

FOX CHAPEL BOROUGH NEWSLETTER

Published by
Fox Chapel Borough



Winter 2020

Mayor's Memo

It has been many years since the Borough added a significant parcel of land to our park system - the 1970 s was the last time a parcel of 18 acres or more was added to our existing green space. Generous donors have made the acquisition of the 18-acre Hardie parcel possible, including the Hardie family themselves! We have had a great response to the request for donations as many of us recognize the recreational and environmental benefits that we all derive from strategic expansion of parkland in Fox Chapel. We are getting closer to our goal of raising funds to pay for acquisition and improvements so we can open this park to the public. We thank those of you who have contributed and would like to get as many people involved as possible as we try to wrap up the fundraising in the next few months. In our request to public sources of funding, we are told of the importance of not just the size of the donation, but the number of people involved. I can report that all members of Borough Council have personally supported the project and over 200 individuals have donated as well. We are striving to double the individual supporters which will get us to about 25% of households, something to take pride in. I am available at the Borough office to discuss this unique opportunity.

We are completing a planning review with Pashek MTR, the park planner hired to help us with the improvements to the new park. Our own Jim Pashek and Park Commission, chaired by Wes Posvar, are working together to accomplish this goal. Thanks are due to those of you who attended the planning meetings and brought your ideas.

As spring approaches, please consider adding trees and shrubs to your property. Planting one tree in spring and one in fall will help us keep up with the tree loss that is occurring from disease and erosion. Trees absorb more water runoff than grass, and the Borough has a list of native trees.

We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions at the Borough office.

-Alex Scott-



"Annie's Field of Dreams"

In August of 2019, Abbie and Steve Whittingham tragically lost their five-year-old daughter, Annabel, "Annie". Annie was a kind and loving child; she loved to play with her sister Sadie and the girls often spent time at the park that sits close to their Fox Chapel home - McCahill Park. Abbie and Steve want the world to remember Annie; they want the spirit of her to live on in the community and for other children to enjoy a place Annie loved. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the Fox Chapel community and family and friends of the Whittinghams, this dream will become a reality. The "Annie Whittingham Forever Five Fund," established in November of 2019, will allow for the revitalization of McCahill Park playground, but it will also serve as a place for Annie to be remembered. Appropriately named "Annie's Field of Dreams," the park will be filled with all of Annie's favorites. The first phase will be completed this spring with a beautiful wooden playground, swings and slides, play equipment, and a circular reading bench accompanied by a lending library. Following the first phase, Fox Chapel Borough and the Forever Five Fund plan to add a bike path and Lillyput-style playhouses, things Annie enjoyed with all her heart. Abbie and Steve want Annie's spirit to be heard through the joy and laughter of children playing in a place that will embody everything she loved. To learn more about Annie's story, view renderings of the playground, or to donate to Annie's Memorial fund, please visit: pittsburghfoundation.org/anniwhittingham



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2020 Budget

There is no tax increase proposed for 2020. Real estate tax millage will remain at 2.95 mills and remains the lowest real estate tax bill residents receive. It is expected to bring in \$3,565,500 in 2020. Earned income tax revenue is projected at 3,205,700, a 1% increase over 2019 revenue. These two taxes alone account for 83.7% of the Borough's projected operating revenue.

In 2020, total operating expenditures in the General Operating Fund are projected to be \$9,065,200. The largest allocation is \$2M in major reconstruction of Borough roadways including \$300,000 in catch basins and underdrain materials to eliminate winter icing and lengthen the lifespan of Borough roads and control stormwater. This continuing commitment of resources is in response to the most frequent requests by Borough residents. Beginning in 2020, \$100,000 will be budgeted annually for slide repair since the topography of the Borough is such that many roads are built into the side of hills. If the funds are not needed for repairs in any given year, they will be reserved for future slide repairs.

The Borough bids its road paving jointly with O'Hara enabling both communities to attract larger paving companies and get lower bids due to volume. In 2019, Fox Chapel installed drainage and rebuilt The Oaks, White Fawn Lane, Old Timber Trail, Fair Oaks Drive, Fawn Meadow Court, Indian Hill Road, Pheasant Drive, Ridgedale Lane, Quail Hill Road, and a portion of Old Mill Road. The anticipated 2020 road paving schedule includes Fairview Road, Westport Drive, Shirl Drive, Foxhurst Drive, Chapel Ridge Court, Place & Road, Olde Chapel Trail and Dogwood Lane.

Fox Chapel Borough provides \$390,000 (.33 mills of real estate tax) in support annually to the Cooper-Siegel Community Library. The proposed budget also increases support to Foxwall EMS from \$39,000 to \$46,000.

The cost of refuse collection is paid by Borough taxes and amounts to 10% of the General Fund budget and .7 mills of the 2.95 mills assessed for real estate tax. In other words, garbage accounts for 24% of a resident's real estate tax bill. Fox Chapel Borough is the only community in the North Hills that provides its residents with garage door pickup and weekend rubbish bins for bulk items and recycling of glass, cardboard, and steel. When comparing our real estate millage with other municipalities, one must subtract the .7 mills that covers garage door garbage service and compare the resulting Borough millage of 2.25. In 2010, the Borough paid \$900,900 for refuse collection under contract with Waste Management. Since Vogel Disposal became the low bidder in 2011, garbage costs for the same services have been reduced so much that the \$853,300 projected cost for 2020 is \$47,600 less than what was paid in 2010 to Waste Management.

The 2020 General Fund budget of \$9,065,200 has been allocated to public services as follows: Public Works 43%, Police/Fire/EMS 21%, General Government 10%, Garbage 9.5%, Library 4%, Debt Service 3.5%, Depreciation Transfer to Capital Reserve 3%, with the remaining 6% split between Code Enforcement, Insurance, Pension, Parks and Tax Refunds.

The proposed 2020 Capital budget includes the replacement of a backhoe, utility truck, police vehicle, 10 ballistic vests that have reached the end of their useful life, 12 pistols, copier, and 3" fire hose. In addition, we will be adding a new public works truck to the fleet and purchasing a rescue tool that will give the firefighters the ability to cut through some of the newer metals.

Borough sanitary sewer rates will remain the same in 2019 thanks to a \$251,400 Green Revitalization of Our Waterways (GROW) grant from ALCOSAN for demonstrating a measurable reduction in groundwater infiltration of our sanitary sewer lines due to the Riverview Terrace sanitary sewer project. Unfortunately, we will be passing through a 7% rate increase from ALCOSAN again this year which will show on sewer bills since the Borough bills for ALCOSAN.

The Borough has begun a multi-year plan to replace aging and rusting public works steel buildings. The current buildings have leaking roofs, doors that do not lock, limited water supply, limited or no insulation and are too small to store all the Borough equipment. The 10T dump trucks are now taller and longer and do not fit easily in the 60-year-old building. Because these trucks are used for salting and plowing, they need to be stored inside with plows attached and loaded with salt to allow immediate availability for snow and ice emergencies.

In 2019, work was done to prepare the existing site for the new construction including compliance with unfunded stormwater environmental mandates that must be done even if a new building is not constructed. Also in 2019, the Borough issued \$5.4M in general obligation bonds a year earlier than planned in order to take advantage of extremely low interest rates. Our excellent AA+ credit rating from Standard and Poor's further reduced the financing costs to Borough taxpayers. The debt will be repaid over 25 years at an annual cost of \$300,000. Prior to the bond issue, the Borough had no debt. Approximately \$1.2M will be used to pay for the site work completed in 2019. The remainder will cover the construction of one energy-efficient garage, repurposing an existing garage built in 1959, demolition of a 1972 building and rehabilitation of a 1985 building with work to be completed in years 2020 – 2022. Final design is not yet complete, so the total cost of the project had to be estimated for the bond issue.

The Truth About Taxes

The Borough's two main sources of annual revenue are property tax and earned income (wage) tax amounting to 85% of general operating revenue. Let's take a closer look at these taxes.

Where does your property tax dollar go?

- Many people do not realize that there are three different property taxes: School District, County and Borough
- The Borough has no control over the County and School District taxes
- The current 2020 rates for each taxing body is as follows:

| <u>Taxing Body</u> | <u>Millage Rate</u> | <u>Portion of Each Tax Dollar</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Fox Chapel Area School District | 19.5750 mils | \$0.72 |
| Allegheny County | 4.7300 mils | \$0.17 |
| Borough of Fox Chapel | 2.9500 mills | \$0.11 |

For each one dollar in property taxes you pay, the School District gets seventy-two cents, the County gets seventeen cents and the Borough gets eleven cents. With the 11-cent Borough share, the Borough provides police and fire protection, road paving, snow/ice removal, leaf and brush removal, trash collection, code enforcement, parks, communications, library and other services. These services are highly visible and vital to your everyday well-being. Do you know what services you receive from Allegheny County and the School District?

Most people realize there is a difference between the County tax and the Borough tax, but they assume that the Fox Chapel Borough property tax and the Fox Chapel Area School District property tax is combined because our names are similar. This is not the case. The School District receives over seven times what the Borough receives and can focus solely on providing education to the children in our community.



Property Taxes – Dates to Remember

Allegheny County Taxes
Due at discount March 31st
Due at face April 1st – April 30th
Penalty after April 30th

Fox Chapel Borough Taxes
Due at discount July 31st
Due at face August 1st –
September 30th
Penalty after September 30th

Fox Chapel School Taxes
Due at discount August 31st
Due at face September 1st –
October 31st
Penalty after October 31st

Tax Collectors

All self-employed persons whose primary place of business is in Fox Chapel Borough must pay a \$52 Local Services Tax for emergency services and road maintenance. Each employer in the Borough, including residents with home occupations, is charged with the duty of deducting the tax from each of his employees and remitting payment to **Keystone Collections Group**, 546 Wendell Road, Irwin, PA 15642 (724/978-0300), within thirty days after the end of each calendar quarter. Keystone also collects earned income tax (EIT) for the Borough. All tax forms are available on-line at www.keystonecollects.com. (Reminder that the Borough's PSD Code is 710403.)

Real Estate taxes are collected by **Jordan Tax Service**. Jordan is located at 102 Rahway Road, McMurray, PA 15317, 412/345-7962, www.jordantax.com. Questions regarding tax payments, refunds or tax receipts should be directed to Jordan Tax Service. If your mortgage has been paid off, please be sure to contact Jordan with the new mailing address to send tax statements to avoid delinquency.



Wage Tax Payments

The Borough encourages residents to verify with Keystone Collections Group (724-978-0300) that wage tax payments are current in order to avoid interest and penalties. Often when wage tax payments are verified due to a home sale or refinancing, a large sum of money is due plus penalty and interest which could delay the closing. Renters of property in the Borough must also pay wage taxes and are required by ordinance to register with the Borough.



Joy Hardt Retires

Joy Hardt, the Borough's Finance Director and Council Treasurer, will retire February 28th after 24 years of service with the Borough. Government accounting regulations are forever changing and are increasingly more difficult to implement, and Joy worked diligently to ensure that the Borough was always in compliance with the new regulations. Her job included, among many things, preparing the budget, monthly financial reporting, year-end closure and preparing several monthly financial statements for Borough Council. She was instrumental in the Borough achieving an AA+ bond rating for the Borough which puts the Borough in the top 8% of all Pennsylvania municipalities. Joy's replacement is Jeanine Mancuso, current Assistant Finance Director. Joy will immediately enjoy retirement by spending two weeks in Hawaii with her husband, Clyde, who is also retiring. Joy and Clyde plan on spending many years of leisure life at their camp on the upper Allegheny River by Kinzua Dam. They will both enjoy their family time, particularly their three granddaughters and grandson on the way. We will miss you Joy...it has been a pleasure working with you over the years. Your knowledge, dedication and friendship will be truly missed. We wish you health and happiness in the next chapter of your life!





Driveway Improvement Permit Protects Motorists From Water Runoff and Ice on Borough Roads

While planning property improvement projects for the spring, please be aware that driveway modifications require a Driveway Improvement Permit from the Borough before starting any work such as repaving, changing the material, grade or drainage pattern. The Borough would appreciate residents making the contractor aware of the requirement for a permit. The Driveway Permit Application is available at the Borough office or on the Borough's website. The permit fee is \$100. If you have any questions, please contact Chuck Smith at 412/850-5030.

Council Reorganizes

At its January 6th Reorganizational Meeting, Andy Bennett and Jay Troutman were appointed President and Vice President, respectively, and Tom Karet as President Pro-Tem. Other members of Council include Harrison Lauer, Fred Leech, Betsy Monroe and Mandy Steele. Borough Council meets the third Monday of the month, 6 PM, at the Borough Building.



Borough Website

The Borough encourages residents to visit the Borough's website www.fox-chapel.pa.us for general information and to get answers to frequently asked questions such as garbage collection holidays, bin hours and office closings. Please see "Announcement to Our Residents" on the home page for current information between newsletters.



Insurance Reporting

All volunteer fire departments in Pennsylvania receive distributions from the Commonwealth as a percentage of the premiums paid by residents of a municipality for homeowner's insurance. However, for the distribution to be made properly, the correct municipality must be indicated on your homeowner's insurance policy. It is important that you check your insurance policy and/or contact your agent to make certain that your home is listed in **Fox Chapel**, not Pittsburgh, 15215 or 15238.

Summer Jobs

Even though it's still winter outside, it is not too soon to start thinking about summer employment for your college student. The Borough is currently accepting applications for summer employment in the Borough's Public Works Department. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have a valid PA driver's license and be capable of performing manual outdoor labor. Please stop in the Borough office to obtain an employment application.



Be Informed – Sign Up for Nixle!

Residents are reminded that the Borough is using Nixle Communications Service that allows important Borough information to be sent directly to residents. Messages may include road closures, public safety issues, garbage collection holidays and other relevant Borough information. There are currently 1490 Fox Chapel subscribers on Nixle. Hopefully, that number will increase. Residents can register their cellphone by texting zip codes 15238 and 15215 to 888777 (two separate texts since the Borough has two zip codes). Registration is free but individual message and data rates may apply.

Welcome Shawn Peterson

The Borough welcomes our newest employee, Shawn Peterson, to the Borough staff. Shawn is currently working in the financial department but will eventually move to the Borough Secretary's office where she is eager for a new challenge. Shawn has a 10-year old son and a 5-year old daughter and lives in the area. We are happy to have Shawn on the team and wish her many years of happy employment with the Borough.



Brush Collection

The Borough will provide spring brush collection beginning March 9. The schedule is included in the newsletter. Please inform your landscapers of the collection schedule. Weather conditions or other emergencies could cause delays in the collection. It can take 2-3 days to complete the route.

All brush must be placed at the roadside with the cut end toward the street. No tree limbs larger than five inches in diameter or eight feet in length will be collected. Hedges, vines, rose bushes, shrubs, multi-flora hedges, etc. must be securely tied in bundles not exceeding 16 inches in diameter. Christmas trees with all ornaments removed can also be placed at the curb. **Items not collected as part of the brush program include leaves, grass clippings, loose hedges, vines, bushes, firewood, rotten wood, ornamental grass or other similar debris.** Please make certain no metal objects are in the branches. Borough personnel are not permitted to enter onto private property for the collection of brush or trimmings. Of necessity, the amount of brush or tree trimmings to be collected from individual properties must be regulated. Accordingly, the volume of material that will be collected by the Borough must be limited to a *single* pile per property, said pile not to exceed four feet in width by six feet in height by eight feet in length.

Looking for A New Member....

The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) is looking for a new member. The EAC is particularly interested in an engineer, arborist or a resident with hydrology and/or soils experience. The EAC meets monthly on the second Monday of the month at 7 PM. Interested residents should email a resume to Shawn Peterson at speterson@fox-chapel.pa.us. The EAC and Borough Council would like to thank Dan Slinger for his dedicated service to the Borough. Dan retired from the EAC after serving nine years on the Board.

Latex Paint Disposal Tips

To dispose of latex paint, solidify and place in your trash....

- Latex paint can be solidified by mixing in an equal amount of absorbent material (such as cat litter, sawdust, plaster of Paris or oil dry) and allowed to dry
- Pour thin layers (about 1") into a cardboard box lined with plastic; allow paint to dry one layer at a time until all paint has hardened
- For faster results, use "Waste Paint Hardener" available at hardware stores

DO NOT

- Do not pour the paint on the ground or down storm drains where it will pollute the surface and/or groundwater (also an MS4 violation)
- Do not pour it down the drain or throw liquid paint into weekly trash



Dogs Running Loose

State law prohibits any dog to run at large. All dogs must be under control. The Borough receives complaints about dogs running loose. The Borough has a contract with Hoffman Kennels to retrieve stray dogs and bring them to the Borough Building. A fine of \$125 will be charged to the dog owner with payment required before release of the dog to the owner.



Dog License Applications

State law requires dogs to be licensed. A license application can be purchased from Allegheny County online at www.alleghenycounty.us/treasurer/dog.aspx.

Animal Control

The Borough often gets calls to trap animals or remove dead deer from private property. The Borough does not provide animal control services, and the Police Department does not remove dead deer from private property. Residents should contact an animal control service to trap or remove a dead animal from their property. Big Daddy Wildlife Removal (412/734-3425) will remove dead deer from private property.



2020 Garbage Collection Schedule

The following is the 2020 garbage holiday collection schedule. Garbage will NOT be collected on these days resulting in a 1-day collection delay: Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's 2020.

Vogel Disposal reminds residents to please place trash in large garbage bags – not small grocery bags. ***Loose garbage will not be collected.*** Please note that it is not the responsibility of the collector to clean garbage strewn in the driveway resulting from an animal. Large items such as lamps, large toys, vacuum cleaners, small household appliances and aluminum/resin lawn furniture 45 pounds or less can be picked up by Vogel Disposal on your scheduled garbage day, eliminating the need to bring it to the rubbish bins. Garbage calls should be directed to Vogel Disposal at 855/494-3345.



2020 Office/Rubbish Bin Closings

The Borough office will be closed on the following holidays in 2020: Good Friday, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

The rubbish bins will be closed Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020. A reminder to residents that there are cardboard, metal recycling and glass recycling containers located at the rubbish bins behind the Borough Building that can be accessed during normal bin hours Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM to 4 PM. Please note that electronics cannot be brought to the rubbish bins. State law requires all electronics be recycled. **Please see the Borough's website for extensive e-cycling and other recycling information as well as paint disposal tips.**



Glass Recycling

The Borough is now accepting clear and colored glass bottles and jars for recycling at the rubbish bins! Other glass items such as glass panes and lightbulbs are not accepted. Reminder that rubbish bin hours are Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM – 4 PM, except holidays. The rubbish bins are for Fox Chapel residents only!

Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania

Join Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania for these events in the spring of 2020! Visit www.aswp.org to learn more – and remember, we're always looking for volunteers! Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve is located at 614 Dorseyville Road in Fox Chapel.

Feed the birds too! Our Nature Store at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve has everything you need to keep your feathered friends happy.

Birds and More Naturalist-Led Walks – every Wednesday at 9 AM year-round

Night Campfire and Hike – March 7

Enjoy a warm campfire, a story or two, and a hike under the stars.

Fledglings Preschool Program – March 12 and April 9

Give your 3-5-year-old a head start on a lifetime of loving the outdoors. Fledglings programs incorporate stories, a walk, and activities to introduce new and fun nature themes to young participants.

Maple Madness – March 21

Experience the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Maple Sugaring as you take a trip through the history and science of maple syrup. Enjoy a pancake brunch, too! Registration is required by visiting aswp.org or 412/963-6100.

Audubon Earth Day: Day of Service to the Planet – April 18

Roll up your sleeves and help ASWP on the Audubon Earth Day of Service. We are inviting everyone to help celebrate with our Earth Day of Service, a morning of pitching in with friends and neighbors at each of our three locations to show some love to our little corner of the planet. Help us remove invasive species and return native plants and trees to the ecosystem or help on our trails.

Plant Sale

The Squaw Run Garden Club will hold its annual plant sale on Saturday, May 2, 2020 at Squaw Valley Park, O'Hara Township, from 9 AM to 2 PM. For sale will be a wonderful selection of annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs, hanging baskets and planters as well as the always popular perennial plants dug from the members' gardens. Proceeds from the sale benefit community projects such as Squaw Valley Park, Aspinwall Riverfront Park, Cooper-Siegel Library, Laurie Ann West Community Center, Camp Guyasuta and Beechwood Farms. The Club also provides educational grants to local schools. Be sure to mark your calendars and shop the lovely selections of plants and to help support the community!



BOROUGH OF FOX CHAPEL

401 FOX CHAPEL ROAD

PITTSBURGH, PA 15238

(412) 963-1100

www.fox-chapel.pa.us



BOROUGH OF FOX CHAPEL ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Andrew C. Bennett, *President*
Jay S. Troutman, *Vice President*
Harrison S. Lauer
Thomas A. Karet
Frederick C. Leech
Mandy Steele
Betsy Monroe
Walter A. Scott, III, *Mayor*
Jeanine A. Mancuso, *Treasurer*
Gary J. Koehler, *Manager*

Meets each month on the 3rd Monday of
the month at 6:00 P.M.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Austin Henry, *Chairman*
Walter A. Scott, III
Thomas J. Murphy
Peggy G. Jayme
Jay S. Troutman
Nanette Bennett

Meets as needed on the 2nd Monday of
the month at 7:00 P.M.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Harrison S. Lauer, *Chairman*
Nanette Bennett
Wesley W. Posvar
James M. Royston
Jeffrey B. Todd

Meets as needed on the 3rd Monday
of the month at 5:30 P.M.

PARK COMMISSION

Wesley W. Posvar, *Chairman*
Nancy Fales
Jay Troutman
Maria Harrington
Dotty Nielsen
Liz Nelson
Lois Folino
Susan Crookston
James W. Pashek
Meets the 2nd Monday in April, June,
September and December at 9:00 A.M.

ZONING HEARING BOARD

Donald F. Smith, Jr.
J. Christian Hart
Kyra Tucker

Meets as needed on the Wednesday
following the 3rd Monday of the month
at 7:00 P.M.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS Office 412-963-1100

Building Permits/
Zoning 412-850-5023
Public Works 412-850-5026
Sewer Department.. 412-850-5030

Police Dept. 412-963-7220
(Office/non-emergency)

MEETINGS ARE HELD IN THE BOROUGH BUILDING AND ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
ALL RESIDENTS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND.