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Happy



Holidays!

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News from the Montgomery Township Board of Supervisors

Winter 2003

Apply By March 1 for Homestead Exclusion

The Board of Supervisors reminds residential property owners to register for the Homestead Exclusion Program, which can result in a decrease in real estate taxes.

The Homestead Exclusion program permits residents to deduct up to \$15,000 from their home's assessed value when local property taxes are calculated. In 2003, about 3200 residents received a \$10,000 reduction in their property assessment. Approximately 8200 properties are eligible for the exclusion. To date, 4300 residents have been approved.

The Board of Supervisors initiated the Homestead Exclusion Program in 2003 to provide tax relief to residents. Property owners who did not apply last year may apply between December 15, 2003 and March 1,



Supervisor Chairman Bob Witmer thanks Boy Scout Troop 399 for helping keep the Township clean through the Adopt-A-Highway program. (See related article on page 2.)

2004. If approved, new applicants would see the savings reflected in their 2005 local property taxes. Property owners who have already been accepted into the program do not need to reapply. Residents who moved to a new home in the Township must reapply.

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Township Given Coveted Financial Rating

Internationally-recognized Moody's Financial Services has given the Township a financial rating of Aa2.

In giving the Township the prestigious rating, Moody's identified the Township's current stable financial situation, prudent management, diverse and moderately sized tax base and modest debt burden as key factors. Moody's recognized that the Township's trend of maintaining healthy cash reserves,

operating flexibility and conservative management has resulted in consistent years of stable financial operations. The rating also reflects the Township's recent refinancing of bonds, saving taxpayers \$65,000 without increasing the length of the debt term.

The Aa2 designation is one of Moody's highest financial rankings. This designation follows the recent "unqualified" opinion the township

received in its annual 2002 audit, signifying that the Township is in sound financial condition.

"The Moody's rating is a reflection of the excellent work being done by the Township's management team led by Manager John Nagel and Finance Director Ron Pratowski, as well as the other department heads," said Township Supervisor Bill Sarosky.

Township Supporting Bypass



Montgomery Township and neighboring communities in Bucks and Montgomery Counties have announced plans for a petition drive in support of the construction of the Route 202 Bypass. The Board of Supervisors asks residents to visit the Township Building to sign the petition. The Township and other communities will also display signs

reading "Build the Bypass: Support the Route 202 Bypass" at key locations.

The actions are part of an effort by Montgomery Township and other municipalities to show support for the Bypass construction. The Bypass will cross the Township from Route 63 on the south to County Line Road in the north, helping remove traffic from many Township streets.

The Supervisors and other local officials are writing letters to Governor Rendell and Secretary of Transportation Allen Biehler to remind them of commitments local governments have made to the Bypass and to express their support and expectations for the completion of the Bypass project.

Book It Thursday

The Bookmobile will now visit the Township on alternate Thursdays at a new time, with the first stop scheduled for December 18. The Bookmobile will be in the same location at Airport Square on Route 309 every other Thursday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The night hours make it even easier to pick up a book. Make it a night out and visit the Bookmobile every other Thursday beginning December 18.



EAC Salutes Recyclers



Montgomery Township businesses with exemplary recycling programs can now be easily identified thanks to the efforts of the Montgomery Township Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC).

In order to enhance the recycling effort in the Township, the EAC is sponsoring a program to recognize and publicize businesses with active recycling programs. Environmentally responsible businesses were given recognition stickers to prominently display within their business location illustrating their efforts with regard to recycling. Montgomery Township residents are encouraged to recognize these establishments for helping promote environmental awareness. A list of these businesses can be found on the EAC's Web site under the "Committees" section at www.montgomerytp.org.

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Applications for the exclusion are available at the Township Building from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday or at montgomerytpw.org. Applications must be returned to the County Board of Assessment Appeals by March 1, 2004. Applications cannot be filed at the Township Building.

Residents who were eligible for the Homestead Exclusion in 2003 received a \$10,000 deduction off of their assessed value for local property tax calculations. For 2004, that amount is projected to increase to \$15,000.

The Board of Supervisors will decide upon the final amount at their December 15 action meeting.

FDMT Marks One Year of Service

The Fire Department of Montgomery Township (FDMT) will celebrate its one-year anniversary on December 27, 2003.

The Department has had a successful first year, responding to 525 calls to date and anticipating 600 full-service responses by the end of the year. The Department's career firefighters and the volunteers in conjunction with the Fire Marshal personnel have given more than seventy fire prevention and fire safety education presentations to daycare centers, schools, senior centers, retail and commercial businesses, and assisted living facilities in the Township.

Fire Chief David Vasconez and Fire Company President Bernd Heinze were among the 36 charter members of the Department when it was incorporated. Since then, 40 additional volunteers have joined the company. Two career paid firefighters support the efforts of the volunteers. The Fire Company also maintains a fire-police division, resulting in a 24-hour comprehensive emergency services Department. The Department operates from stations at Route 309 & Stump Road and Doylestown Road &



Career firefighters Frank Colelli (left) and John Scheiter are just two of the men and women who have served the Township with FDMT.

Montgomery Avenue in the northern portion of the Township. For more information, please visit www.montgomerytownship.org, or visit the Department at www.FDMT.org.

Authority Looks at 2004 Sewer Rates

The Sewer Authority is recommending a sewer rental rate adjustment beginning in January 2004. Customers would no longer be billed a flat sewer rental rate. Customers would be billed a fixed service charge of \$75.84 and a variable charge of \$2.46 per 1,000 gallons of water used. The Board of Supervisors will consider the Sewer Authority's recommendation at the December 15th meeting.

The Sewer Authority believes this is a fair method of ensuring that all customers share equally in the costs to operate and maintain the public sewer system. By billing customers a fixed charge and a variable charge, those customers who use more water and put more stress on the system will pay more. Costs to the Sewer Authority have increased over the years through inflation. The final additions to the new sewer treatment plant and recent state budget cuts resulting in a loss of \$223,000 in grant funding require the Sewer Authority to increase revenues.

The average customer will see a modest increase. Reflective of their individual usage, some customers will have higher sewer rentals while others will see a reduction in their quarterly statements. Please call the Sewer Authority at 215-393-6930 with any questions regarding sewer rental rates.

Recycle Your Christmas Tree

Wondering what to do with your live Christmas tree once the holiday season is over? Montgomery Township will be accepting Christmas trees for recycling anytime after Christmas Day at the drop-off location in Windlestrae Park. Please use the main entrance off of Kenas Road and follow the signs to the site. Just remove all of your holiday decorations from the branches and we'll take care of the rest!



Give Blood

Red Cross Blood Drive

December 23

Township Building

12:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Call Deb Rivas at 215-393-6900 to make an appointment to save a life. Appointments are recommended but not required.



1001 Stump Road
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Permit #16
Montgomeryville,
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18936

Your Award-Winning Communications Community

Helpful Snow Tips From Your Road Crew

As we say good-bye to the colorful leaves of fall and welcome winter, the Township staff offers these helpful hints to get you through the cold days.

- * Be sure your car is properly winterized with a full tank of gas, sufficient tire treads, clean windshields, head lights and brake lights, an emergency kit including a heavy blanket, salt or sand, flashlight, water and non-perishable food.
- * Do not park your car on snow emergency routes.
- * Do not pass or get between trucks plowing in a "plow line".
- * Remain at least six car lengths behind an operating snow plow.
- * Take special precautions on roads that look wet but may actually be frozen, often referred to as black ice.
- * If you become stranded, do not leave your vehicle. Instead, keep a downwind window cracked, run the motor every half hour and wait for help to arrive.

- * Please do not throw snow into the street. When a plow clears your street, snow will be pushed back onto your driveway or sidewalk.
- * Ordinances require all private sidewalks to be shoveled within 24 hours after a snowfall to ensure that school children and pedestrians have a safe place to walk.
- * Be patient. The road crews are working diligently to tackle a big job. Let's work together in inclement weather!

The Township puts a high priority on clearing major streets first so school buses and emergency vehicles can gain access to all parts of the community. Under most circumstances, cul-de-sacs are the last residential streets to be cleared. Cul-de-sacs are plowed last, because they carry the lowest volume of traffic among the different types of streets. State roads and highways are cleared by state snow removal crews. Public Works Department: 215.855.0510.