



September 2023

*The Newsletter for the Residents of West Deer Township*

## Zoning Ordinance Overhaul

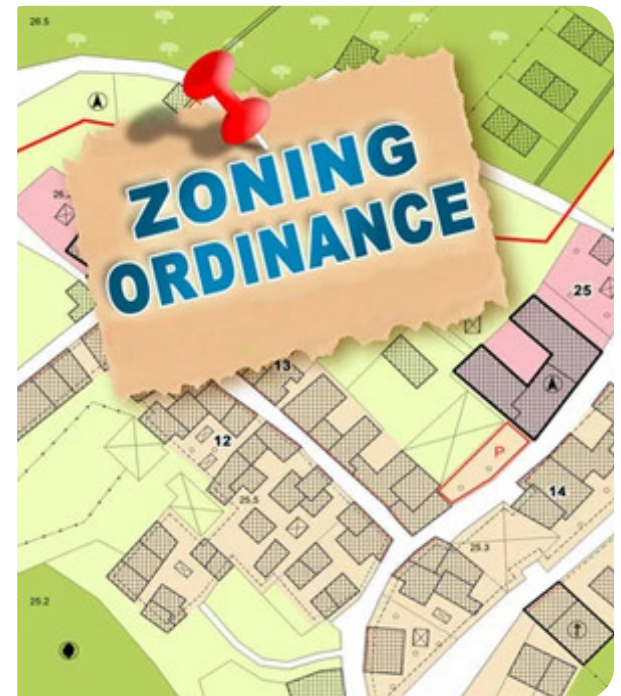
For the first time since 2012, West Deer Township's Zoning Ordinance is being updated. The first question that probably comes to mind is...what is going to change? The short answer is a lot. From the zoning map to the text itself, most of the ordinance will be affected in some way.

As mentioned, the Zoning Ordinance has not been significantly updated since 2012 and many changes have been made in the intervening years that make our ordinance, in some cases, unenforceable or inadequate due to changes in zoning laws and relevant court cases. Since the onset of this overhaul, the Board of Supervisors' goal remains to take the 2012 ordinance and bring it up to current standards, and make it easier to read and understand.

At their regular meeting in July, the Board received the final draft version of the new map and text. The Board is currently reviewing these to make any final suggested edits before making the ordinance available to the public for comment. Once available, a copy of the proposed new zoning ordinance, map and text, will be available on the Township's website at [www.westdeertownship.com](http://www.westdeertownship.com). A public hearing will be held where residents can offer comments, and final adoption of the ordinance by the Board will follow.

Once the ordinance is available, comments can also be submitted to Township staff via email at [jshook@westdeertownship.com](mailto:jshook@westdeertownship.com), USPS, or by dropping them off at the Township building addressed to Joseph Shook, Assistant Manager/Zoning Officer. Additionally, a physical copy of the proposed ordinance will be available for viewing at the Township building, 109 East Union Road.

We invite you to explore the proposed ordinance and get involved in the process. Your feedback and participation are critical to ensuring that the updated zoning ordinance, both the map and text, accurately reflects the needs of our community. Thank you for your interest in this important task! ♦



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# 2023 West Deer Festival

## Events Scheduled for Saturday, September 23



10:00 AM	Run/Walk Registration
10:30 AM	Run/Walk Start
11:00-9:00 PM	Rides
12:00-9:00 PM	DJ
3:00-9:00 PM	Hay rides
3:00-5:00 PM	Balloon Artist
3:00-5:00 PM	Face Painting
5:00-7:00 PM	Petting Zoo
6:00-7:00 PM	Wild Animals
7:00 PM	Pie Eating Contest
7:30-9:00 PM	Karaoke



## Events Scheduled for Sunday, September 24



12:00-7:00 PM	Rides
12:00-7:00 PM	DJ
2:00-4:00 PM	Face Painting
2:00-4:00 PM	Balloon Artist
3:00-5:00 PM	Petting Zoo
3:00-7:00 PM	Hay Rides



# Garbage/Recycling Info

One of the most disputed and misunderstood topics in the Township is garbage/recycling collection.

Garbage attracts vermin and disease, is horrible to look at, and simply smells bad. Because of these reasons, the Board of Supervisors adopted a “Solid Waste” ordinance – Chapter 181 of the Township Code as seen on our website – which made collection and disposal of garbage/recyclables mandatory throughout the Township.

This also means that all one and two family residences are obligated to pay the rate of service to the trash hauler awarded, through an agreement, by the Board of Supervisors through a formal bid process. Why? Because the hauler is also obligated to pick up the trash. They are not permitted to “pick and choose” addresses. So everyone has an obligation to uphold.

When it comes to recycling, Shank uses a re-purposed garbage truck to collect it. So, though it may look like they are dumping recyclables in with garbage, it is kept separate. So they would have to pay more and drive farther (with turnpike tolls) by mixing recycling with garbage.

There are times when trash pick-ups may be missed. In those situations, please contact Shank Refuse at 724.226.8320. ◆



## SOME COLLECTION TIPS

1. Read over Chapter 181 on our website for rules and requirements. It's simple! Click on “**Code of Ordinances**” on the front page under the Government tab, type in “**181**” in the search bar at the top, then click on the “**Solid Waste**” result!
2. Make sure your trash is out the night before pick-up so you aren't missed. Pickup is between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.
3. Ensure you either use a sturdy garbage can or use thick contractor bags (sold at stores such as Lowe's). Critters such as raccoons, crows, and even bears (!) will tear apart weak, unprotected kitchen bags.
4. Along those lines, Shank is not responsible for picking up loose trash. As per the requirements, garbage must be bagged.
5. New recycling bins are available for purchase at the municipal building, 109 East Union Road. The cost is \$12 payable by cash or check.

# Welcome to West Deer!

The West Deer Township Board of Supervisors is pleased to welcome all new residents to the Township of West Deer.

An independent community since 1836, West Deer Township is characterized by its self-reliant people and rural-residential atmosphere. We are a growing community with low crime rates, a diversified population, easy access to major highways and shopping, while still retaining a small town atmosphere. We believe you will find West Deer Township to be an enjoyable community in which to live.

In order to assist you in becoming familiar with your new community, we have provided below a list of informative items. If you have a request, question, or complaint regarding the Township or any of the services it provides, the administrative staff will be happy to address it for you. Also, please take the time to view the Township's website [www.westdeertownship.com](http://www.westdeertownship.com) for announcements and current information about our community. ♦

## WEST DEER TOWNSHIP TELEPHONE DIRECTORY:

West Deer Township Municipal Building.....	724-265-3680
West Deer Township Police Department Office .....	724-265-1100 or 911
West Deer EMS (Ambulance Service).....	724-265-4750
West Deer #1 Volunteer Fire Department.....	724-265-1380
West Deer #2 Volunteer Fire Department.....	724-265-1248
West Deer #3 Volunteer Fire Department.....	724-443-3351
West Deer Food Bank, Meals to Go Program, Backpack to Fight Hunger Program .....	724-312-5656
West Deer Senior Citizen Center/CYA.....	724-443-8220
Tax Collector/Dorothy J. Bonovitz .....	724-265-4250
Keystone Collections Group/Earned Income Tax .....	724-978-0300
West Deer Road Department.....	724-265-1333
Code Enforcement Office (Building, Zoning & Dog Law) .....	724-265-2780
Deer Lakes School District.....	724-265-5300
Deer Creek Drainage Basin Authority (Sewage).....	724-265-5315
Richland Sewage Authority.....	724-443-5921
West Penn Power .....	800-255-3443
Duquesne Light Company.....	888-393-7100
Dominion Peoples Gas Company .....	800-764-0111
Oakmont Water Authority .....	412-828-7220
Hampton Water Authority .....	412-486-4867
Fawn Frazer Water Authority.....	724-224-6562
Richland Water Authority .....	724-443-9100
Shank Waste Service (Garbage Pickup & Recycling).....	724-226-8320

# Update on West Deer Park Master Plan

As you most likely know, the Township has been working on a Park Master Plan since 2015. This Plan focused on the Nike Site and Bairdford Park.

Because of funding limitations – there is no easy way to pay \$5.4 million at one time – each park's projects were broken into phases, and grants have been applied for and awarded to offset the majority of the upgrades. All the Nike Site phases are complete, and the Township has shifted to Bairdford Park.

You may have noticed that our Public Works crew removed the old sports courts in the “lower bowl” of Bairdford Park. That was done in preparation of a fully renovated lower bowl, for which we also received a large grant of \$291,000! This phase will include: the reconfiguration and paving of the large parking lot; new pickleball courts; a new basketball court; a new gaga ball pit for kids; a new sports court surface for a dek hockey rink in the very near future; a new pavilion; a new lower parking lot; new benches; an ADA concrete ramp and sidewalk to the playground/pavilion; curved asphalt ADA parking in both lots; guiderails; curved asphalt walkways; grading; and storm sewers/inlets/swales.

The Board approved the paving contract in March and the other amenity contracts in April. Because the amenities cannot be installed until the paving is completed, there had been a delay with the project. The paving has recently begun, however, and should be completed prior to this year's West Deer Festival! After that, all of the other amenities will be installed.

The Board also authorized the Township Manager to seek additional funding for the aforementioned dek hockey rink completion. That grant has been applied for, and – if awarded – should be installed sometime in 2024.

After this phase, there are additional phases in Bairdford Park that should see a new concession stand, roadways, and field upgrades.

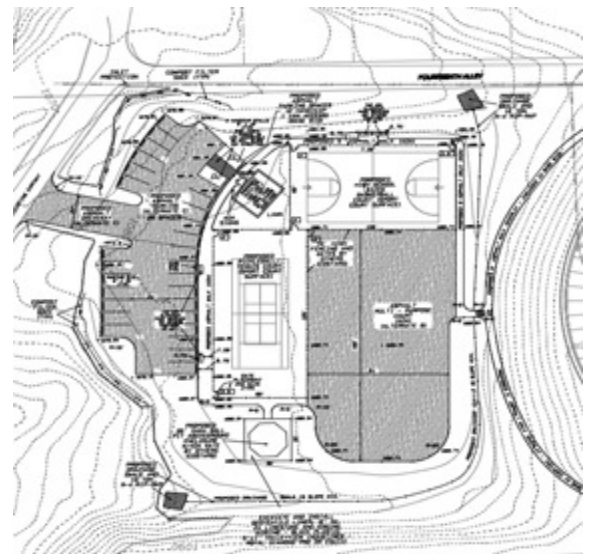
If you have any questions, please check out our website or contact us! ♦

## Important Broadband Survey

West Deer Township needs resident feedback! We are working with broadband/internet providers to expand coverage and internet speeds in the Township. In order to tell providers which area(s) of the Township need the most attention, we need to hear from YOU by November 1. Here's how to do that:

1. On the Township's website, a page has been created (<http://bit.ly/45mixMk>). Go to that page.
2. You have two options to submit a survey: using the online survey link located there, or by printing a copy of the pdf file on the page and getting it to the Township Building personally, through the mail, or via email ([dmator@westdeertownship.com](mailto:dmator@westdeertownship.com)). Any of those options work for us.

It's that easy, and we look forward to hearing how we can help make your internet experiences lightning-fast!



# Frequently Asked Questions

## DOWNED TREE?

During storms – and living in such a wooded area – trees and large branches often fall on roadways. When they do, please do not wait for regular business hours to contact the Township. Instead, call 911. The police dispatchers will notify our officers, and our officers will call our Public Works Foreman.

Our Public Works Foreman will then send a crew to take care of it.

It's that simple!



## DEAD DEER?

Who to contact if you find a dead deer on a roadway depends on whose road it is.

If the deer is found on a State road, please phone PennDOT at (412) 781-3260.

If the deer is found on a County or Township road, please phone the Township offices at (724) 265-3680.

When calling, be sure to leave your name, address, phone number, and the approx. location of the deer.



## IS IT A TOWNSHIP ROAD...OR NOT?

Many times the Township offices receive phone calls about road conditions in the Township. However, there are also State and County roads within our borders.

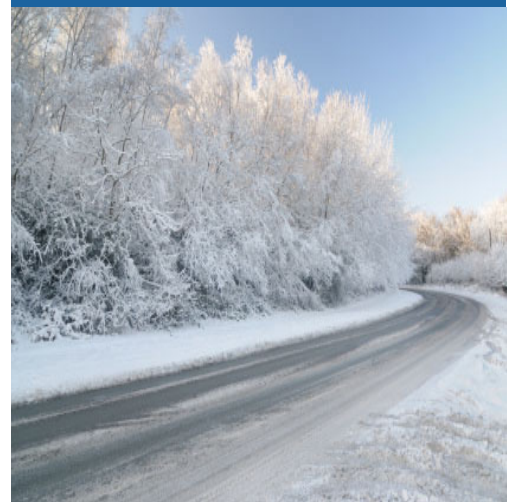
It's the middle of winter, and we are getting pounded with snow. You're driving on Oak Road, and it's clear – it's been freshly plowed. Then you get to Route 910. **DISASTER!**

You call the Township offices, furious. You pay your taxes, and the Township cannot even clear 910!

The truth? The Township doesn't maintain Route 910. It is a State road, and the State does not contract with the Township to perform winter maintenance on it (unlike Oak Road, which is a **CONTRACTED** State road).

The same goes for the County, so please check out the listing of roads we have on our Public Works webpage at:

[www.westdeertownship.com/public-works/](http://www.westdeertownship.com/public-works/)



## NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROGRESS

After 71 years the Township offices will soon have a new home. Although we aren't going far, the new building will offer many much-needed improvements.

Discussions began over two years ago about the need for a new building, mainly due to a lack of space. At their November 2021 meeting the Board of Supervisors approved the advertisement of the formal bid process for the professional design of the new building and the project was eventually awarded to HHSDR Architects.

Through numerous discussions and meetings involving the Board, staff, the architects, and residents, a design for the new building was presented on October 19, 2022. Sealed bids were solicited for all phases of the build, including general construction, electrical, HVAC, and plumbing. All bids received were opened on May 4, 2023. Finally, at a special meeting on May 10, 2023 the Board of Supervisors formally approved construction of the Township's new municipal building.

On June 15, 2023 Township Supervisors, staff and contractors broke ground on the new building. So far thanks to cooperation from Mother Nature construction is ahead of schedule, and at the current rate the building is expected to be complete and ready for occupancy by Fall 2024.

The total project cost will be approximately \$11 million. What is great, though, is the Township received a significant source of funds thanks to a \$1.5 million grant from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program and a \$1 million Local Share Account grant. The remaining cost is funded through \$1 million from the Township Capital Reserve Fund and a General Obligation Bond for \$7.5 million

Follow progress of the building on our website at [www.westdeertownship.com](http://www.westdeertownship.com).

# More Frequently Asked Questions

## TRASH COLLECTION, RECYCLING, AND YARD WASTE

**RESIDENTIAL** Trash Collection Service in West Deer Township is **MANDATORY**.

The West Deer Township Board of Supervisors awarded the current weekly Residential Solid Waste and Bi-Weekly Recyclable Material Collection Contract to:

**Shank Waste Service**

4201 Arnold Avenue #2253

Lower Burrell, PA 15068

724-226-8320

Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Shank Waste Service collects every holiday except for Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving Day.

Contract Year:	Per month/Unlimited:	Senior Citizen Stickers:
2023	\$22.24/month	\$3.00/Sticker
2024	\$22.91/month	\$3.00/Sticker

### TRASH COLLECTION:

1. Trash must be at the curb (within 5 feet of the road where the truck travels) on your collection day by 6 a.m.
2. ALL trash should be bagged, boxed, bundled, or contained in some manner. Each parcel should weigh no more than 40 – 50 lbs. Cans or bag sizes should not exceed 32 gallons.
3. SHANK WILL NOT ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING: Dirt, sod, rocks, bricks, cement, building materials, remodeling materials, auto parts, hazardous waste, paint or anything containing Freon (refrigerators, freezers, dehumidifiers, or air conditioners).

NO TELEVISIONS, computers, or propane tanks. Pennsylvania State Law states televisions, monitors, computers, printers and keyboards must be recycled. If you have any of these items bring them to a Hard-To-Recycle drive-thru event.

## GOT LEAVES?

Shank will pick up leaves during curbside leaf collection in spring and late autumn. Leaves **MUST** be in biodegradable paper composting bags, **NOT PLASTIC**.

Once the dates have been set for the Spring and Fall, the Collection Schedule will be posted on our website, and printed copies can be picked up at the Township building.

## SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY TEXT NOTIFICATIONS

Most residents have cellular phones – and therefore have the ability to send and receive text messages. The Board of Supervisors felt it was important to have a method of notifying residents instantly of emergency situations, such as closed roads, downed trees, flooding, etc.

The Township enrolled in a service called SimpleTexting, and it is free for residents to sign up. To do so, please send a text message to:

**833-544-0940**

and type in the keyword:

**westdeer**

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (724) 265-3680

Police: 911

Police Admin: (724) 265-1100

Hours: M-F 7:00 am to 3:00 pm



## When Do You Need To Apply For A Building Permit?

Below is a list of projects that require obtaining a building permit from the Township before beginning the work:

1. Construction of a new house
2. Addition to an existing house
3. Adding a deck or porch to a current house
4. Interior structural renovation
5. Adding a fence to a house
6. New or relocated driveway
7. Adding a shed, gazebo, or other yard structure
8. Grading (Example: a retaining wall)
9. Emergency generator
10. Solar Upgrade either roof or ground mounted
11. Adding a swimming pool either inground or above
12. Construction of a commercial building
13. Interior commercial fit-outs
14. Interior multi-family fit-outs (Example: an apartment)
15. Change of use of an existing building

For questions, call the Planning and Zoning Department at (724) 265-2780.

## Streetlight Assessment

If any part of your property – within 150 feet – is lit by a Township streetlight, the Township Tax Collector adds a “Streetlight Assessment” to your property tax bill in the amount of \$35/year per affected parcel. This streetlight assessment is adjusted annually as necessary to ensure funds are available to cover expenses.

In years where a sufficient fund balance exists, the Board of Supervisors issues a moratorium on the assessment.

## Streetlight Burned Out

Many people believe the Township changes burnt-out streetlight bulbs, but it is actually the duty of the electric companies.

In the past we have been able to call the electric companies on your behalf, but they now require an account number from the area. If you have an outage, please find the pole number – located on the pole as seen to the right – and phone your electric company at:



**Duquesne Light: 888.393.7000**

**West Penn Power: 888.544.4877**



# STORMWATER MANAGEMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE MS4 PROGRAM

**There is no doubt about it – stormwater management in Pennsylvania is a multi-layered, multi-jurisdictional, ever-changing set of rules, regulations, and requirements. This article will help West Deer residents understand why these requirements -- mandated by Federal and State laws – are in place.**

## What is the MS4 Program?

Untreated or uncontrolled stormwater runoff is the number one cause of impairment in our local waterways. Polluted runoff is often transported through municipal drainage systems until it eventually discharges into streams, lakes, and rivers. An MS4 – or Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System – is comprised of drainage systems including streets, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ponds, ditches, man-made channels, and stormpipes owned by public entities. Therefore most municipalities – including West Deer – are required to comply.

MS4 programs are intended to improve our nation's surface waters by reducing the levels of pollutants picked up by runoff and transported into the stormwater system during rains. As part of the MS4 Program, West Deer holds a permit to discharge stormwater into local waterways. This permit requires us to implement and maintain a stormwater management program that: 1) reduces the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent possible; 2) protects water quality; and 3) satisfies the water quality requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act. In Pennsylvania, the MS4 Program is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Every resident can participate in this program by reducing or preventing pollutant runoff from their own property by reporting any non-stormwater discharges into the Township's drainage system.

## What can we do to keep stormwater clean?

There are numerous things we can all do on a daily basis to keep pollution out of our waterways, such as:

1. Never dumping anything into storm drains, swales, or streams.
2. Picking up litter from the street before it gets into storm drains.
3. Using limited amounts of fertilizers.
4. If you must use pesticides, finding an environmentally-friendly product.
5. Recycling motor oil and other hazardous chemicals. NEVER dump such materials into the storm system!
6. Recycling in general!
7. Always picking up your pet's waste. Otherwise, bacteria from it will eventually get into our water.



## What type of connections are prohibited?

The following connections are strictly prohibited:

1. Any drainage pipe, channel, or ditch that allows non-stormwater discharge (like septic) into our system.
2. Roof drains. Unless necessary and approved by the Township, roof drains should discharge into vegetation.
3. Rubbish/garbage left in public rights-of-way, except that in waste receptacles intended for refuse collection.
4. Any drain or pipe connected to the Township's stormwater system without approval from West Deer. ◆

“For many of us, clean water is so plentiful and readily available that we rarely, if ever, pause to consider what life would be like without it.”

- Marcus Samuelsson

# From the West Deer Police Department

## SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION!

School Zones are posted with times and flashing yellow lights, the maximum speed in these zones is 15mph. The fine for this offense can cost you up to \$500. Officers will be monitoring these zones, so please follow the speed limit and watch for children. Buses within the Deer Lakes School District are equipped with bus patrol. When a bus is stopped with the red lights flashing and STOP sign enacted, you must STOP! Cameras will record anyone going through the red lights and you will receive a citation in the mail. The penalty for running a school bus stop sign can be up to a \$250 fine AND a 60 day suspension of your license.

## ON-STREET PARKING ORDINANCE

The updated On-Street Parking Ordinance was enacted by the Board of Supervisors at their Regular Business Meeting held on March 16, 2022. A copy of this ordinance can be found on the Township website.

This ordinance was enacted due to emergency vehicles and plow trucks being unable to travel on some township streets, as well as complaints received by both the Police Department and Township.

If you plan to have a gathering, party, etc., you may request an exemption from the Police Department. Please email [parking@westdeertownship.com](mailto:parking@westdeertownship.com) with your name, address, telephone number, date, and time of your event. Please ensure your guests are parking in a manner that still allows for emergency vehicles to get through in case of an emergency.

There are some streets that are exempt so please check the ordinance to see if your street is on the list.

## TOYS FOR CHILDREN

West Deer Township Police will be sponsoring the 27th annual Toys for Children Program. Children ages infant to 12 within the Deer Lakes School District will be accepted into the program. Donation boxes will be placed in both the municipal building and police department lobbies on November 1st. Donated toys are requested to be new and unwrapped. Monetary donations will also be accepted in order to purchase additional toys needed, wrapping supplies, shoe vouchers, and any other items necessary.

Please mail any donations to: Toys for Children, 109 East Union Rd, Cheswick PA 15024. Registrations for anyone in need this year will begin on November 6th. Please email any questions regarding the program to [toysforchildren@westdeertownship.com](mailto:toysforchildren@westdeertownship.com)



## SOLICITING

Anyone who wishes to solicit within the township must obtain a Criminal Background Check from PA State Police (can be found on their website). An application for solicitation can be obtained by visiting the Police Department Office, and a copy of the background check results must be submitted at this time. After approved by the Chief of Police and the Township Manager, a No Knock list will be provided to the solicitor. In order to be placed on the 'No Knock' list, please email your address to [noknock@westdeertownship.com](mailto:noknock@westdeertownship.com). No other information is necessary.

# “We Need More Businesses So Taxes Will Drop”

## Would this actually solve tax issues?

It seems that every time the question of how to improve the Township – or whether to raise taxes – comes up, there is a similar refrain: “We need more businesses in the Township to lower taxes! That will solve our problems!”

While this is a normal (and very popular) response, in reality it is not always true.

In 1988, the Pennsylvania legislature passed what was known as the Pennsylvania Local Tax Reform Act. This Act prohibited municipalities that did not tax business proceeds – such as West Deer – from ever receiving business taxes.

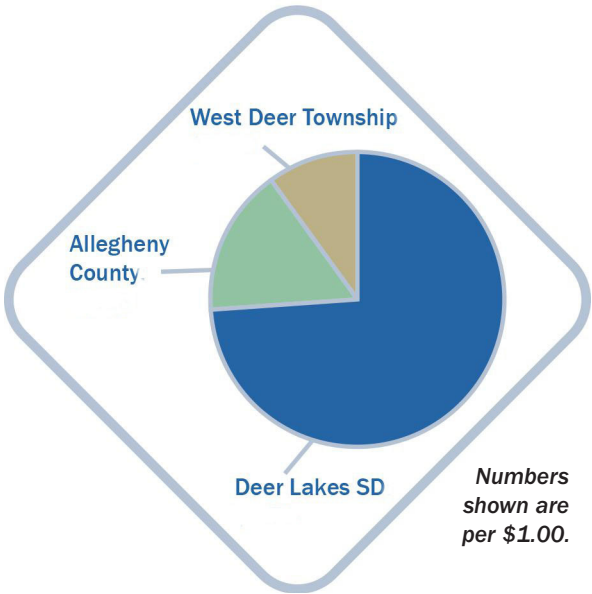
As an example, if a Wal-Mart moved into the Township today, West Deer would receive \$0 from taxing their profit. Not a single penny!

Now we would receive a property tax, local services tax (LST), and fire tax. Those would total approximately \$29,000 using an average Wal-Mart’s value and employee count.

However, that Wal-Mart would require additional policing, more wear-and-tear on the roads, etc., so the cost to the Township would be greater than the \$29,000 gained.

Having businesses located within the Township is both valuable and desirable. That is why the Township Board of Supervisors work diligently to get SMART business growth in the Township... for the right reasons. ♦

“No taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant.”  
- George Washington



## WHERE DO MY TAX DOLLARS GO?

We receive many questions from residents in regard to their property taxes, so each year we include a breakdown to help people make sense of it.

Firstly, many folks do not realize that there are THREE different property taxes in West Deer: School District, County, and Township. The Township has no control over the County and School District taxes, and vice versa.

The current 2023 information for each is as follows:

Taxing Body	Millage Rate	Portion of Each Tax Dollar
Deer Lakes	22.69	\$0.75
Allegheny County	4.73	\$0.15
West Deer	2.99	\$0.10

The following is the actual annual amount that would be paid for the average property assessment of \$117,600 in West Deer:

Deer Lakes:	\$ 2,668.34
Allegheny County:	\$ 556.25
West Deer:	\$ 351.62

# Referendum Item #1 - Township Fire Tax

You may have heard that there are going to be two referendum questions on the ballot for voters to decide upon on November 7. Those regard the Fire Tax and the elected auditors.

## Why is this happening, and what is a referendum?

West Deer Township is a Home Rule Charter community. That means we are governed by a Charter that acts just like the United States Constitution. The Charter can only be amended through a referendum.

A referendum is a process where the Board of Supervisors sends an ordinance to the Allegheny County Department of Elections having a question placed on the ballot of West Deer voters, who can only vote “yes” or “no.” If more voters vote “yes,” the ordinance passes and comes back to the Board for implementation.

## FIRE TAX REFERENDUM

### What is the purpose of the Fire Tax referendum?

The Fire Tax referendum will be on the ballot to modify the language of the Charter to change the fee structure from flat rates to millage-based rates, to simplify the language, and to increase funding for the operational support of our three volunteer fire companies in the process.

Section C-1197 (Tax Limitation) of the Charter currently states:

“The taxes on real estate shall be limited to twelve mills per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) of assessed valuation **together with a fee of up to \$40.00 per household and \$100.00 per business for fire protection.** This limitation may be modified by the Board of Supervisors by an ordinance placing the question of increasing the limit on the ballot of any election for the approval or rejection by the qualified voters of the Township.”

The **bolded** language – which is the Fire Tax itself – was resoundingly added by the voters of the Township through a referendum in 2005, when over 70% of the voters felt the Fire Tax was necessary.

The voters will decide whether to change the language of Section C-1197 to read:

“The taxes on real estate shall be limited to twelve (12) mills of the Township’s assessed value, which may include a Fire Tax in an amount not to exceed one-half (0.5) mills.”

### Couldn’t the Board of Supervisors simply increase the Fire Tax (or give extra funds to the VFCs)?

Contrary to what has been said on social media, the Board of Supervisors does not have the authority to increase the Fire Tax. As you can see in the current version of Section C-1197 above, the \$40/\$100 Fire Tax limits can only be modified by the voters, not the Board. All the Board can do is send it to the voters.

Some folks in the fire service and in the community have asked why the Board does not just give the fire companies additional funding from the General Fund instead of increasing the Fire Tax. Though the Board could do that, it would be contrary to the entire purpose of having a Fire Tax.

In 2004, the companies and the Board argued that if a Fire Tax was implemented, the fire departments would not have to rely on a fluctuating revenue source decided by “the benevolence” of different supervisors each year. As stated, the Fire Tax was therefore resoundingly adopted by the voters in 2005 as a means to ensure a stable, set, and able-to-be-budgeted source of funding for the fire companies each year. So today the General Fund is budgeted separately by the Board of Supervisors knowing that the Township’s fire service funding comes from the Fire Tax alone. In the case of an emergency, the Board could definitely offer additional – and understandable – financial support, but the fire companies now know what their budget is and work within it.

...ARTICLE CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

# Referendum Item #1 Continued...

## **Why do the fire companies need an increase, and what do you mean by “operating costs”?**

A Fire Study conducted by the Commonwealth recommended the VFC funding be reviewed. After studying more detailed financials given to the Township, and meeting with all three companies on June 1st to discuss finances and an appropriate funding level, the Board of Supervisors realized that the companies were able to cover operational costs – utilities, training, fuel, vehicle and building maintenance, firefighting equipment, hoses, etc. – but were not able to save enough to cover the capital costs of future vehicles. The Fire Study showed that all three fire companies follow recommended vehicle replacement schedules, and do not buy replacements until they truly need them. Costs have increased so much in the seventeen years since the Fire Tax was implemented, however, that more saving is necessary. A \$400,000 truck in 2006 may cost over \$1 million today. And that is why the Board unanimously voted to send this important increase to the voters.

## **I noticed VFC #3 bought a new building? Why should I vote for the Fire Tax to go to that?**

It should be made clear that the recommended increase is not for the VFC #3 building on Route 910. Again, this Fire Tax increase – if voters pass it – would go toward operating expenses and capital vehicle purchases.

When VFC #3 petitioned the Board of Supervisors on June 15, 2021, the Chief and President gave a presentation that listed six sources of revenue to pay for the new building and renovations: 1) Fifteen year Mortgage for \$1.4 Million; 2) Bridge loan of \$400,000; 3) \$250,000 from company funds/investments; 4) Sale of existing building estimated at \$700,000; 5) State VLAP loan for \$450,000; and 6) GETGF grant for \$500,000. As you can see in their complete presentation, nowhere in their proposal did they state a Fire Tax increase or additional funding from the Township would fund the building and/or renovations.

## **Are there other sources of revenue the fire companies have available?**

All three companies receive additional funding in the form of fundraising, grants, and special programs through the state and federal governments. The Township has offered to assist in helping with applications.

## **Will there be accountability?**

Absolutely. Another recommendation from the Fire Study was greater transparency and financial reporting from the fire companies. Though the Fire Tax is budgeted, simple reporting requirements will be placed on the funds before they are distributed. These reports include reports such as monthly profit/loss reports, year-to-date profit/loss reports, and federal 990 filings, and are necessary so the Board knows how the tax dollars are being spent (and to gauge when more administrative help is needed from the Township).

## **How will this impact my tax bill personally?**

All residential properties are currently charged \$40 a year for the Fire Tax, and all commercial properties are charged \$100 for the year. With the recommendation to move from a flat fee to an assessed fee, some property owners will see a reduction of their tax, and some will see an increase. This is all determined by your assessed property value from Allegheny County (not your market value, which is much higher). The average property assessment in West Deer is currently \$117,600. At .5 mills, the Fire Tax would be \$58.80 a year.

## **What if I need additional information?**

If you need additional information, the Township has created a webpage dedicated to explaining these referenda further. You can see it at: <https://bitly.ws/TX1a>. You can also contact the Township administrative offices at 724.265.3680, or send an email to Township Manager Daniel Mator at [dmator@westdeertownship.com](mailto:dmator@westdeertownship.com). We want the public to understand this issue, so we are here to assist! As a cautionary note: Please do not rely on social media for accurate information. You will not find it there. ◆

# Referendum Item #2 - Elected Auditors

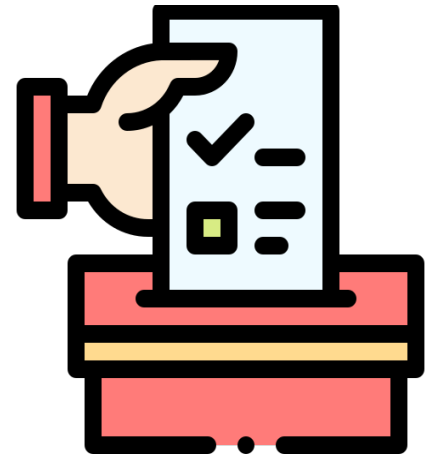
The Fire Tax isn't the only item on the ballot this November in the form of a referendum. Voters will also be able to decide on the continuation of elected auditors.

## AUDITORS REFERENDUM

### What is the referendum regarding elected auditors, and why is it on the ballot?

The current Charter language states:

"There shall be three (3) auditors elected at large. An auditor shall be elected to serve a term of six years, said term beginning the first Monday of January, 1976, and an auditor shall be elected every two years thereafter. The three auditors shall be elected and serve in accordance with the Laws of Pennsylvania relating to non-charter Township of the Second Class. They shall audit the accounts of the Township annually. The Board of Supervisors may contract for an audit by a Certified Public Accountant. Upon presentation of a petition by five (5%) percent of the registered voters of the Township asking for an independent audit, the Board of Supervisors must contract for an audit by a Certified Public Accountant."



Forty-seven years ago when the elected auditor position started, things were different in the Township. Three residents could step up and serve that role (rather easily). All they had to do was make sure what was reported as financially going in and out actually matched records.

Times have changed, and that is no longer the case. With each report of financial inaccuracies – or flat-out corruption – by other municipal, state, and federal government officials, the Commonwealth ratcheted up reporting requirements. They did this to the point that the system of reporting has become so complex that it currently takes two CPAs trained in municipal accounting two weeks on site – and about a month after that – to complete an audit.

The audit then goes to the Department of Community and Economic Development for review, and is presented to the Board of Supervisors later that summer. This report is always available to the public and shows exactly how the Township did financially.

Because of the complexity, the Township has appointed an independent, third-party municipal CPA firm for over two decades. Though elected auditors occasionally show up on ballots – and through write-in campaigns – they do not complete the audits anymore, and are therefore not necessary. Often the Township has no elected auditors. When we do, they defer to the appointed auditor and just review the audit. In fact ANY resident is welcome, and encouraged, to review the audit.

The referendum – if adopted – would therefore change the language of that Charter section to:

"The Board of Supervisors shall provide for an independent annual audit of Township accounts by a certified public accountant or accounting firm duly licensed in Pennsylvania. It shall be the duty of the appointed auditor to audit, settle, and adjust all accounts of the Township, including any Township boards, committees, or commissions that received Township funds during the immediately preceding calendar year. The Board may also provide for additional audits as it deems necessary. The results of the annual audit and a financial statement of the fiscal affairs of the Township shall be presented to the Township Manager and made available to the public by the deadline determined by the Commonwealth following the fiscal year audited."

### How would this be different from what we already have?

As stated, we already have an appointed auditor performing our audits. So process-wise this referendum would have no impact in that regard. It simply eliminates the confusion of having – or not having – elected auditors to vote for, appoint, and/or track. However simple a change that may seem, the time taken by the voters, the Board, the staff, the County elections division, and the elected volunteer auditors themselves to administer the elected auditor provisions is sizeable. That time can be used elsewhere in the Township. ◆

# West Deer Dog Shelter

**The Dog Shelter is a Township-owned, volunteer-run, no-kill shelter located behind the Municipal Building. It provides a home, food, and medical care for abandoned and stray dogs -- no cats (sorry!).**

Each dog is given attention and care by our dedicated volunteer staff, which ranges from school-aged children to retirees. The shelter allows the dogs to roam freely throughout the shelter and adjoining yard. In addition, they get walks and exercise.

Before dogs are “adopted out,” they receive a complete medical checkup that includes vaccinations and spay/neutering services. If any medical conditions are discovered by our vet, they will be addressed prior to adoption.

When an owner cannot be located – or circumstances do not allow the dog to be returned to its owner – a dog will remain with the shelter until adopted. Some dogs have been with us for years, but we are – again – no-kill, and they will always have a home with us.

Dogs up for adoption are listed on **Petfinder.com**. Check them out and give them a “forever home”! ♦



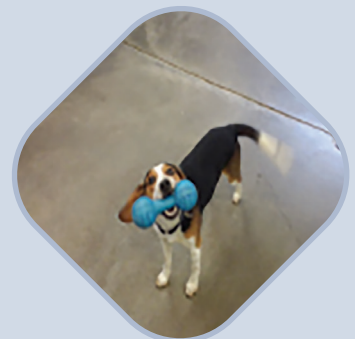
## How to donate to the dog shelter —

The West Deer Dog Shelter accepts monetary donations via Venmo @westdeerdogshelter. When asked for phone number verification enter 5519. All monetary donations go towards vet care since the shelter is volunteer based. If you wish to donate in another way the shelter's preferred dog food is Purina One Lamb and Rice. As a reminder donations are also accepted in person or by mail to 109 East Union Road Cheswick, PA 15024.

You can help cover our dogs' medical needs by having your own prescriptions filled at Rite Aid. Enter this link in your web browser to learn more: [support.rxfundraising.com/WestDeerTownshipDogShelter](https://support.rxfundraising.com/WestDeerTownshipDogShelter).

## DOG LAW INFO

- Pennsylvania state law mandates that all dogs over three months old require a dog license. A fine of \$300 may be imposed to owners of unlicensed dogs. It is also recommended that your dog be micro-chipped and have a collar displaying ID tags w/ phone number.
- Excessive barking — defined as continuous barking for thirty minutes or more — is not permitted . A citation can be issued to the owner once the Code Enforcement Officer receives five written complaints.
- All dogs must be under control at all times. Dogs must be contained within your property and are not allowed to run at large.
- Animal abuse laws state that all owners are required to provide food, potable water, and access to clean and sanitary shelter.
- When an unattended dog is tethered to a leash -- or a run -- there are minimum standards which must be met. First, the tether must be at least 10' in length (or three times the length of the dog). Second, the dog must have access to potable water and a shaded area. Third, the dog cannot be tethered longer than thirty minutes in temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.



# West Deer Township Planning & Zoning

The Planning & Zoning Department of West Deer Township seeks to provide quality public service while being mindful of our duty to protect the public's health, safety and welfare in the built environment. This department, along with our third party building inspection provider, Professional Code Services (PCS), provides timely and comprehensive services in the areas of plan review, inspections, code enforcement and administration.

The planning & zoning department's primary responsibility is the enforcement of the West Deer Township Code. We issue permits for all construction, demolition, signs and licenses for all business conducted within the Township. In conjunction with the issuance of permits, the department along with PCS perform necessary review and approval of plans for code compliance and perform onsite inspections.

The department processes all requests in addition to submitting the necessary documentation to the appropriate commissions and boards for: variances, occupancy permits, land development and subdivisions. The department maintains all files related to records for the Township's Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Zoning Hearing Board. In addition, we receive and attempt to resolve complaints filed by Township residents that pertain to code compliance.

The Township's Code Enforcement Officer investigates complaints and performs inspections relating to property maintenance, quality of life, and the safety of occupants. It is also the responsibility of the Code Enforcement Officer to inspect properties to ensure conformity with the Township's housing, zoning, health, sanitation, and safety regulations. Planning and Zoning staff also handle occupancy permits and matters related to zoning. The Code Enforcement Officer does not have a role in anything related to building inspections. All building inspections are handled by our third party provider PCS.

## **Responsibilities of Code Enforcement:**

- \*Overgrown Grass/Weeds
- \*Junk and/or Debris on a Property
- \*Safety Conditions of a Structure or Building
- \*Light, Ventilation, and Occupancy Limitations
- \*Standard of Living Conditions
- \*Abandoned Vehicles on a Property

For questions, contact us at (724) 265-2780. ◆



## **PLANNING & ZONING**

West Deer has a Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board. Each has a separate -- yet very important -- function within the Township.

### **Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission is a seven-member body made up of local residents. They oversee new developments and subdivisions, and works with the Board of Supervisors and administration on the Township's Comprehensive Plan. The Township Engineer also works in conjunction with the Commission, reviews the plans, and advises them on engineering specifications.

The Commission ensures that the developers/contractors meet all the requirements and zoning stipulations established in the Township.

**Public meetings are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. (if necessary).**

### **Zoning Hearing Board**

The Zoning Hearing Board is a five-member quasi-judicial body. This means that they are a "court of first appearance," much like a regular court. The Zoning Hearing Board has its own solicitor (attorney), and a court reporter is present at every meeting.

A typical hearing, for example, may be held to determine if a resident is permitted to place a structure within the normally allowable side-yard setback. The ZHB would hear the case and determine whether or not the "variance" would be permitted.

**The Zoning Hearing Board, if necessary, holds their hearings the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.**



The West Deer Fire Companies are actively recruiting men and women for a variety of positions within the Fire Service. Contact your local Fire Company for more information.

- West Deer VFD # 1 – 1520 Saxonburg Blvd – 724-265-1380
- West Deer VFD # 2 – 2163 Saxonburg Blvd – 724-265-1248
- West Deer VFC # 3 – 4418 Gibsonia Road – 724-443-3351

# Fire Station Info From West Deer VFC #2

West Deer VFC #2 would like to introduce ourselves and tell our residents a little about our station, our mission and our future plans to provide fire protection to the residents of West Deer Township and surrounding townships.

Our mission is simple:  
“We protect the ones you love.”

West Deer #2 has provided fire services to West Deer township residents since 1945. Whether there is a house on fire, basement flooding, motor vehicle accident or a simple resident assist we are here to serve with our 100% volunteer membership.

At West Deer #2, our volunteers put in hundreds of hours each year, whether it's fundraising, training or time spent on the scene of an emergency incident. We are here to serve everyone!

Our membership meets every Tuesday for training and equipment safety checks in the following categories: Firefighting, Vehicle Rescue, Rope Rescue, and full inspections of trucks and all associated equipment.

Our fleet of trucks includes the 2021 spartan 2000 gallon tanker, 2001 spartan 1500 gallon engine, 2004 ram brush truck, 2015 ram pick up used as a squad, and a 2015 Kawasaki Mule used for off road rescues and brush fire operations. Looking to the future, West Deer #2 has plans to receive our newly refurbished 2001 spartan rescue/ engine later this year.

Throughout 2022/2023 West Deer #2 firefighters have been training and preparing to become a State Certified Rescue Company. We are excited to add this service for our residents. We have trained for hundreds of hours to prepare for your time of need. As for fundraising, we are proud of our young membership that is coming up with new fundraising ideas to pay for the needs of our department. Follow us on Facebook to see all of our great tip board raffles we are doing. 100% of the proceeds go to funding our training and equipment needs.

Meet our leadership team:

**Chief** - Anthony Creaturo Sr.

**Deputy Chief** - Adam Olszewski

**Assistant Chief** - Darryl Morrison

**Rescue Captain** - Anthony Creaturo Jr.

**1st Lieutenant** - Braden Fish

**2nd Lieutenant** - Tim Hamilton

**President** - Adam Olszewski

**Vice President** - Brian Levec

**Treasurer** - Tim Scholze

**Asst. Treasurer** - Chrissy Creaturo

**Secretary** - Victor Gillner



If you have any interest in becoming a volunteer firefighter with our department, please stop by for a visit on a Tuesday night and fill out an application. New members are always welcome! ◆

# Updates From the West Deer EMS

**The West Deer EMS 2023 subscription drive is underway! Packets were mailed to Township residents and businesses in June. Your paid subscription will help us continue to protect you and your loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

West Deer EMS is a non-profit organization responsible for emergency medical response to residents and visitors of West Deer Township. We are a separate entity from the Township and are not funded by taxes. As the cost to operate a business increases, the reimbursement received from health insurers has decreased.

Your contributions also help keep up with the ever-increasing costs of buying ambulances, purchasing life-saving medical equipment and training for our dedicated personnel. Your yearly subscription helps us continue to protect you and your loved ones 24/7. Your paid subscription is vitally important in helping West Deer EMS.

Your paid subscription can also save you hundreds of dollars as it provides you with a 50% discount off any out-of-pocket expenses related to emergency ambulance service provided by West Deer EMS. We

have two residential subscription options to choose from. Our individual subscription program will cover one individual while the household subscription program will cover all members living in the household as well as any visitors that might need an ambulance while at your residence.

If you have a business in West Deer and subscribe, all employees are protected while on company time at the place of business. The subscription year runs from September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2024. Subscription packets were mailed to West Deer Township residents in June 2023. Sometime in September we will also mail a reminder packet to those that may have missed the first one. You can simply fill out the information and return the subscription with payment in the envelope provided, or you can go online to our website at [www.WestDeerEMS.com](http://www.WestDeerEMS.com) and click on the subscription tab to pay online.

Support your local emergency medical service by becoming a subscriber today! For any questions, please call the office at (724) 265-4750 option 5.

In other news, West Deer EMS took delivery of a brand new 2023 Crestline CCL 150 ambulance built on a Ford E-350 chassis in August (pictured above). This is the first new ambulance for West Deer EMS since 2016 and will replace the oldest unit in our fleet that was purchased in 2008. This ambulance has exciting new technology and features that increase safety for our patients and EMS providers. We've also redesigned the graphics package to have higher visibility while on the road.

It will take a couple of weeks to place all the equipment and prepare the unit for the Allegheny County's Department of Health inspection before use of the vehicle can begin. Have no worries, though, as you'll see the new ambulance taking care of West Deer residents very soon. Thank you again to everyone for your support of West Deer EMS! ♦



## Your Newsletter... Spread the Word!

This newsletter is an effort to inform everyone in West Deer Township. Other sources — such as social media — may reach a portion of our residents, but a great deal of folks would be overlooked.

The Township produces a monthly electronic newsletter that will be available on our website and Facebook page. We will also have a small amount of printed copies of the monthly newsletter available at the municipal building, 109 East Union Road. ◆

**Warning:** Though social media has its value, receiving Township information from sources like Facebook can be misleading. They are great to keep up-to-date with community events, etc., but not Township FACTS. Make it easy on yourself... check out our website, email us, or simply give us a call. We're here for YOU!



### **Township Supervisors**

Beverly S. Jordan, Chairwoman  
Shirley Hollibaugh, Vice Chairwoman  
Vernon Frey  
David Harrison  
James Smullin

### **West Deer Township**

109 East Union Road  
Cheswick, PA 15024  
Phone : 724.265.3680  
Email : [info@westdeertownship.com](mailto:info@westdeertownship.com)  
[www.westdeertownship.com](http://www.westdeertownship.com)