

Charlestown Township Newsletter

Summer 2021 Newsletter

www.charlestown.pa.us

Published by the Board of Supervisors

4030 Whitehorse Road, Devault, PA 19432 - (610) 240-0326

Township Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

Visit our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/CharlestownDay/>



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BOARD MEETINGS

Supervisors

1ST Monday @ 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission

2nd Tuesday @ 7:30 p.m.

Historical Commission

Semi-monthly 3rd Tuesday
@ 4:00 p.m.

Environmental Advisory Committee

2nd Wednesday @ 6:00 p.m.

Parks & Recreation

3rd Thursday @ 7:30 p.m.

Meetings have resumed at the Great
Valley Middle School starting July 1st

CHARLESTOWN DAY RETURNS! SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 AT CHARLESTOWN PARK 100 Academic Way, Phoenixville, PA

Come join us for a day of community spirit at our beautiful park!

The **5k starts at 8AM**, meeting at the Pavilion Area. Registration is only \$20. Sign up here:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/PA/Phoenixville/CharlestownDay5k>

All other activities start at 9AM: Face Painting, bounce house, bubbles, carnival games, basketball contest, corn hole, a selfie zone and a scavenger hunt! Live music will be provided by the Mighty Manatees. There will be a Taco Food Truck, and many Vendors and Non profit booths to visit.

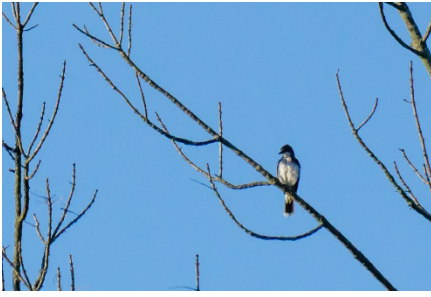
This will be the first year a Flower Show will be part of the event.

Updates and vendor applications are also available on www.charlestownday.org and the township website at www.charlestown.pa.us.

We're looking for volunteers! Would you like to join our team and run carnival games, or assist with parking or ice cream selling?

Email Inquiries to: CharlestownPaParks@gmail.com





We Preserved it ... and They Came Our Continuing Efforts to Encourage a Diversity of Birds at Brightside Farm Park

At left: tree swallow

When the two parcels of the 75-acre Brightside Farm were purchased and permanently preserved by the Township more than fifteen years ago, we recognized the value of this picturesque natural resource for our community.

This spring, Planning Commissioner Andy Motel arranged for a Bird Watching Walk at Brightside led by Patti and John Werth of the Valley Forge Audubon Society on June 24th. Prior to this walk, they spotted many varieties of bird, including a pair of Kestrels, which are not so common in Southeastern PA. They were actively courting, and we were delighted to learn through a follow up visit by Dan Mummert, Wildlife Diversity Biologist for the PA Game Commission, that 4 Kestrel eggs were discovered! (During our 2019 Earth Day event, Planning Commissioner Dan Walker had installed the kestrel box on a utility pole, along with two owl boxes in the wooded areas.)



The Kestrel is declining in Pennsylvania due to habitat loss (areas converted to large areas of grassland), so this was good news! The Kestrel is the smallest member of the falcon family.

Dan Mummert and his volunteers monitored the nest and when the chicks were 10-24 days old in June he banded them for the Game Commission's tracking program. Mummert works with landowners to promote habitat for these and other species and offered to visit Brightside through the Game Commission's "Private Landowner Assistance Program." Via this free-of-charge program, the PGC offers guidance to landowners with not less than 10 acres how to enhance their land for wildlife.

Here's a link to a video of Dan and his work with Kestrels and Barn Owls (suggestion: skip to 4:15). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkUleRL-amU> . Video of banding starts at 40:00.

After the visit, we received a report of findings that will be used to decide which measures are compatible with current use and Township objectives for Brightside.

Other birds sighted this year include the Eastern Meadowlark, which is quite rare in PA, as well as orchard orioles and bobolinks, all species that nest on the ground in high grasses. While bobolinks aren't rare, we are at the edge of their normal range. The Brightside Farm has now been listed as a birding hotspot through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

At right: Eastern Bluebird



Additional Property Preserved through our Open Space Program

We thank the following residents who placed conservation easements on their properties with the French & Pickering Creeks conservation trust in 2021:

Thomas & Marjorie Seibert 19.7 acres, Pikeland Rd.

Thomas Baldwin and Nancy Long 15.1 acres, Bodine Rd.

This brings us to a total of just over 39% preserved land in the Township!



How are the Signs on Your Street?

We routinely check for missing or damaged signs, but with over 1,000 of them, we can always use your help.

If you're aware of any road signs that need to be replaced or repaired, send an email with the type of sign & its location to:

manager@charlestown.pa.us

Chester County Household Hazardous Waste Events for 2021

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL HHW EVENTS !

Sat. August 28th – Coatesville

Sat. October 9th – West Chester

Go to this link to register:

<https://chestercountyswa.org/121/Upcoming-Household-Hazardous-Waste-Event>

Free Electronic Waste Drop-Off

Computers, computer peripherals, and TVs can be brought for recycling to the Lanchester Landfill:

Chester County Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA)
7224 Division Highway ~ Narvon, PA 17555
484-796-4039

- Limit of (1) TV per household
- NO PROJECTION TVs
- Limit of 3 computers/computer peripherals

For more information, visit:

<https://chestercountyswa.org/>

Your Comments are Welcome on our Verizon Cable Franchise Renewal

As part of the franchise renewal process with Verizon, we'd like to invite our residents and businesses to contact us with any feedback you'd like to provide with regard to your general satisfaction with Verizon cable services and how service could be improved. Email the Township Manager with your comments: manager@charlestown.pa.us

What is a cable television franchise fee? A cable television franchise fee is an annual fee charged by a local government to a private cable television company as compensation for using public property it owns as right-of-way for its cable lines. The provider agrees to provide cable television to the franchise holders' residents. Charlestown has franchise agreements with both Comcast and Verizon.

Devault Trail Open House Held June 15th

The first of two open houses to be held this year on the Devault Trail Action Plan took place on June 15th. Numerous residents attended following a post card invitation sent to all households in addition to the posting an ad for the event on our website. A link to the edited/produced version of the Devault Trail Activation Plan public meeting is available on our website and also available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtO5kLzMz2Q>

Charlestown Township received a grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to create recommendations for the management structure for the future trail, including ownership, construction, maintenance, and security. We teamed with TMACC (the Transportation Management Assoc. of Chester County), which assisted us with the grant application and is performing the bulk of the planning work on this project.

Although Charlestown has taken the lead in pursuing development of the trail, this is truly a regional project. Converting the Norfolk Southern Line to a regional multi-use trail is a complicated task, given that four municipalities and the county are directly involved. This, by its very nature, is a time consuming process. In addition to forming a steering committee to oversee this stage to its completion, we've been fortunate to collaborate with interested community groups and stakeholders including the surrounding municipalities, Chester County Planning and Parks & Rec Departments, Phoenixville School District and Technical College High School, Phoenixville Regional Planning Commission, numerous Bike, Trail, and Business organizations,

neighbors and neighborhood associations. Of course, all our efforts depend on a successful outcome with Norfolk Southern Railroad, but the path to achieving that outcome starts with these studies and planning efforts.

We began in 2015 with a Feasibility study to determine the best options to link the Phoenixville and Great Valley Route 29 corridor with a multi-use trail connecting people to parks, recreation, schools and the regional trail network known as the Circuit.

The six-mile Devault Trail would connect with the Schuylkill River Trail in Phoenixville Borough, then travel south through Schuylkill and Charlestown Townships to the office parks of Great Valley before connecting with the Chester Valley Trail.

The Open House provided information on this Action Plan project and its goals, which is to create a framework to determine the ownership of the proposed trail, its construction, and an ongoing maintenance plan.



A view of the Devault Line atop the trestle above Route 29

Earth Day Raffle Winners

Winner of the Charlestown Township Earth Day raffle basket: The Longua family! Their clean-up efforts focused on the Pickering Preserve. The raffle basket contained "reduce your plastic use" items, i.e., stainless steel water bottle, bamboo toothbrushes and floss, shampoo bar, dish soap with tablet refills. Many thanks to the Longuas and all our other wonderful residents who participated in the clean-up efforts.



Surprise Visitor

- by Pete Goodman, Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee

Judy and I have lived in our house in Charlestown Township for 48 years. We carved out a small opening in the woods and built a small house. Over time we have added some additions, but I still like to think our footprint in the woods off of Valley Hill Road is pretty small. In the years since building, the woods have closed in on us. We now have very little grass, and the trees tower around the house— our setting might feel claustrophobic to some. A few years ago we had a family stay at the house, and their son called it the “Lodge.” You get the picture— it is woody.

On the morning of May 27th as I let out the dogs and walked into our little area of grass backyard, I noticed an orange salamander. I immediately ran back inside to get my phone to take a picture. In the 48 years we have lived in our house, only once before have I ever seen a red eft, which is what the orange salamander is called.



As a youngster, I remember finding red efts in the Pocono Mountains where we vacationed. I recall seeing the eastern red spotted newts, which are the adult life stage of the red eft, in the ponds and lakes up there. But I do not know where the adult stage lives in my local area. I guess I need to do some more investigation, and obviously I don't know the township and its wild residents as well as I thought.

Red efts are good to have around as they eat biting insects like mosquitoes. The adult stage, newt, will eat the aquatic mosquito larva.

The life cycle of the eastern red spotted newt is as follows. In early spring, eastern newts leave the water to mate. After mating, they return to the water. The female lays her eggs on vegetation in the water. The eggs hatch in 1-2 months. The larvae are 1/2 inch long when they hatch. In the fall, the larvae leave the water and change into red efts. In their red eft form, they can live on land for 3-4 years. They lose their gills when they become red efts, but they have to keep their skin moist to survive. Red efts hibernate under logs or rocks in the winter. Red efts return to the water when they mature into adult eastern newts. The total life span can be 12 – 14 years.

Butterfly Walk at Brightside Farm Park Sunday, August 29, 11:00 am

Hope you can join us for a walk at the farm! There are fields and meadows to explore and community gardens with flowers the butterflies think were planted just for them. We will meet in the parking lot at 3040 Yellow Springs Road. We're hoping for sunshine this year, so remember sunscreen, water, and a hat.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtails lay their eggs in trees. Mostly wild cherry, birch, and tulip poplar trees. Although they gather nectar from the flowers on these trees, we see them most often when they come down to the flowers in our fields and gardens.

Esther Underhill, cell for day of walk: 267-615-1577

DEERFIELD COMMUNITY PASTURE SPRING PROTECTION PROJECT

This project started nearly a year ago on August 3, 2020 when a Charlestown Township Environmental Advisory Committee member noticed a person weed-whacking in the drainage ditch on the old pasture at the corner of Yellow Spring and Valley Hill Roads. He stopped and asked the landscape worker to stop cutting in the wet bottom of the drainage. He contacted the worker's boss who gave him the HOA's property manager's name. He called the property manager. Each time he contacted someone new, he felt obliged to start the whole story all over again, and it always ended, "There is a spring there, and it should be protected as a stream headwater, the source of a stream."

The property manager was asked what would be the best way to approach the HOA to have them hear the case for protecting the stream with a modest forested buffer. The property manager suggested writing a proposal and said she would take it to the HOA board. A proposal was written and reviewed by the Charlestown Township Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) and the Valley Forge Chapter of Trout Unlimited for edits and approval. Ultimately the proposal was submitted to the Deerfield Community Association, LLC. A month or two after the proposal was submitted, we started to push for follow-up action and requested to meet any interested parties of the HOA on site to show them the spring and drainage. Finally, around Thanksgiving we received a verbal approval with some caveats. We needed to verify that the project did not interfere with the HOA's agreement with the Township for the maintenance of its open space. That question was referred to Ed Theurkauf, who stated he thought it was, "a good idea." At a site visit, we talked through some of the HOA concerns and said that we would move forward to try to secure funding for the envisioned trees and shrubs and for deer protection.

The project proposed was relatively modest, only running 50 feet from the top of the drainage channel on each side. The area would need about 210 trees and shrubs.

We approached the landowner adjacent to the HOA open space and the project to see if they would be willing to participate in the project. They declined, saying that they also had a vision and that included planting more blueberry bushes in the area where the project would have spilled onto their property. That worked for us. Any woody vegetation would be an advantage over the mowed grass that exists there now.

We ultimately looked at three grant possibilities and applied for two grants, the latter due at the end of March. But we were unsuccessful in obtaining funding from either. We started to ask around for other sources of funds and trees. The first positive surprise came through the Green Valleys Watershed Association (Vic Laubach) and PA Audubon (Jeanne Ortiz), who acquired 140 trees from Max Blaustein with the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department. We purchased tree tubes and stakes with funds that we had from a couple of anonymous donors. Next, we were able to acquire an additional 86 trees and shrubs through Cori Trice, our watershed coordinator at the Chester County Conservation District. She was aware of some extra stock and was able to secure it for the Deerfield project. All of the pick ups and deliveries were made by members of the EAC or of the Valley Forge Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The initial planting was done May 14th and 15th after the project area was field mowed by Deerfield's Landscape contractor, KPZ Enterprises LLC. The volunteers faced hot planting conditions, but the digging was easy, and the first round of planting went very well. The second round of planting was postponed due to the hot, dry weather until we had some rain in the forecast. Saturday, June 5th was the final planting day, and it was another hot one. We cannot express enough our appreciation for the wonderful volunteers who gave their time and energy to bring the planting and the deer protection to a successful conclusion. We also wish to acknowledge the volunteer organizations:

- continued on page 7

Charlestown Township Board of Supervisors, Charlestown Township EAC, Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards and the Valley Forge Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Also, a special word of thanks to our master waterer, Dan Walker. His vigilance and diligence in keeping the young trees watered has been key to the project success and high rate of plant survival.

As we finished the planting that last Saturday, a green heron flew over checking out our progress in the morning. In the afternoon we observed three monarch butterflies— the first sighting for any of us. And as we were loading the truck to leave, a kestrel perched on the wire as if checking out the project. I think the kestrel approved.

Volunteers:

Pete Goodman	Lisa Mailey	Judy Goodman	Pete Hughes
Carol Armstrong	Todd Mailey	Susan Bednar	Joe Armstrong
Paul Nelson	Miranda Mailey	Dave Manning	Eric Hall
Heather Nelson	Colton Mailey	Ben Zhou	Sophie Hall
Veda Manny	Niki Manny	Sarah Newman	Dan Walker

Tree and Shrub Species Planted

Common Name	Species	Common Name	Species
Red Bud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Pin Oak	<i>Quercus palustris</i>
Silky Dogwood	<i>Cornus amomum</i>	Swamp White Oak	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>
Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	White Oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>
Winterberry	<i>Ilex verticillate</i>	Sweet Gum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>
Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Tulip Poplar	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
River Birch	<i>Betula nigra</i>		



BEFORE: September 3, 2020



AFTER: June 10, 2021

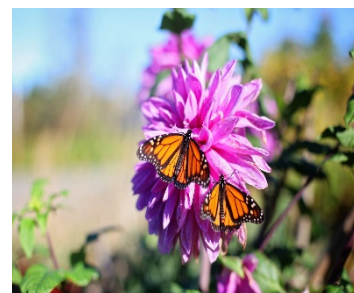
Look Who's Coming to Dinner: How & Why to Create a Buffet for our Pollinators

Please join us for this enlightening presentation.



An in-person public presentation by Sharon Richardson of the Charlestown Environmental Advisory Committee

Join Sharon as she explains why our pollinators are in trouble. Learn what we can each do to provide a healthy habitat for our pollinators. It's not about pretty anymore; it's about using productive plants conducive to where we live.



**August 18, 2021 ~ 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Great Valley Middle School
Choral Room**

**Charlestown Township
P.O. Box 507
Devault, PA 19432**