

A MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING THE
LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

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COVID-19 News for Townships

Check out this column for the latest COVID-19 news for your township, as well as guidance on state and federal orders:

New State Restrictions Apply to Township Meetings — The Commonwealth implemented new mitigation measures for COVID-19 on July 16. The new orders **restrict indoor gatherings to 25 people**, while outdoor gatherings remain at up to 250 people.

It is PSATS' understanding from the governor's office that **townships are to comply with the new orders**, which will impact public meetings. As such, townships should consider options of teleconference, videoconference, hybrid in-person/remote meetings, or hold meetings outdoors. Townships should review **PSATS' Meeting Guidance for Townships During Pa.'s Phased Reopening**, which was mailed to you last month and is available at psats.org by choosing the COVID-19 button.

Other restrictions affect teleworking, gyms, and bars and restaurants. Where possible, businesses are to conduct operations remotely. Gyms and fitness facilities are to prioritize outdoor activities. Bar service must be suspended and restaurants are to operate at 25 percent of indoor capacity.

Guidance on State Quarantine — The Commonwealth is urging all Pennsylvania residents who travel to states with high numbers of COVID-19 cases to quarantine for 14 days upon their return. While not mandatory, townships should consider implementing this recommendation for employees. Any policy needs to provide a clear expectation on how long the quarantine will be, how leave will be handled (*paid or unpaid*), and if employees will be permitted to work from home. Employees are not eligible for Families First Coronavirus Response Act leave during a voluntary quarantine. Townships could accept negative COVID-19 test results as an alternative to quarantine. For the most current list of states in the quarantine advisory, go to www.doh.pa.gov and choose "Travelers."

State Mask Order Applies to Townships — Townships should be aware that Pennsylvania's universal mask order, which took effect July 1, applies to township facilities. Face coverings are required if indoors in a public area, if outdoors and unable to consistently maintain a distance of six feet from other individuals, and when working and interacting with the public or in any common areas or space visited by the public. There are exceptions for medical conditions and where it would create an unsafe working condition. For details, go to health.pa.gov and choose "Universal Masking FAQ."

Wolf Vetoes Resolution to Terminate Emergency Declaration — Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed concurrent House Resolution 836, which would have ended his emergency declaration. The General Assembly had presented the resolution to the governor in accordance with a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling that the General Assembly cannot decide unilaterally to end the declaration. The legislature has the option to override the veto if it has the votes.

Commonwealth Updates COVID Recreation FAQs — The Wolf Administration has updated its frequently asked questions about summer recreation, camps and pools. The main change is to incorporate the Commonwealth's universal mask order and apply it to recreational opportunities. To view, go to the PSATS COVID-19 page and go to Resources.

New resources and the latest guidance continue to be available at psats.org in the COVID-19 Information box. Subscribe to the PSATS Morning News by emailing memberservices@psats.org for daily updates!



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**HB 1069 would
amend the
Sunshine Act to
require all agencies
to post meeting
agendas on their
website (if the
agency has one),
at the meeting
location, and at the
agency office at
least 24 hours in
advance of the
meeting.**

Urge Your Residents to Complete the Census by Constitution Day

Census takers have started knocking on doors in Pennsylvania of households that have not yet responded to the census. **PSATS is urging a statewide push to count every person in every township.** To help with this effort, we have designated Constitution Day (*September 17*) as “Township CENSUS 2020 Response Day.”

Let’s use the fact that the U.S. Constitution mandates a count of the nation’s population every 10 years to rally township residents to make sure they participate in the 2020 Census. Please help us promote Township CENSUS 2020 Response Day as a special and important event in your township.

PSATS has created a flyer (enclosed) and a logo that you can use to promote this day. You can also find these materials on PSATS’ 2020 Census page at **psats.org** (*look under the “Newsroom” tab*).

Capitol Roundup

PSATS Represents Townships — Over the last few weeks, PSATS has taken the following action to represent townships:

Asked Gov. Tom Wolf to provide direct grants to municipalities for COVID-19 expenses, particularly since the state’s Hazard Pay program does not apply to townships.

Testified before the Senate Local Government Committee in opposition to HB 1563, which would allow owners of multiple rental properties served by a single meter to request a rate study and adjustment of water and sewer rates.

Testified before the House Transportation Committee on SB 1199, which would authorize the use of **personal delivery devices** (*autonomous robots*) to deliver packages to consumers and emphasized the importance of local control to prohibit these devices where they would constitute a hazard.

Submitted comments to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission on the need for coordination of water and wastewater utilities with local land use ordinances.

To view the testimonies, go to **psats.org** and choose “Legislation & Policy” and then “Legislative Testimony.” The PUC comments are under “Letters to Agencies.”

Posting meeting agendas — The Senate recently moved **HB 1069** forward, which would amend the Sunshine Act to require all agencies, including townships, to post a meeting agenda with all items that the board intends to deliberate or consider at least 24 hours in advance of a meeting on the agency’s website (*if it has one*), at the location of the meeting, and at the agency office. The board could discuss and vote on only those items that were listed on the posted agenda unless a majority of the board first votes to add new items to the agenda. HB 1069 previously passed the House unanimously and is now before the full Senate.

New Studies Provide Resources for Townships — Recent legislative studies provide resources for townships and PSATS’ legislative agenda:

The Independent Fiscal Office has released a report on the **Fiscal Impact of COVID-19 on Local Government**. Townships should use this report to estimate their tax revenues for the remainder of the year. The IFO released an **outlook on 2020 Natural Gas Impact Fee revenue**, which can help townships with their 2021 budgets and **studied the economic impacts of the regulation of plastic bags**. To view these reports, go to **ifo.state.pa.us**.

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee released a study on Pennsylvania’s

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Broadband Deployment Mandates and analyzed the non-economic impacts of **the regulation of single-use plastic bags**. To view the LB&FC reports, go to lbfc.legis.state.pa.us.

Governor Signs New Acts — Gov. Tom Wolf recently signed the follow bills of interest to townships, including several bills addressing law enforcement reform and first responders:

Act 57 of 2020 creates a **database for law enforcement officer records** and requires employers to disclose employment information to law enforcement agencies conducting background investigations of applicants.

Act 58 of 2020 authorizes all municipalities to create a **redevelopment authority**.

Act 59 of 2020 requires the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission to train police officers on recognizing suspected child abuse and **provide annual instruction on the use of force** and interacting with individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Act 61 of 2020 authorizes municipalities to **provide tax exemption incentives for certain blighted** industrial, commercial, business, and residential property.

Act 66 of 2020 exempts a **volunteer fire company, volunteer EMS company, or volunteer rescue company** from the real estate transfer tax.

Act 69 of 2020 creates a statewide **program to help first responders manage stress and prevent stress related illness** and fulfills a recommendation of the SR 6 commission report.

For more information on the new acts, go to legis.state.pa.us.

House Unanimously Elects Speaker — After former House Speaker Michael Turzai (R-Allegheny) resigned from office in June, the House unanimously elected Representative Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) as the 141st Speaker of the House of Representatives. Cutler was first elected to the House in 2006 and previously served as the House Majority Leader.

Local government legislation moves forward — Since mid-June, the following bills of interest to townships moved forward in the General Assembly:

SB 835 would provide **grants for high-speed broadband service** infrastructure deployment in unserved areas of Pennsylvania.

SB 875 would **exempt firefighters from the sales and use tax** when purchasing protective equipment and accessory communications equipment.

SB 881 would expand **Pennsylvania's farmland preservation program** to include land trusts.

SB 1118 and **HB 2438** would **authorize an electric cooperative to provide broadband service**.

SB 1180 would establish a **state tax credit for volunteer firefighters** of up to \$500.

HB 1582 would give townships that use a CPA to perform their annual audit the **option to eliminate the township's board of auditors** and authorize the board of supervisors to set a salary schedule by ordinance for supervisors who are also employees.

HB 2536 would authorize local governments, during the COVID-19 emergency, to use **alternative tax anticipation notes** that mature at the end of the next fiscal year.

HB 2293 would require emergency response plans for **natural gas liquid pipelines** in highly populated areas.

For more information on these bills, go to legis.state.pa.us. For daily legislative news, subscribe to PSATS Morning News daily email. Email memberservices@psats.org to subscribe.

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities

PSATS Training Format Changing Due to Governor's COVID Order — Due to Gov. Wolf's recent order capping indoor gatherings at 25 people, PSATS has made the decision to convert its upcoming Regional Forums, affiliate seminars, and certain other offerings to virtual training. Published dates will remain the same, but we expect to add more dates to break up one-day training into more manageable segments over several days. More details will be available at the registration sites noted so please check there for additional dates. Any regular in-person classes such as flagger training, budget courses, and the like, will be capped at 25 participants.

Virtual Conference Workshops — Just because the PSATS 2020 Educational Conference and Exhibit Show has been canceled doesn't mean you will miss your chance at a valuable education! Many fantastic virtual Conference workshops are scheduled in July and August. And purchasing a \$99 per person all access conference pass allows you to view the live workshops you want, while allowing you to view on-demand those that you missed. For more, visit learn.psats.org/virtual-conference.

Regional Forums — Now through November, PSATS is hosting a series of Virtual Regional Forums that provide members with lots of practical advice on tackling near-term and long-term issues. These sessions are tailored to your region's unique needs and issues.

The cost to attend is \$75 for members and \$125 for non-members. For more information and to register, go to connect.psats.org/trainingevents/regionalforum.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where you will find important reminders and information.

- **COVID-19 Grants for Fire and EMS Available** — The Office of the State Fire Commissioner is accepting applications for COVID-19 grants for fire and EMS. Applications are **due August 7, 2020**. Each fire company and EMS company that received 2019-2020 grants through the Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grant program will receive, at a minimum, the same amount as their 2019-2020 award. Due to federal compliance guidelines, **all fire, rescue, and EMS companies must register for the new program to receive a grant**. Log onto www.osfc.pa.gov for more information!
- **Enter 2020 Data for PSATS Salary Survey Plus** — Don't forget to enter 2020 wage and salary information into the PSATS Salary Survey Plus online platform! The more townships that participate, the higher the quality of the results will be for our member townships. Help make the survey the best it can be! Login to connect.psats.org and choose the Salary Survey Plus link under "My PSATS Accounts." **Be sure to have all of your township's data submitted by August 15** to ensure the earliest access to the 2020 survey results!
Questions? Email salarysurveyplus@psats.org or call (717) 763-0930 ext. 138.
- **Recognize Your Local Hometown Heroes and Win Cash, Custom Website** — Townships of under 5,000 population have **until August 15** to nominate an outstanding civic volunteer or organization for the Small Town America Civic Volunteer Award. Nominees may be an individual or organization and your township will win a cash prize of up to \$10,000 if it is one of the top three entries. Also, the top 100 nominees will win a custom website and a year of free website hosting by CivicPlus. To learn more or to enter, go to civic-volunteer.com.
- **PSATS Accepting Workshop Proposals** — PSATS is accepting proposals for workshop presentations until **September 4, 2020** to be made at its 2021 Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, which will be held on April 19-21, at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey, PA. Workshops will be held on a wide variety of topics. Interested parties must submit proposals through conference.psats.org.