,000 specifically for the protection and preservation of open space.

Allocation of 2011 Budgeted Expenditures (All Funds)



A great resource for learning more about local government in Pennsylvania and keeping current with issues and trends affecting the Township is the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. The web site is <http://www.psats.org/>.