

BOROUGH OF SLATINGTON NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Issue 7

"Building on the Past for a Stronger Future"

December 2011

FROM THE DESK OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT – GALEN FREED

This year has been filled with many controversies and issues, but now that the election is over and as the dust settles, hopefully we as well as the good citizens of Slatington will put these problems behind us to help our town get back together as a community that wants to move ahead and work with each other. One thing that is very important is to stay in tune with all that is going on and the best way to do that is try to attend the monthly Council Meetings (second Monday of the month) and the Workshop Meetings which are held the 3rd and 4th Monday evenings of the month, or check out the website www.Slatington.org where all the minutes are published once they have been approved. Doing this, can prevent a lot of miscommunications and misunderstandings between people and the town's governing body. Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings, and actually are encouraged to. Remember – being there and hearing directly is better than hearsay. On November 8, 2011 elections were held for 4 Council Seats with the following results: Gwynette Neff, Robert Steets, Rev. David Schnaars, and Galen Freed were elected to serve a 4 year term starting January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2015.

SEWER – KRIS BUREK – Councilwoman

The Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project was started over a year ago. It was funded primarily through Federal stimulus money which was distributed through the state's PENNVEST Program. Of the \$7 million awarded to complete this project approximately two-thirds was funded by grant money and one-third was funded by a low interest loan. Unlike the General Morgan Bridge project where construction progress could be viewed daily, this subterranean event occurred without visibility. The project was able to replace and/or rehabilitate 95% of the entire Borough's aging sewer system (63,000 lineal feet or 12 miles of pipe). Of the 210 manholes in the Borough, 33 were repaired. Each year the Borough will schedule repairs on a portion of the remaining 177 manholes until all manholes have been repaired. Improvements to the sanitary sewer system will continue with such projects as private sewer later inspections and repairs to the Pump Station. Additionally, a generator for the Sewer Plant is being funded entirely through a grant. Our committee is dedicated to the continued upgrade of our sewer system and treatment facility so as to ensure quality services for all of our customers.

Water – ELDON ROBERTS – Councilman

The Trout Creek Project has recently been completed.

FINANCE/ PLANNING/ZONING – RUSSELL HALLMAN – Councilman

The past few years have been financially challenging for local, state, and federal governments. All these entities have been impacted by certain common problems: poor economy, high unemployment numbers, decreasing revenues, and increasing costs. Local governments have been hard hit due to the fact that many state and federal grant programs have been severely cut or eliminated. In addition, high unemployment has drastically cut Earned Income Tax revenues. Despite these challenges, Borough Council has taken many steps in the past year to save money. The 2011 General Fund Budget expenses were reduced by over \$157,000.00 as compared to 2010. In addition, we absorbed cost increases that were built into the budget. Absorbing these into the budget meant that we actually cut over \$177,000.00. Our revenue projections for 2011 were calculated to be as realistic as possible in this economic climate. Department budgets were cut, and some positions were eliminated or not filled. Our decision to not fill the Borough Manager position led to additional savings in the sewer, water and garbage budgets. We did not fill two former full time positions in 2011, and have no current plans to fill these positions. This will save us additional monies for 2011, and in the future. A bond refinancing was undertaken in 2011. We did not extend the length of the bonds, but were able to save due to lower interest rates. This led to savings of over \$122,000.00 The Borough changed electric, phone, and internet providers. All these were at significant savings to taxpayers. We were able to extend our current garbage contract, which should allow us to keep garbage rates the same in 2012. It is a difficult process trying to cut costs and maintain close to the same level of services. The public has to realize that whenever we reduce our number of employees, there may be some reduction in the level of service. We have tried to balance this, and have attempted to maintain our service level. It is a constant struggle to maintain this balance. We are all human and have our faults, but never doubt our commitment to get the most out of your tax dollars.

PUBLIC SAFETY – PAUL HOFFMAN – Councilman

At a recent Workshop Meeting the issue of vandalism in the Borough was discussed in length and it was suggested that a "Rewards Program" might be established to help with this problem.

HIGHWAY/SPECIAL SEWER COMMITTEE – BRYON REED- Vice-President

The Highway crew would just like to remind residents to clean off their sidewalks and curbing of weeds, high grass, etc. This year has been an especially difficult time for some of the residents up in the Maple Spring Acres area due to the excessive amounts of rain entering the sanitary sewer laterals, causing serious water and sewer backup in residents' homes. Earlier this year a letter was sent to the residents noting that the Borough would be conducting an inspection to

check for illegal hookups into the sewer system. They are still conducting these inspections and are also televising residents' sewer laterals for leakage and breakage. A letter will be sent to the individuals who will need to address these issues to help alleviate the I/I problems and to prevent the backups. These problems must be taken care of for 2 specific reasons (1) it is a health hazard to the residents who experience sewer backup, not to mention costly, and (2) the more I/I going into the Sewer Plant for processing, the more it costs for treatment. The Borough could also incur very costly fines from the DEP. Lehigh Engineering of Walnutport has been engaged to do a preliminary study up in the Maple Spring Acres area to address the storm sewer water overflow problem. They will be contacting the Borough shortly to inform them of their findings.

HUMAN/COMMUNITY SERVICES – DANIEL STEVENS – Councilman

Do you pay attention to what is going on in the Northern Lehigh area? Do you open your eyes to the many exciting improvements that have taken place in the past few years? Some people drive around with blinders on, and seem intent on pointing out all the problems and negative things in the area. Let's look at some of the great amenities and opportunities that have been added in the past few years. The Slate Heritage Trail has been completed to Slatedale. This includes the addition of restrooms in Slatington and Slatedale, a pavilion and stage at the Covered Bridge, historical markers, and benches. Phase One of the Slatington Memorial Park has been completed. Next year we will be installing a drinking fountain, historic wayside signs, litter receptacles, and other amenities. This project has transformed an empty lot into an attractive and usable public space that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors. The section of the D&L Trail from Laurys Station to Slatington was dedicated in August. This is now one of the longest continuous sections of the D&L Trail, and runs from Northampton to Bowmanstown. Development of the Slatington Trailhead ties directly to these projects. Thanks to the Delaware & Lehigh Heritage Corridor, the Trailhead has been landscaped. This creates a beautiful gateway to Slatington when traveling from the East. An entrance sign, slate planter, benches, and informational kiosks have been erected on the site. Construction on the pavilion and restrooms at the Trailhead is moving forward. This project is being done by the Venture Group. The Slatington Trailhead is quickly becoming one of the most popular Trailheads in the area. The Lehigh Gap Nature Center recently completed a huge expansion project. It is a popular nationally recognized education center, which is being used heavily by local schools and visitors. Lehigh County has added a boat launch to the site, granting access to popular activities on the Lehigh River. Slatington's Victory Park is home to a Disc Golf Course, which is a popular sport and can be enjoyed by people of all ages. A tournament is held on the course in the Spring. Also, don't forget the Slatington Community Pool and the pavilion which the Borough rents out for picnics, and other parties. Late Summer and Autumn are a great time in the Northern Lehigh area. You can enjoy Friday night football games, the changing leaves, or participate in one of the runs or walks on the Trails. Local events include the Lions Club Car Show, The Gathering, Apple Festival, Walnutport Canal Festival, Halloween Parade and many other great events. Our area is rich in recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors. When visitors come to our area, they help the local economy. Our residents are able to enjoy these facilities year round. Through grants and the efforts of our great volunteer organizations, Slatington has been able to expand these facilities at a very minimal cost to taxpayers. As you drive around, take off the blinders and open your eyes to all our area has to offer!

ADOPT A FLAG

The American flags displayed on Main Street have taken a real beating this year. Wind, rain, sun, theft, and vandalism have all taken their toll. To give our town the patriotic flavor that so many of us feel, and to properly honor those who willingly go in harms way to protect us all, damaged and missing flags must be replaced on a routine schedule. We all know that money is tight at all levels of government and in our own lives, but the Borough believes that maintaining these flags is an important part of our community. They compliment the historical banners, and will enhance the new trees as they grow and begin to bloom. You can support this worthy effort by sponsoring one or more flags at \$28.00 per flag. Your donation will be acknowledged in Council Minutes, and may be tax deductible (check with your tax advisor). For more information contact the Borough at 610-767-2131. Recently the Borough received a new flag donated by the Slatington High School Class of 1949 and requested that it be placed on the pole at the new Memorial Park. The flag that is flying from that pole right now is larger, so it was decided that this new flag be placed on the pole in front of the Slatington Borough Hall. We thank the Class of 1949 for their generous donation.

ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER – Linda Nails – Just a reminder of the Borough's Snow Removal Ordinance addressing homeowner/tenant responsibility to remove snow and ice from sidewalks within 10 hours after a snow event. The violations and penalties allow the Borough staff to remove the obstruction. Costs will be billed to the homeowner/landlord. Some suggestions for those of you who find that you are unable to perform this task: perhaps check with the Northern Lehigh High School to see if they have students that need to fulfill project obligations and, or service requirements. As winter approaches please remember to temporarily move as many vehicles from the street as possible to allow snow removal. Thank you for your cooperation and have a safe warm winter season!

HELP WANTED

There are several positions open on various Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Civil Service Commission, Vacancy Board, Zoning Hearing Board, Parks and Recreation, and the Slatington Borough Sewer Authority. If you are interested in donating your services to your community, please send a letter of interest to the Borough Council along with a short resume.

Billing Schedule/Delinquent Procedures approved by the Borough Council. Utility bills sent to homeowners/landlords, show previous and current reading and are calculated in thousands. Rates: Min 8,000 Gallons - \$93.00/Qtr Water - \$107.00 Sewer - \$ 66.00 Garbage. For every 1,000 gallons after 8000, it is \$6.88 per thousand/water and \$7.54 per thousand/sewer.

1 st Qtr – Nov-Jan – Water/Sewer Jan-Mar - Garbage	Reading – First Week February Bill Sent – First Week March Duc Date – First Week in April (On Bill)
2 nd Qtr – Feb – Apr – Water/Sewer Apr – June – Garbage	Reading – First Week May Bill Sent – First Week June Duc Date – First Week in July (On Bill)
3 rd Qtr – May – July – Water/Sewer July – Sept – Garbage	Reading – First Week August Bill Sent – First Week September Duc Date – First Week in Oct (On Bill)
4 th Qtr – Aug – Oct – Water/Sewer Oct – Dec – Garbage	Reading – First Week November Bill Sent – First Week December Duc Date – First Week in Jan (On Bill)

After due date 10% penalty applies to all outstanding balances, even if you have a payment plan. Bills received postmarked after due date considered late even if the check is dated on or before due date. The Borough does not accept pre-dated checks. Thirty (30) days after due date, we sent out delinquent letters to landlords and homeowners. EFFECTIVE 10/01/05 – POSTING FEES HAVE BEEN INCREASED TO \$40.00; OFF FEES AND ON FEES FOR NON-PAYMENT ARE NOW \$50.00 EACH.

Water/Sewer Policies:

The Borough will no longer allow residents to carry a balance of \$50.00 or less from one quarter to another to prevent shut off. Unfortunately too many customers are doing this and the Borough is in need of their revenues to pay their expenses.

The Borough has been receiving customers' payments through their banks. Unfortunately the processing center that cuts these checks will date the checks with the due date, but do not send the checks out in time and when they arrive at the office (with no postmarked date) after the due date, they are considered late. This is a reminder to our customers who do pay by this method that they need to get with their bank to make sure that they process their payments in time to be received by the Borough by the due date. If not, they will be considered late and the 10% penalty will be applied.

The Borough had considered using debit/credit cards for payments, however the different bank fees and card machine rentals would have to be passed on to the customers, and it was decided that it would not be fair to the people who don't use cards to incur these additional fees. The Borough does not accept PLASTIC for payments.

The Borough has recently contracted with Swiftreach to compile a water emergency call list. If we do not have a good working phone number for you, you will not be notified of any emergencies and the Borough will not assume responsibility for you not being contacted. Please contact the borough and supply them with your phone number (either home number or cell number).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Children's Christmas Toy Bingo, Friday December 2, 7:00 PM, Vigilant Fire Company, 110 S. Walnut Street. Tickets: \$25.00 each and can be purchased at the door. Doors * kitchen open at 5:00 PM, 26 games of bingo. (610)767-3832

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and Santa's Arrival – Friday December 2, 2011 – 7:00 PM - Slatington Memorial Park.

Northern Lehigh Community Center Programs and Classes: Mondays – Adult Stretch 10-11 AM, Zumba Toning 6-7PM and Wednesday – Zumba Gold 10-11 AM (Begins Dec. 7, 14, and 21 – All these classes are at the Vigilant Fire Company. Wednesdays - Zumba Classes – 6-7 PM – Northern Lehigh Middle School cafeteria. Thursdays – Yoga 6-7 PM – Peters Elementary School (music room), Fridays – Adult Stretch – 10-11 AM – Vigilant Fire Company
Saturdays – Play Group – 10-11 AM – St. John's Lutheran Church in Slatington – 1st Sat. of every month. Call Susan Heil at 484-623-4451 to register. For all programs you can call 610-760-0300 for more information or to register.