

Sharing Your Vision – From Bursich Associates Inc.

Dear Rockland Township Residents,

Bursich Associates Inc. was hired by the Township in July of 2018 as a special consultant for sewage disposal facilities planning to satisfy the requirements of Pennsylvania Act 537 (sewage facilities planning). In that brief time we have met with your Township supervisors and are presently communicating with DEP officials in efforts to continue work that was previously started by others. Our efforts in the future will be to provide an acceptable Act 537 plan, for both the Township and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), with the goals of addressing the Township's sewage disposal needs in concert with the Community Vision of sustaining and maintaining the character of the Township.

A little about Bursich...

Bursich is a multi-discipline Consulting firm founded in 1972 and headquartered in Pottstown. We pride ourselves on having long standing relationships with the clients and communities we serve. Bursich is lucky enough to have employees who were raised in the region and understand the diversity of our landscape, being well versed in the challenges associated with the geologic and geographic features of our land; not discounting the social factor - people. We currently serve 7 additional Municipalities and Sewer Authorities. We serve small and rural Municipalities with less than 4000 people and larger, suburban Townships with more than 10,000. Our diverse staff is capable of designing capital improvement projects for large wastewater treatment facilities and On-Lot Disposal Systems (OLDS). Ed McCorkle, who is Bursich's Project Manager, previously worked with Dr. Hugh Archer consulting on sewage facilities matters in Rockland Township.

And what's an Act 537 plan...

On January 24, 1966, the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act was enacted to correct existing sewage disposal problems and prevent future problems. The Act requires proper planning in all types of sewage disposal situations; this includes maintenance programs. Local municipalities are largely responsible for administering the Act 537 sewage facilities program with the DEP providing technical assistance, financial assistance, and oversight.

Municipalities are required to develop and implement comprehensive, official plans that provide for the resolution of existing sewage disposal problems; provide for the future sewage disposal needs of new land development, and provide for future sewage disposal needs of the municipality. This official plan is sometimes called the "base" plan or the "Act 537 plan".

When a municipality adopts a plan, the plan is submitted for review and approval by the DEP. By regulation, the planning process is not final until an Act 537 Plan has been approved by DEP. Act 537 planning has been a municipal requirement since July 1, 1967. Legally, all municipalities have an Act 537 Plan, however, some plans are newer and more detailed than others. Rockland Township's plan is more than 40 years old and has a mandate to update the plan. This will require communication, cooperation and community engagement.

It's in the water...

The rural character and lifestyle of the area does not escape anyone who passes through or visits any areas of the Township. What isn't as immediately apparent is the vast water resources and the fine condition of these waters; technically referred to as "special protection watersheds" – of "high quality" or "exceptional" value. These attributes mentioned above are quickly becoming the bellwether for a high quality of life, holding exceptional value for those who seek this lifestyle. The regulatory importance of the water resource maintaining its high quality and providing exceptional value is about protecting it for everything that relies on it, but also in protecting it from everything thing (humans) that rely on it. That is, in order to protect water quality, OLDS need to be maintained and updated as needed. This requires an updated Act 537 plan that meet the needs of the current regulation and the Townships needs/vision. An approved plan, where it is demonstrated that OLDS are being maintained, system failures can be effectively addressed, and alternative OLDS systems are able to be implemented in the future, negates the need for DEP to mandate connection to a centralized sewage system be included in the plan. The Township's goal is to maintain the character of the community, water quality and providing exceptional value for the residents.

Further downstream...

This spring we will likely be in further discussions with DEP regarding the effort to update the Act 537 plan, and in the future will likely need to evaluate existing OLDS. This may be as simple as needing to obtain any maintenance and repair records, up to requiring inspections of OLDS. Well maintained OLDS can last many decades with proper siting, construction and maintenance. Cooperation will be important in this effort, as accurate data for each residence will be required. We look forward to working with your elected officials, the Township's Sewage Advisory Committee and community to protect water quality and your quality of life.

Respectfully,
Bursich Associates Inc.