

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

Legislation is
now being
introduced for
the 2021-2022
legislative
session

Capitol Roundup

2021-2022 legislative session begins — The 2021-2022 session of the General Assembly convened on January 5 and committee chairs have been appointed. Legislation is being introduced for the new session and committee assignments are available at www.legis.state.pa.us. Gov. Tom Wolf will hold his budget address on **February 2**. Stay tuned as the new session gets underway!

Special elections scheduled — Speaker of the House Bryan Cutler (*R-Lancaster*) has ordered a special election to coincide with Pennsylvania's primary election on Tuesday, May 18, to fill the vacant seat in the 59th Legislative District in Westmoreland and Somerset counties. The vacancy was created by the sudden passing of Rep. Mike Reese (*R-Westmoreland/Somerset*).

A second special election will be scheduled due to the recent death of Sen. Dave Arnold (*R-Lebanon*). It is also expected to coincide with the May primary.

Committee chairs appointed — Both chambers recently announced committee chairs for the 2021-22 legislative session. Below are the leaders of several committees that will consider legislation affecting townships in the coming months:

- **Senate Local Government Committee:** Sen. Cris Dush is the majority chair and Sen. Tim Kearney is the minority chair.
- **House Local Government Committee:** Rep. Carl Walker Metzgar is the majority chair and Rep. Bob Freeman is the minority chair.
- **Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee:** Sen. Gene Yaw is the majority chair and Sen. Carolyn Comitta is the minority chair.
- **House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee:** Rep. Daryl Metcalfe is the majority chair and Rep. Greg Vitali is the minority chair.
- **Senate Transportation Committee:** Sen. Wayne Langerholc is the majority chair and Sen. John Sabatina, Jr. is the minority chair.
- **House Transportation Committee:** Rep. Tim Hennessey is the majority chair and Rep. Mike Carroll is the minority chair.
- **Senate Communications and Technology Committee:** Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill is the majority chair and Sen. John Kane is the minority chair.
- **House Consumer Affairs Committee:** Rep. Jim Marshall is the majority chair and Rep. Robert Matzie is the minority chair.
- **Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness:** Sen. Patrick Stefano is the majority chair and Sen. Katie Muth is the minority chair.
- **House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness:** Rep. Karen Boback is majority chair and Rep. Sainato is the minority chair.

PennDOT Drafts Rules for Road Robots — The state Department of Transportation has drafted Policy and Procedures for PDD Operations. PDDs are personal delivery devices, or autonomous robots, that are designed to deliver packages to consumers in Pennsylvania. Act 106 of 2020 authorizes the use of these devices on sidewalks and in pedestrian areas and along the berms of roads posted at 25 miles per hour or less.

The rules would require operators to reach out to affected municipalities before an



PENNSYLVANIA STATE
ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIP
SUPERVISORS

4855 WOODLAND DRIVE
ENOLA, PA 17025
(717) 763-0930
WWW.PSATS.ORG

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recognize an
everyday hero in
your township
by nominating
them for a
PSATS award!

application is submitted and consult with them in the review process and when materials are developed. PDDs could only operate in an approved area, and operators would need to show whether they would be operating on a sidewalk, shoulder, or berm and if bridges are on the route. Also required would be hours of operation, where the PDD will be stored, and how an emergency responder can stop or disable a device.

Office of Open Records revises fee schedule, new director appointed — The Office of Open Records has updated its official fee schedule that townships must use when charging for Right-to-Know Law requests. The first 1,000 black and white copies remain at \$.25 per copy, but only \$.20 per copy may be charged for any copies beyond that. The maximum charge for a CD or DVD is the actual cost up to \$1 per disc, down from \$3 per disc. Agencies cannot charge for records that they can redact securely by electronic means.

Gov. Tom Wolf has appointed Liz Gerloff Wagenseller to serve a six-year term as executive director of the Office of Open Records. Wagenseller currently serves as chief of staff to the auditor general. She replaces Erik Arneson.

For the new fee schedule, go to www.openrecords.pa.gov/RTKL/FeeStructure.cfm.

Recognize Township Leaders with PSATS Awards

Just Do It! That is the motto practiced by township leaders every day. They don't think their actions are remarkable or heroic (*and they certainly don't do them for recognition or credit*), but best practices and great things happen every day in townships all across Pennsylvania. Don't miss these upcoming opportunities to nominate your township and/or its officials for various PSATS awards. The recognition programs and their deadlines are:

- **PSATS President's Leadership Awards — January 29**
- **PSATS Excellence in Intergovernmental Cooperation Awards — March 5**
- **Road & Bridge Safety Improvement Awards — March 5** (*See enclosure!*)
- **PSATS Youth Awards — March 15** (*submissions due to county associations by March 1*)

Information about the Road and Bridge safety awards is enclosed and townships will receive materials for the Youth Awards this month. To learn more about this programs, go to psats.org and choose "PSATS Programs and Services," and then "PSATS Awards Program."

COVID News

As state orders change at a rapid pace, go to psats.org and choose **COVID-19 Resources** for the most up-to-date information and guidance, a PSATS member service. Updated fact sheets are available to help you determine the **best options for conducting your meetings, how to keep your employees safe, and more**. For the latest, subscribe to the **PSATS Morning News e-newsletter** by emailing memberservices@psats.org.

Temporary orders expire — On January 4, the state's temporary mitigation orders expired. This means that the gathering limits for indoor events are 10% for facilities with a maximum occupancy of less than 2,000 and outdoor events are 15% for facilities with a maximum occupancy of less than 2,000. In addition, the maximum business occupancy is now 75% of the facility or meeting room.

Vaccinations — Plans for the distribution administration of the COVID-19 vaccinations, as well as the priorities for who is to receive priority, continue to change. In the current Pennsylvania plan, emergency responders such as police and firefighters are eligible to receive vaccines in the second phase, Phase 1B. All township employees and elected township supervisors are eligible to receive the vaccine as part of Phase 1C, the third phase. For more information, go to doh.pa.gov and choose "Vaccines."



Be Sure to Register for PSATS' 2021 Conference & Exhibit Show and Centennial Celebration!

For almost a century, the PSATS Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show has been the “one-stop shop” where township officials can easily and conveniently learn more about their duties and responsibilities, set Association policy, and visit exhibits that offer services and products of specific interest to townships.

As many supervisors and employees have found, the Annual Conference is an **excellent investment** for attendees, as well as their townships. If your township does not yet have someone registered for this year's event, scheduled for **April 18-21** at the Hershey Lodge, now is the time to change that!

Below are a few more important reasons why someone from each township should attend PSATS' 2021 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show:

It's Our Centennial: Don't miss out on our special celebration this year. PSATS turns 100 on May 5 so we're pulling out all the stops to observe this very special occasion.

General Sessions: The general sessions, held each morning of the conference, will again focus on a wide range of important issues for townships.

During Tuesday's business session, delegates will vote on resolutions and bylaws amendments and elect a slate of officers to lead the Association.

On Wednesday, you won't want to miss PSATS' annual “Leaders Forum” or the keynote speaker, who will send you home with an inspirational message.

Workshops: With **more than 80 workshops** scheduled, this year's conference promises to provide something for everyone. Please refer to the list of workshops posted on **conference.psats.org** or in the center spread of each issue of the *Pa. Township News* to see the broad array of timely, educational topics that PSATS is once again offering its members.

Workshop sessions start Monday morning and go through Tuesday afternoon.

Exhibit Show: Another popular event at the conference is the exhibit show, which is the **largest of its kind in Pennsylvania**. This year, close to 300 vendors and state agencies will be on hand both inside and outside to discuss the latest products and services available to townships. And on Monday and Tuesday mornings of the show, stop inside the main exhibit hall for a free continental breakfast with our exhibitors.

Registration Information: For more information about registering for the conference, please call PSATS at (717) 763-0930, ext. 189, or go to **conference.psats.org** to register.

We hope to see you in Hershey in April!



PSATS Mentor/Mentee Program Needs Your Help!

The PSATS Mentor/Mentee program pairs first time conference attendees with individuals who have attended at least one PSATS Conference in the last three years and support the mission and goals of our association.

The PSATS conference can be overwhelming for a first-time attendee, so having a mentor can help them to navigate their first conference and feel at ease. Like some mentors in the past, you may even find that you want to continue the mentorship and newfound friendship!

It can be a truly rewarding experience for both. To volunteer as a mentor at the PSATS 2021 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, or for more information, please contact Mary Lehane at 717-763-0930 ext 107 or mlehane@psats.org.

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities

For more information about any of these sessions, go to learn.psats.org and check out the great selection of webinars coming up in February!

COVID-19 Vaccines: What Municipal Employers Need to Know — In this **February 2** webinar, Eckert Seamans' Labor & Employment Group will present a focused discussion of the relevant factors municipal employers should consider when implementing vaccination policies, maintaining employee morale, handling enforcement issues, and managing accommodation requests.

Quickbooks for the Beginner — This four-session virtual class begins **February 4** and is designed to provide you with a fundamental understanding and working knowledge of QuickBooks Accounting Software.

Performing MS4 Outfall Inspections — This virtual class, scheduled for **February 16**, will provide a workable, effective framework for establishing a hierarchy for outfall inspections, a protocol for performing inspections, and methods for inspecting, documenting, and addressing potential illicit discharges.

Basic Training for Municipal Secretaries and Administrators — This class will explain the administrative and management topics that townships face daily. Scheduled for **February 22 and March 1**, these two half-day virtual sessions will cover budgeting, purchasing, advertising, meeting management, human resources, public engagement, and more.

This and That...

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

- **2021 PSATS Calendar now available online** — Based on member demand and in response to delayed postal deliveries, the entire 2021 PSATS member calendar is now available on psats.org. Go to "Newsroom" and select "2021 PSATS Calendar." Hopefully, your hard copy of the calendar will show up soon. PSATS will continue to post the annual calendar on its website as a member service going forward. Thank you for your patience in waiting for the calendar to arrive. If your phone calls and emails are any indication, we certainly know how much you appreciate this member service!
- **Looking for DCED Forms?** — Township officials preparing for the numerous state filings due this month should be aware that the state Department of Community and Economic Development sent its annual mailing via email on November 5. to the email address provided for the "Contact" position on their 2020 Report of Elected and Appointed Officials. If you did not receive the email, check your spam folder, contact the Governor's Center for Local Government Services at 888-223-6837, or go to dced.pa.gov and choose "Local Government" and then "Municipal Statistics."
- **2021 bid limits set** — The Department of Labor & Industry published the 2021 bid limits in the December 12, 2020 issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. For 2021, the minimum purchase amount that requires the advertisement for bids is **\$21,300**. In addition, the minimum purchase amount for telephone quotes is **\$11,500**.
- **2021 mileage rate** — The Internal Revenue Service set the 2021 standard business mileage rate at 56 cents per mile.
- **Natural gas impact fee estimates released** — The state's Independent Fiscal Office estimates that shale gas impact fee collections for calendar year 2020 will be \$144.9 million, a \$55.9 million decrease due to lower gas prices, fewer new wells, and aging wells. The distribution for calendar year 2020 will be made to townships around July 1, 2021.
- **Assistance to Firefighters Grants available** — Applications for the federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program are being accepted until **February 12**. Townships should make their volunteer fire companies are aware of the program so they can apply. For more, go to www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness.
- **Grants available for historical preservation** — Grant applications are **being accepted until March 1** for construction and project grants for historic resources that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To learn more, go to phmc.pa.gov and choose "Preservation" and then "Grants and Tax Credits."