

Albany Township Park Land

In 2009 Albany Township purchased approximately 60 acres of land between the Kempton Community Center, the historic village of Trexler and Creek Road along the Ontelaunee Creek. The property consists of flat and gently rolling farmland with exceptional views of the township. It is split by the WK&S steam railroad and is adjacent to the Albany Township Historical Society building. There is a stone bank barn that needs work but has great future potential for restoration and use as a Township building to house public meeting rooms and an office. This farm is perfectly located to allow us to provide for all future expansion needs of the Township for public work and recreation purposes for decades.

It is one of the responsibilities of the Board of Supervisors to plan and provide for the recreational needs of the community. Albany Township does not currently provide any recreational facilities to our residents. Initially, we will be utilizing the property as a passive recreation area or park. Many folks have noticed the signs posted along Creek Road to indicate Township-owned land. In time a Master Plan will be developed that will evaluate recreation uses for the land and present various alternatives with costs for Township consideration. Related site and drainage improvements will be evaluated in the Master Plan as well. Note that the Master Plan, which is typically performed by a planning or engineering firm, has not yet been sanctioned, and at this time it is unknown when budget will allow for initiation of this planning effort.

Following the completion of the Master Plan, public review and comment of the plan, and adoption of the plan, we anticipate pursuing grant money to implement the chosen alternative. Conceptually this may include establishing athletic fields, a pavillion, and related facilities in areas of the land that are determined to be best suited for these improvements. Walking paths through the up lands may also be established over time. The field next to the Community Center can be set aside to continue use as a supplemental parking area for designated events.

Our current facilities are too small to even adequately meet current needs, but with the new property we have ample room to put up a pole shed to house all of our equipment inside and out of the weather. The intent is to continue to use our current property for stockpiling salt and stone and all of our road maintenance activities.

We have worked out an agreement with the Amity Township Historical Society (ATHS) to allow the ATHS to rebuild the historic Peter Jones House on a portion of the Township land near the barn and along the railroad, in the village of Trexler. This stone farmhouse will be used for educational purposes consistent with the historic designation of the village of Trexler. It is to contain small public meeting rooms downstairs and an office upstairs for the use of our Township Secretary & Zoning Officer. ATHS and Albany Township will share lifetime use of the building. It will also be made available to small groups who need a place to meet in the area. Reconstruction work for the project has commenced and is ongoing. More information on this will be following. Please note that the Peter Jones House will be entirely rebuilt by ATHS at their expense.

Now the finances. Your township is primarily financed with 1/2 of the local income tax (the school gets the rest), 1/4 of the gasoline tax per mile and real estate taxes of .6mil. (\$60 for every \$100,000.00 of assessed value).

For the past 9 years, we have not raised your Township taxes - not even the slightest amount. During that time we went from operating in deficits to surpluses. We repaved over 20% of our roads and performed full oil and chipping on a 6 year cycle. We bought used equipment where we could and replaced old with new where it made sense. We got the job done as frugally as possible but we did not cut corners (this was a unanimous decision by all supervisors since 2001). As a result, by early 2008 we had \$400,000.00 plus in our operating accounts and had our debts paid down to about \$30,000.00.

When the farm was offered to us we were encouraged by the PA DCNR to apply for a reimbursement grant that would pay for half of the purchase cost. It seemed like a "no brainer", so we signed a contract on the farm. Then came the financial meltdown and the state ran out of money, cut DCNR's budget, and our grant was not funded. We, however, had made sure we could afford it without the grant before we signed the contract. So, we purchased the farm for \$455,000.00 with a 15 year mortgage at a payment that we can easily afford without raising taxes. It is our intention to get the mortgage paid down while we save money for the Master Plan and future improvements. All in all we felt that we would probably never again get the opportunity to purchase and preserve this property that really is in the cultural center of Albany Township. We believe that over time this property will be a great benefit to our Township.