

Schwenksville Borough Newsletter

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Schwenksville

Pathways

Borough Newsletter

Calendar of Events

- 10/25 Annual Halloween Parade-
6:00 pm - 9:00pm Heidelberg Church, 2nd St
- 11/1 Planning Commission Meeting -7pm Borough Hall
- 11/8 Borough Council Meeting- 7pm Borough Hall
- 11/22-23 Borough Hall Closed for Thanksgiving



Newsletter Named "Pathways"

Dear Residents,

Welcome to another edition of the Schwenksville Borough Newsletter. Borough Council is pleased to publish a third edition for 2012 as part of its continuing effort to keep residents informed and current on activities, decisions and events that affect Borough residents and property owners. The new name "Pathways," reflects Schwenksville's strong appreciation for its history and the long path traveled; as the Borough's commitment to forging a path towards future prosperity and the distinction of being a gateway to the Perkiomen Trail.

Just as a pathway symbolically connects our past, present and future, there is a unifying goal that underlies the activities, projects, initiatives and actions taken by the Borough of Schwenksville. That goal is the desire to enhance, protect, and promote the unique identity that is Schwenksville in a fair, efficient and cost sensitive manner. By doing so we hope to justify and reinforce the civic pride of the residents who live here, the institutions who serve here, and businesses that operate here.

As you read the news articles included in these pages please keep this community-wide goal in mind and think about how you can contribute. Working together, Schwenksville's path towards a better and brighter future will become more distinct and our identity more secure.

As always, your thoughts and suggestions are not only welcomed but encouraged.

Schwenksville
Borough Council

2012 Schwenksville Officials

Borough Council 2012

Arthur Fairclough, President
Parks Committee and Municipal Authority Board

Rudolph Micsko, Vice President
Finance Committee

Ray Yeanish
Streets and Roads Committee,
CPV Regional Planning Commission Rep.

Lee Ann Miller
Activity Committee, Historical Committee,
Revitalization Task Force

Lisa Dull
Activity Committee, Revitalization Task Force

Joe Giunta, Mayor

Anne Klepfer, Borough Manager

Gail Phillips
Administrative Assistant/Treasurer

Planning Commission 2012

H. Gilbert Williams, Chairman
CPV Regional Planning Commission Rep.

Larry Keown, Vice Chairman
Ellen Brinton
Roy Miller
Gary Schneider

Wendi Rowley, Tax Collector



Schwenksville Annual Halloween Parade

Sponsored by:
The Rotary Club of Central Perkiomen
&
Schwenksville Borough

Thursday, October 25, 2012
6 PM-9PM

Starts at the Heidelberg Church
2nd Street, Schwenksville PA 19473

Pre-Registration

OnLine Registration is now available at
www.centralperkrotary.org



TreeVitalize Planting Volunteers



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Sewer Lateral FAQs

What is a sewer lateral?

A sewer lateral is the section of pipe from the property line to the mainline sewer in the street. This section is sometimes referred to as the "public side". The section of pipe between the property line and the structure is called the "private sewer lateral service" and is sometimes referred to as the "building sewer." Every building receiving sewer service has at least one building sewer and sewer lateral.

Who owns the sewer lateral?

The sewer lateral between the property line and the mainline sewer is owned and maintained by the Schwenksville Borough Authority. The private sewer lateral from the structure to the property line is owned and maintained by the property owner/owners.

What is a sewer cleanout?

A sewer cleanout is a point of access where the sewer lateral can be serviced. It is usually 4" in diameter and has a tight-fitting steel or plastic cap over it. Two cleanouts are typically installed at each house or building. One is located just outside of the building (plumbing cleanout), and one is located at the property line (Property line cleanout)

I cannot locate my sewer cleanout? What can I do?

If you are unsuccessful in locating one, you either do not have one or it may be buried under dirt or concrete. A plumber can assist you in locating it.

Can I get the Authority to install a sewer cleanout, if I don't have one?

No. Sewer cleanouts belong to the property owner. It is the property owner's responsibility.

Contact the Borough Authority at 610-287-7772 for more information.

October Adoption of Sewer Lateral Ordinance

By Arthur Fairclough

Effective January 1, 2013 the Borough will be implementing a "Sewer Lateral Ordinance." This ordinance is part of a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of the State of Pennsylvania to help reduce overflows of the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) during torrential rain events.

The WTP has a capacity of 300,000 gallons per day. On a normal day it typically processes 119,000 gallons of waste. During the massive rains in 2011 the plant was experiencing flows of over 900,000 gallons per day.

This resulted in partially treated waste water entering the Perkiomen Creek. The extra water flows are caused by ground water entering the waste water lines. The Borough Authority was fined by the DEP for this incident and had to agree to a CAP to fix the problem.

The Borough Authority is addressing leaks in its main lines but the Borough also had to agree to implement an ordinance requiring property owners to fix leaks in their sewer laterals. This will keep ground water out of the sewer laterals that run from the property owner's home or business to the main sewer lines. (Note that the Property Maintenance Code does require homeowners to

maintain sewer laterals.)

The new Sewer Lateral Ordinance requires property owners to inspect and repair or replace the sewer lateral when a video inspection shows problems in the sewer laterals during:

- Transfer of title of the property
- Replacement or repair of the main sewer line
- Upon routine inspection of the sanitary sewer system

Our Borough was one of the first towns in the area to have a sanitary sewer system and sometimes you pay a price for that. There is no question that our infrastructure (roads, storm water drains and sewer lines) have reached or are beyond their normal life span. We are trying to deal with the cost of repairing or replacing



During the massive rains in 2011 the plant was experiencing flows of over 900,000 gallons per day

our infrastructure in a cost effective manner and by being environmentally responsible at the same time.

We all want clean water and to enjoy the natural beauty of the environment around us so your cooperation while we implement this new ordinance would be greatly appreciated.

Arthur Fairclough
President, for
Borough Council

Property Maintenance Matters

By Anne Klepfer

In 2010 Schwenksville Borough underwent the public process of developing a Community Revitalization Plan. The plan is the culmination of public comment meetings, "visioning" sessions, and research into what has worked in other communities. Through the planning process the Borough developed and adopted four broad goals as well as more specific objectives to help obtain each goal. Those goals are:

1. To maintain the economic viability of Schwenksville while making physical changes that build on its existing small town character.
2. To provide a broad array of commercial and retail options within the Borough's commercial districts.
3. To market the Borough to appropriate businesses that will thrive in Schwenksville's small-town atmosphere.
4. To increase the number of activities and events occurring in the Borough.

The Borough recognizes that revitalization is not an end but a continuing process that never ends. The challenge is determining a beginning.

The creation of an Activities Committee to schedule events such as Community Day and Music in the Meadow as well as the on-going improvements to Meadow Park also noted in this newsletter are steps taken to achieve Goal 4.

Goal 1 is perhaps the broadest and most encompassing goal. It includes things such as improving the streetscape along

Main Street, improvements to overall pedestrian safety and connectivity, enhancing connections to open space from Main Street, improve parking options, traffic calming and safety improvements. It also includes improving signage for businesses in the borough and establishing ordinances that encourage preservation of historic buildings and provide for an aesthetically pleasing blend of old and new buildings.

With Goal 1 in mind, the Borough rejuvenated the Perkiomen Trail gateway to Schwenksville Borough, created and delineated on-street parking along Main Street, applied for and received a grant to create more off-street parking and Council adopted a new sign ordinance that will provide for viable, safe and attractive signage for businesses and institutions in the Borough.

The Revitalization task force is currently working on a streetscape concept plan and the Borough Manager is working on a plan to address the infrastructure improvements needed to complement the streetscaping. This is where property owners can, and under the Borough's laws, are responsible for helping to maintain the Borough's economic desirability and viability.

Property Maintenance is a responsibility shared by all property owners in the Borough. Chapter 121 of the Borough Code adopts the International Property Maintenance Code and sets forth maintenance

responsibilities that property owners in the Borough need to abide by. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Mowing and weeding yards to growth not higher than 6 inches. This includes spraying for weeds that are growing up through cracks in the sidewalk and along retaining walls.
- All sidewalks and driveways and parking spaces shall be kept in a proper state of repair and maintained free of hazardous conditions. This includes replacing sidewalk that has failed, cracked or broken and trimming back bushes that obstruct sidewalks or have overgrown retaining walls and sidewalks.
- Properly storing in a garage all unlicensed and inoperative motor vehicles and **not** parking boats, trailers, and other recreational vehicles on public streets.
- Maintaining the exterior structures of homes including doors, window frames, porches, trim, balconies, decks, fences, foundation walls, roofs and drains.
- All exterior property shall be free from any accumulation of rubbish or garbage.

In order to achieve our goal of improving the economic viability of Schwenksville Borough, the Borough needs every property owner to do their part. With this desired end in mind, the Borough will be renewing their focus on property maintenance as required by long standing Borough Ordinances and enforceable under the law.

Fire Company News

- Annual Lottery Calendars are for sale for \$20.00, with a chance to win \$20-\$500. Calendars can be purchased by calling the Firehouse at 610-287-9370 or by email to j.keyser@schwenksvillefire.com.
- Schwenksville Fire Company will be handing out candy at the Halloween Parade on October 25th.
- November 11th the Fire Company will be having their Annual Bucket Brigade at Main Street and Park Ave from 8am-4pm

Your Support is very much appreciated!!



- December 9th is the Annual Winter Chicken Bar-B-Que
- Saturday, December 22nd Santa will be coming to town on the Fire Truck. Parents should call the Firehouse at 610-287-9370 for more information on preparing for Santa.



Safety

Message from Mayor Joe Giunta

Reporting Suspicious Activity: We urge citizens of the Borough to be vigilant and to report any type of illegal activity or suspicious vehicles, persons or circumstances to the State Police and Borough Hall. Acts of vandalism, graffiti, drug use and other criminal acts reflect poorly on the entire community and threaten everyone's security. We want everyone to enjoy their activities in a safe, secure and clean environment. Please be safe and remember to report suspicious activity to the State Police immediately upon observation.

Street Lights: For your safety street lights are maintained throughout the Borough. Maintenance of the Street Lights is contracted out by the Borough. Please report street lights that are out to the Borough by calling 610-287-7442 and providing staff with the pole number or the address of the property closest to the pole. Due to the age and type of lights, some repairs take longer to make and your patience is appreciated.

Solicitations: Borough Code allows street solicitations pursuant to registering with the Borough and providing sufficient identification and credentials. Street Peddlers who have registered with the Borough should upon request show you an approved permit application signed by Borough Manager Anne Klepfer and be able to produce identification. **The Permits are valid for one year and are restricted to between the hours of 9:00 AM and 7:00 PM.** Residents should ask to see a copy of their permit through a window or locked storm door. **NEVER OPEN A DOOR OR INVITE DOOR-TO-DOOR SOLICITORS INTO YOUR HOME FOR ANY REASON.** You also have a right to place a sign that clearly states "NO SOLICITATIONS" that they are required to abide by.

Summer Events Review

By Lisa Dull

The summer started off with a bang! Community Day was held May 19 and it was a picture perfect day with blue skies and sunshine! So many events were taking place in the Park from musical entertainment, magic tricks, face painting and square dancing to dog parades, moon bounces, numerous vendors, a treasure hunt, dog agility training, yummy food and much, much more. It was a day to bring your family, see friends and celebrate the community spirit that is alive and well in our wonderful town of Schwenksville!

June found us participating in the moving Annual American Flag Burning Ceremony hosted by the Patriotic Order Sons Of America, Camp 387 (POSofA). Did you know the flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning? This ceremony was held in the Pavilion and was performed by the members of the POSofA and Boy Scout Troop 105 Schwenksville. If you as an individual would like to dispose of an American Flag, the POSofA has a box located in front of the Borough Building where you may drop it off.

July started our Summer Concert Series with a performance by Roadhouse. A local Schwenksville group, they got us up and singing with many

tried and true songs, along with songs of their own. Under a starry sky, we had a fun night.

August found us hosting Dog Bite Money with our very own Postmaster, Fred Geller. A big crowd was in the park that night as Fred and the band rocked well into the dark, no one wanting them to stop, but we had to, as we could no longer see them! Another fun and successful concert took place in our own Meadow Park.

Due to rain, we unfortunately had to cancel our last concert in September of the Christopher Dean Band. However, the band is already rebooked to open our 2013 Summer Concert Series! (I'm sure the local wildlife is looking forward to a break.)

Planning for 2013 Activities has already begun! Call 610-287-7442 to ask how to get involved!



Flag Burning Ceremony –Boy Scout Troop 105

Calling 9-1-1 from a Cell Phone

The Montgomery County Department of Public Safety asks that anyone who calls 9-1-1 from a cellular phone in communities near the County border to immediately state "I'm calling from Montgomery County" when the call-taker answers the phone.

If the nearest cell tower to where the call is placed is across the border in a neighboring county, the call will be routed to the 9-1-1 centers in Philadelphia, Bucks, Berks, Chester or Delaware counties, depending on where the tower is located.

The neighboring 9-1-1 centers will transfer the call to Montgomery County, but the time it takes to figure the actual location out, transfer the call and then supply the information about the incident again could make a difference in saving someone's life.

Stating "I'm calling from Montgomery County" at the outset will greatly reduce any delay in getting people the help they need.

Using a landline to call 9-1-1 will result in the call automatically being routed to the proper call center.

Meadow Park Improvements

By Anne Klepfer

Thanks to several grants applied for last year, the Borough is now in a position to make significant improvements to Meadow Park. The improvements will both protect the park for the future and make it more enjoyable now.

Over the summer an underground drainage system was installed in the meadow. This is the first step towards making the meadow more suitable for active use and lessening the speed of erosion in the park. The drains will collect the water and allow the meadow to dry more quickly. The next step includes the construction of rain gardens where a drainage swale currently exists. The underground drains will convey the water to the swale and the rain gardens will serve as a filter to both filter contaminants and slow down the water draining to the creek and causing erosion.

In early September the Perkiomen

Watershed Conservancy and Schwenksville Borough partnered with approximately 40 volunteers to plant 150 native trees and bushes in Meadow Park as part of a Stream Bank Restoration project. The event is part of an on-going project sponsored by a grant from Tree-Vitalize, a public-private partnership that aims to restore tree cover in Pennsylvania and educate citizens about related issues.



The project was implemented by Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy Conservation Coordinator Krista Scheirer and

the loyal volunteers. Supplies & tools were provided by the Southeastern PA Resource Conservation & Dev. Council. The Borough has its share of volunteers helping as well. A big "shout-out" to Linda Wild, Gail Philips, Mayor Joe Giunta and Council Members Arthur Fairclough and Lee Ann Miller for their tree planting efforts. Borough Manager Anne Klepfer and her daughter also joined in the fun learning the proper way to transplant trees and successfully planting several.

After an unusually wet August, the weather changed to sunny and dry in September! Not good for newly planted trees! **A huge thank you to the Schwenksville Borough Fire Department for watering the trees until Mother Nature**

could take over! As the trees are specifically planted to slow stormwater run-off, you will notice that the planted areas will **not** be mowed regularly except for pathways.

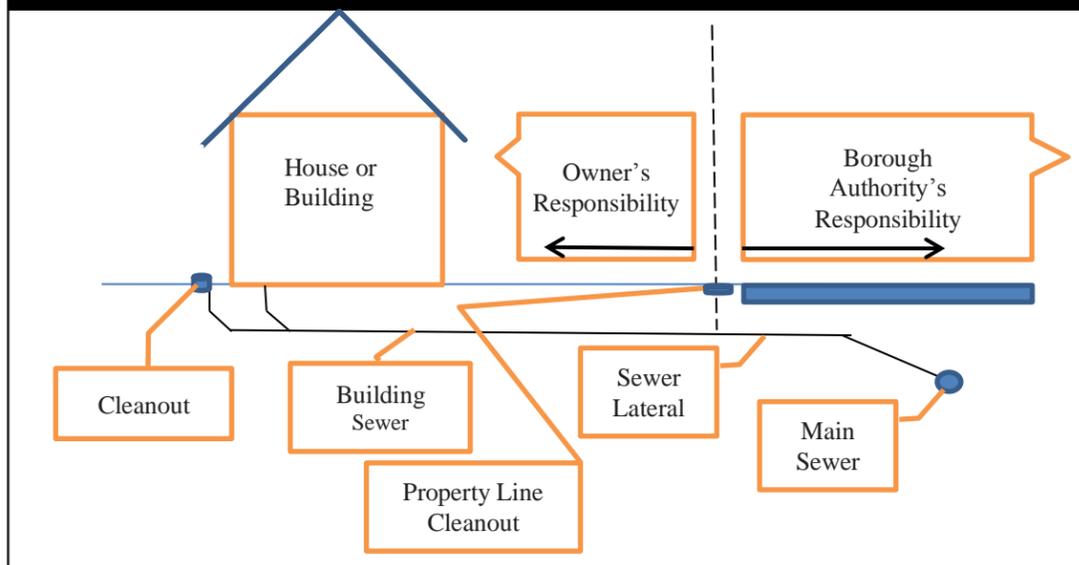
In addition to the rain gardens, additional improvements scheduled for spring/summer of 2013 include installation of a proper playground meeting current safety standards and site access improvements. These improvements are made possible by a recreation grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

With all the improvements and plans for Meadow Park, it recently became necessary for the Borough to take steps to protect the meadow from both accidental damage and intentional vandalism. The Borough took action to keep horses out of Meadow Park and posted signs along the trail to alert equestrians to this change. We did this because the horse droppings were left to wash into the creek and the horses were kicking up the sod and contributing to erosion of the meadow.

Meadow Park is now under video surveillance to deter and prosecute vandals who disrespect the park. Thanks to the volunteers who made this possible.



Sewer Lateral Diagram



Historic Preservation Ordinance Q & A

The following are questions regarding the proposed Historic Ordinance. Many of them were explored at the Town Hall meeting on this subject which was held on July 25, 2012. We have obtained additional information as needed.

How do I know if my property would be affected?

All affected property owners were notified directly by mail in early July, and they also received any survey form done regarding their property. All Borough properties over fifty years of age were considered by the consultant, Wise Preservation, LLC. Of these, (113) are considered historically significant and thus would be affected by a historic ordinance. (This is indicated on the survey forms as Class 2 or Class 3).

What determines whether an older property is considered significant?

The primary criteria considered were the property's architectural integrity—how much of the original structure remains intact, with minor alterations. Other items which can contribute to the significance are historic uses/events, important people or archeology.

What is the current status of the ordinance?

Currently, the ordinance is a rough draft, which is being carefully considered and will be revised as appropriate. Public comment was sought at the Town Hall meeting, and this dialog with the public will be continued through mailings and future meetings, as well as by the required formal notification process if Borough Council ultimately decides to propose the ordinance for adoption. Borough volunteers, many of whom are property owners affected by the ordinance, are spearheading this effort.

What would the effect of the ordinance be on a property owner?

If a property owner wanted to do exterior repairs or alterations, additions, or demolition of all or part of the structure, they would be required to go through a review process. Note that the ordinance would not apply to basic maintenance such as painting, or dictate personal choices such as paint color. There is also a provision to enable the Building Inspector to approve certain routine repair items such as roofing and replacement windows, without going through the formal review process. For example, a gray fiberglass roof shingle may be approved to replace a slate roof.

Is a property owner going to be required to return a building to its original state, or prevented from changing it?

The intent of the ordinance is not to try to force property owners to make changes, or to prevent them from doing so. Other than in an extreme case of "demolition by neglect", there is no provision for the Borough to require a property owner to do anything to their property. (Note that there are general property maintenance requirements already in the Borough code.) If the property owner desires to make changes, each individual situation would be looked at by a review board to see if what was planned is appropriate. For example, a building could have a contemporary addition approved if the materials and general design harmonized with the existing structure. However, demolition of a property in whole or part would require compelling reasons to do so, and the ordinance specifies the information to be considered.

Who makes these decisions, and how do we keep it from being arbitrary or personal?

If the Building Inspector determined that a formal review was needed, the property owner would supply drawings, photos and

other information to a Historic Commission. This is currently proposed as a five-member board to contain a mix of residents and professionals with experience in fields like real estate, architecture and construction. It has further been suggested that a good number of board members be property owners of historically significant structures. They would be guided by the ordinance and the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties." This document contains ten specific guidelines. If you did not receive a copy of this at the Town Hall meeting, you may obtain one online at the Borough web site or contact Borough Hall. The Historic Commission would make a recommendation to Borough Council, who would make all final approvals.

Can a property owner choose to "opt out" of the ordinance?

This option has been considered, but has not been included in the ordinance to date. The concern is that this will nullify the beneficial effect of the ordinance.

How would the ordinance affect our property taxes

and resale value?

We contacted the Montgomery County Board of Assessments for their input. There would be no direct effect on a property's tax assessment, other than the reassessment which customarily occurs already when major improvements are made. They are not aware of any research of the effect on property values, but offer the personal opinion that it would not adversely affect values and might positively affect values over the long term.

So what would happen if I wanted to replace a window?

In most cases, this could be approved quickly by the building inspector if the replacement window would have the same size, configuration and general appearance of the original. If the property owner wished to do something different, or if the window had already been altered in a way out of character with the original, a formal application to the review board would be required. Generally, some consideration is given to the cost of various options, and the location of the proposed alteration. Thus, window grids maintaining the look of individual lights might be

required, but not the expense of "true divided lights." A window to the rear of the house, not visible from any public street, might be permitted to be changed in size or configuration.

Are there any advantages to an ordinance, such as grants?

The biggest advantage is a collective one, in maintaining the Borough's historic character and encouraging revitalization. Property owners who have spent much time and money improving their properties should also get some satisfaction from knowing that effort would not be quickly undone by a future owner. Unfortunately, in the current economy, many grant options have disappeared. However, for commercial uses, there were options in the past that may be available again in the future. For larger scale commercial projects that are eligible for listing on the National Register, there are federal and state tax credits available. There is also some limited provision for exceptions to certain code provisions for existing and/or historic structures.

