

YOUR TOWNSHIP TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Our Fellow Township Residents:

Township officials are taking this opportunity to explain the annual expenditure of tax dollars. The Township tax rate of 3.062 mills was again maintained in 2023, although the cost of services continues to increase. In fact, South Park Township’s millage rate ranks at 19 out of the 20 lowest millage rates in Allegheny County based upon 130 communities. Township taxes have not increased since 1998, and the millage has been lowered on several occasions over the years to the current tax rate. A balanced budget in the amount of \$7,412,762.00 was adopted for 2023, and reflects a reduction of \$215,803.00 from 2022. The decrease can be attributed in part to the final payment of the Township’s outstanding bond issue in 2022, and also new construction offsetting expenditures. A breakdown of the department expenses and the corresponding percentage of the overall budget is presented below:

A principal source of revenue is property taxes which are paid to the three taxing bodies: South Park Township, Allegheny County and South Park School District. The following chart reflects the amount of taxes that will be paid by property owners in 2023 to each taxing entity using a home value of \$175,000 and the current millage rates:

<u>Taxing Body:</u>	<u>Millage Rate:</u>	<u>Dollar Amount:</u>
South Park Township	3.062 Mills	\$ 535.85
Allegheny County	4.73 Mills	\$ 827.75
South Park School District	27.13 Mills	\$ 4,747.75

The effective management of departmental spending and maintaining expenditures within established parameters is of primary importance. Tax dollars are limited and every attempt is made to effectively allocate funding and utilize revenues to meet the diverse needs of our residents without

increasing taxes. Annual operating expenses are apportioned to Administration, the Public Works Department, the Police Department, Recreation and the Library.

The investment in the Township's infrastructure remains a top priority. The road repaving budget for 2023 is approximately \$400,000, a financial commitment that has been consistently maintained for a number of years. South Park Township **is not** responsible for the repair and maintenance of streets under the control and ownership of Allegheny County or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (PennDOT).

Sanitary and storm sewers are critical components of the Township's infrastructure that require continual maintenance. A contract in the amount of \$365,000 was awarded for the 2023 Township-wide project. DEP monitors annual progress on required municipal maintenance activities. If the Township does not comply, sanitary sewer taps will not be available for new construction. South Park Township is assessed a combined fee of \$1.7 million by three separate sewage authorities: Bethel Park Municipal Authority, Pleasant Hills Municipal Authority, and Clairton Municipal Authority for the treatment of sewage waste. Although costs continue to increase, the Township has maintained the sewage user rate of \$6.50/1,000 gallons of use since 2005. This is no longer sustainable since expenses, particularly treatment charges, are exceeding revenues, and an increase in the cost per gallon sewage rate is inevitable. The Township has been working in conjunction with a software company to offer online payment of sewage and refuse fees in the near future. The payment portal will be available to residents within the next several months.

Public safety is of paramount importance to Township officials. Approximately 36% of the budget is invested in public safety, reflecting an increase from 2022. South Park Township's police officers are trained continually in all aspects of law enforcement because of the ever-changing dynamic of community policing. Officers are furnished with the best equipment, including weapons, body armor and vehicles to maximize on-the-job safety. This year in-car cameras with state-of-the-art technology

replaced older equipment in five Township police vehicles at a cost of \$40,000 which was funded by the Township. Police officers will also be equipped with body-worn-cameras by the end of 2023. The \$28,000 expense was financed with grant monies received from Allegheny County Council and the District Attorney's office. Four senior police officers retired in 2022 and 2023. The vacancies were filled and the force was also increased by one additional officer for a total of 16. The replacement of one vehicle, an SUV at a cost of \$52,000 which includes equipment, was factored into the 2023 Budget and recently received by the department. Police officers are engaged in a wide array of activities, including but not limited to traffic details, investigations, traffic issues, and interaction with the various schools. The department continues with the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) efforts as coordinated by PennDOT and the Federal Department of Transportation. The purpose of MCSAP is to address safety issues such as overweight vehicles, and safety inspections of commercial truck traffic in an effort to prevent catastrophic incidents in our Township.

Snow removal is the number one priority of Township officials during the winter season. Considerable resources are allocated to the purchase of salt, and salting/plowing activities. Annual winter maintenance costs average approximately \$575,000 in labor and materials. Fortunately, the 2022-23 winter was relatively mild which had a positive impact on the budget. Public Works employees are engaged in other duties throughout the year including pothole patching on Township streets, park maintenance, sanitary sewer and storm sewer repairs/replacement, and the maintenance of detention ponds owned by the Township. Budgeting for the maintenance and upgrade of equipment and vehicles is essential to efficient operations. Delivery of a new 10-Ton dump truck at a cost of \$180,000 was received in 2022 which replaced an aging vehicle. A new 1-ton truck chassis will be delivered in 2023 at a cost of \$85,000, and retrofitted with existing equipment.

Recreation is an important component of the services offered to Township residents. The Township is responsible for the maintenance of Evans Park Complex, Wilson Field Complex, Grove Road

Park, Highland Park and Whitewood Park. The Township works in cooperation with the various athletic associations relative to field improvement requests. The construction of restrooms at Evans Park was completed in 2022 at a cost of \$250,000. The facilities are open to the general public during the playing season.

The Township offers many recreational programs and opportunities throughout the year. One of the favorites is the Summer Recreation program scheduled for seven weeks that offers activities such as swimming at the Wave Pool, craft classes, and playground activities at a reasonable cost. The Allegheny County Park Rangers continue to be part of the program. Other recreational favorites include various holiday events such as the Easter Party, the Halloween Party, the Children's Christmas Party, the annual tree lighting, as well as Community Day, the September 11th Ceremony and monthly craft classes. The Township's winter basketball program will again be offered but in a different format. The 5.3-mile Montour Trail has a significant presence in the community and provides exercise opportunities such as biking and walking to all age groups. The remaining Trail section from Wood Street to Stewart Road will soon be completed, pending the approval of a Highway Occupancy Permit currently under review by PennDOT. Recreational fishing receives financial support from the Township and is a popular pastime. Peters Creek has been designated as a state-approved trout stream in 2021, which means the PA Boat and Fish Commission assists financially with stocking efforts. The Township recently entered into a lease agreement with EQT. The bonus payment and subsequent royalties will be segregated in a separate account dedicated to funding recreational improvements at the Township's parks.

The Township Library is another amazing asset available to residents. The range of materials includes books, CDs, DVDs, computers, digital resources, and instructional classes. The Library will be adding a new dedicated area for teen programming that will include a 3-D printer, as well as instructional classes in video design. A grant made the purchase of two screens and projectors possible that will be placed in several locations to enhance programming opportunities. Every effort is made to

design programs that are appealing to residents of all age categories in a variety of subjects. The Day Trips and Destinations continues to be extremely popular and offers residents the opportunity to travel beyond the Library's walls to experience various adventures. The Friends' Spring and Fall book sales are wonderful for bargain hunters and an important Library fundraiser. Plans for the expansion of the memorial paver project are underway and will offer residents an opportunity to recognize loved ones by purchasing an engravable paver.

Summit Station, which is a Transit Oriented Overlay Development (TOOD), was completed in 2023, with the exception of the commercial/retail/grocery store component. Construction continues on the Villas of South Park development located off of Snowden Road. The development is a mixture of single-family and patio homes with 96 units in the final design. 60 acres of the 100-acre development will be retained as green space. The construction of a new veterinary clinic on the site of the former Stewart School commenced in 2022 and is nearing completion. The new Park Social located across the street from Bavarian Village is also in the final stage of construction.

One of the most exciting developments is that the bid process for the demolition and grading phase of the Rt. 88/Library Road intersection project is underway. Bids will be received in August, with an anticipated award to take place at the September 11, 2023 Board of Supervisors meeting. The second phase of the \$1.7 million project includes a left-hand turning lane, public parking spaces, a pedestrian crosswalk, a new LED traffic signal, upgrades to Peach Alley to improve neighborhood safety, and an aesthetically pleasant landscape design will begin in the spring of 2024. Grant funding obtained by the Township in the amount of \$400,000 and a financial contribution from the developer of Summit Station in the amount of \$345,000 is being used to offset the project costs.

The design work was completed on the flood mitigation project in the Broughton area of the community where flooding has been an issue for many years. Township officials worked with representatives of Allegheny County to allow for the placement of flood control measures on park

property. The appropriate permits have been forwarded to DEP, with the review process expected to take 8-12 months. The Township continues to pursue grant funding for the \$900,000 project.

The objective of this article is to provide an overview of annual expenditures related to tax revenues, measures relative to the maintenance and enhancement of our community's assets, and goals moving forward into the future. We thank our residents for their support and assistance throughout the year and for helping to make South Park Township a wonderful community.

Board of Supervisors:

Walt Sackinsky, Ed Snee and Brian Lucot

Township Manager:

Karen Fosbaugh