



CHARLESTOWN TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Charlestown Park: From the Beginning to the Present Day

By Paul Hogan



Crowds gather on any given weekend at Charlestown Park

Use it or Lose it! That was Uncle Sam's dictum when he turned over 47 acres of the Valley Forge General Hospital after it closed following the end of the Vietnam war in the mid-seventies.

How 'bout being used by over 1,800 children and a few hundred parent coaches, and countless hikers along our trails? Is that putting the land to good use or what? Our Township took over the Army's nine-hole golf course that was a great therapeutic help to the wounded soldiers, but to keep it as it was would serve too few of our citizens and cost too much to maintain.. At some point along the line it turned into a BMX course for just a few dozen kids.

That too seemed a waste of space and open land.

Around that time the Phoenixville Marion Youth Club and the Phoenixville Area Soccer Club were losing their fields in Phoenixville. Their request to move to our park was quickly granted. They agreed to improve and maintain their fields at no cost to Charlestown taxpayers. That was a good deal for everyone.

We got help from all quarters. The 103rd Engineer Battalion spent their summer training program building us the soccer field along Coldstream Road. They put the giant machines you paid for as taxpayers to good use, trained their men on a difficult construction operation and made friends with all of us involved with the park. Upon completion of the field we celebrated with a nice picnic in honor of the soldiers who helped us. This year we constructed a regulation size Lacrosse field and 200 more players popped up ready to use the field. Coaches came forward to teach the teams with players age 6 to 16+. I guess the most popular area of the park year-round is the mile-long hiking trail.

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Sometimes kids would rather play in the stream that runs thru our park than on the field. That's OK too.

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We work closely with the Valley Forge Christian College, which has taken over all the buildings. The one exception is the Military Police Headquarters building which is now the HQ of the Phoenixville Soccer Club and the Charlestown Parks & Recreation Board. It comes complete with three jail cells!

We often meet with College President Don Meyers or Bill Werkheiser, who is in charge of VFCC development. We work together on mutual interests such as parking and connecting our trails. The college has plans to extend the trail for approximately 3 miles around the perimeter of the college grounds. There will be several connections to our trails and we'll both end up with hiking trails over 4 miles in length. We use their facilities and they use ours. Next time we'll talk about the playground, basketball courts and other parks and services we have in Charlestown. Meanwhile we will be looking for you in our parks!

Join Your Neighbors in Preserving Your Land

Many people in our township already have taken advantage of the huge tax advantage being offered for donating a conservation easement. Many others, unable to donate in full, have also taken advantage by selling their development rights. With the uncertainty in the stock and real estate markets, now is the perfect time to explore your options and make a difference for future generations. A conservation easement not only allows you to live on your land without staring out your window at new development, but it protects your land forever. It presents an important estate planning option that can protect your family's assets.

Curious? Please call me at 610-636-7292 to find out if this is a smart choice for you.

-Aliena J. Gerhard



Enjoy Our Many Trails

Autumn is a great time to explore Charlestown's many trails! The leaves are gorgeous and the sunny weather invites you to enjoy the outdoors before Winter's onset. As the number of trails in the Township grows, please consider whether you would like to volunteer to help us maintain them. It is an easy and fun job and gives you an excuse to get outside! Please contact me at agerhard@charlestown.pa.us or 610-636-7292 for more information.

Canines for Clean Creeks

(Source: Center for Watershed Protection, www.cwp.org.)

Dogs are great companions for fresh air, exercise, and a wonderful way to enjoy our natural surroundings. However, pet waste has a negative impact on streams, walking trails, and natural areas. Recent studies by Chester Ridley Crum Watersheds Association, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and Villanova University have documented that our local creeks frequently have levels of fecal coliform bacteria three or more times the state recommended maximums for safe water contact. Studies by the Center for Watershed Protection have found that a significant portion of fecal coliform bacteria in residential stormwater originates from dog waste. These levels escalate when stormwater washes contamination from pet droppings into storm drains.



One average size dog dropping contains 3 billion fecal coliform bacteria. Multiply that by the fact that 40% of households have a dog, you can see the problem and how it adds to the challenge of treating much of our creek water for drinking water.

Do your part to make your dog a friend of our creeks, fellow walkers, and our natural environment:

- Pick up after your pet and dispose the waste properly- in a trash can or toilet
- Keep your pet on a leash and on trails in natural areas and avoid contact with wildlife
- Remain within off leash areas when off leash
- Encourage your friends and family to do the same!

Our Yearly Reminder on Snow Removal



Please keep the following in mind during snow events:

- To avoid frustration, don't shovel or plow the end of your driveway until the road is cleared.
- Remind your hired plowmen that it's against the law to push your snow onto the public roads.
- Clear the snow around any fire hydrant on your property to save valuable time in an emergency.
- Do not park on the street until the roads have been completely cleared.
- Drive carefully at a minimum speed.
- Kindly check on your neighbors who live alone.

Be patient with us and bear in mind that our primary concern after a snow storm is to ensure that each and every road is opened for emergency vehicles. After this is accomplished, we have more time to address additional widening and complete clearing of the cul de sacs.

Our Public Works Superintendent, Fred Alston, can be reached at any time on his cell phone for road related problems and questions: (610) 656-9315.

OPEN SPACE TAX INCENTIVES CONTINUE

Extension of Federal Law Gives Better Tax Break for Voluntary Conservation Easements

Dear Neighbors:

As Director of Open Space for your Township, I am thrilled to be writing to tell you that Congress has made a 2 year extension to the law that increases your tax benefits for conserving your land.

Congress recently extended the highly popular law that enhances the tax benefits of protecting your land by donating a voluntary conservation easement. If you own land with important natural or historic resources, donating a voluntary conservation easement can be one of the smartest ways to conserve the land you love and protect America's natural heritage, while maintaining your private property rights and **sheltering some or all of your earned income for up to 16 years.**

- A conservation easement donor to deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year;
- Qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income; and
- Donors to take deductions for their contribution over as many as 16 years.

These changes allow many landowners to deduct much more than they could under the old rules, bringing increased fairness to the tax code.

What do you need to know to enter into a voluntary conservation easement? Here are the facts:

- A conservation easement, is a legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect important conservation values.
- When you enter into a conservation easement, you give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, you might give up the right to subdivide your land or build additional houses. You still retain all other ownership rights including the right to sell your property, and future owners also will be bound by the restrictions you placed on your property. The land trust is responsible for making sure the terms of the agreement are enforced.
- Conservation easements vary widely and fully donated easements need not require public access.
- A conservation easement can help a landowner pass land on intact to the next generation. By limiting the land's development potential, the agreement **lowers its market value for federal estate tax purposes.** This can make a critical difference in the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.

This extension is only valid until the end of 2009, and it can take 6 to 9 months to complete a conservation easement. Many of your neighbors have already taken advantage of this limited extension. To find out how you can take part, please feel free to call me at 610-636-7292 or email me at agerhard@charlestown.pa.us .

Very truly yours,
Aliena J. Gerhard
Director of Open Space



Charlestown Township – Volunteer Positions Application

Charlestown Township has a variety of committees, boards and commissions made up of citizen volunteers. During the year, there is often a need to find interested citizens to fill vacancies. In order to better facilitate locating volunteer minded individuals, the Township maintains a “Volunteer Resources” file on citizens interested and willing to serve. If you are interested in getting involved, please complete the form and return it to us at P.O. Box 507, Devault, PA 19432. Thank you!

INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE PRINT AND COMPLETE FORM.**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Present Address: _____

Daytime Telephone # _____ Evening Telephone # _____

Email address: _____ Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes No

SERVICE INTERESTS – Check off as many as you wish

- Planning Commission (Meets one or two times per month)
- Parks & Recreation Board (Meets one time per month)
- Historical & Architectural Review Board/Historical Commission (Meets one time per month)
- Open Space Commission (Meets one time per month)
- Zoning Hearing Board (Meets as needed)
- Emergency Operations Center (Meets for two training drills per year)
- Valley Forge Sewer Authority (Meets one time per month)
- Building Code Appeals Board (Meets as needed)
- Trails Committee (Meets one time per month)
- Trail Maintenance
- Earth Day Cleanup (3rd Saturday in April)

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS – Please indicate any special work skills, experiences, etc. that you feel are relevant to the position.

My present occupation is: _____

Special qualifications are: _____

I have served on: _____ in the community of _____

Charlestown Township
P.O. Box 507
Devault, PA 19432

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Emergency Tip - Got "ICE"?

In case of emergency (ICE) is a program that enables emergency personnel to identify you and contact your next of kin. They are now trained to look for "ICE" when the situation warrants it. Add your emergency contact in your cell phone under the name "ICE". You can list multiple contacts as "ICE1", "ICE2", etc. We recommend you program your childrens' cell phones with "ICE" as well.



State Roads

The state roads are maintained by PennDOT and are listed below. If you have a maintenance complaint, you can call PennDOT's Chester County Maintenance number at 800-FIX-ROAD (349-7623)

Charlestown Road
Church Road
Coldstream Road
Conestoga Rd (Rt. 401)
Foster Road

Hollow Road
Merlin Road
Morehall Rd (Rt. 29)
Newcomen Road
Phoenixville Pike

Pickering Dam Rd.
Pikeland Road
Seven Oaks Road
State Road (Rt. 29)
Valley Hill Rd (East of Rt. 401)

Whitehorse Road
Yellow Springs Road
(north of Hollow Rd.)