

PUBLIC WORKS ANNUAL REPORT

2022



This review is written for the interest of Council members, residents and as a matter of record for work performed by the Public Works Department in 2022.

When fully staffed, the Department has 19 full time employees working out of three buildings; the Maintenance Garage located at 4th and Oley Streets in Berkshire Heights; the Tree House, located off Penn Avenue in Wyomissing Hills and the Parks Barn on Old Wyomissing Road

WATER

HYDRANT FLUSHING – As part of regular maintenance to our distribution system we flush hydrants every spring. This work is done to clean the distribution system, gather data and identify hydrants that are not working properly. This is done with a two to four man crew across a roughly two week time period.

HYDRANT MAINTENANCE – We visit each of our 385 fire hydrants annually to lubricate them and check that they are draining and operating properly.

RESIDENTIAL METER UPGRADES- 2022 was the fifth year of upgrading residential water meters. Working with an outside installer, we changed 252 water meters. These new meters give us the ability to do “drive by” meter reads as opposed to walking up to every house. They also can retain flow data that is retrievable if there is a billing dispute. In addition, we replaced 63 failing meters with our in-house crews.

COMMERCIAL METERS – We replaced an aging large meter at the Holiday Inn Express and removed, cleaned and maintained a newer fire meter at the Inn at Reading.

METER READING – We read commercial meters (200) each month and residential meters (2,400) each quarter. In addition to these planned readings we also get final readings for real estate sales. We also have the ability, with the newer meters, to download information when there is consumption complaint.

FIRE HYDRANT AND WATER VALVE REPLACEMENT – We replaced five fire hydrants that did not operate properly. In addition we repaired two hydrants that were hit by vehicles. A known bad water valve on Garfield Avenue was replaced prior to the street being paved.

MAIN BREAKS – We had three main breaks for the year. One on Timberline Drive, one on South Park Road and one on Farr Road. Two of the three required boil water advisories after the event.

VALVE BOX REPLACEMENT – In preparation for the paving of Garfield Avenue and Reading Boulevard, we dug up and replaced 11 water valve access boxes that were broken or offset. This preventative maintenance will help us access valves for future issues.

VALVE EXERCISING – As part of our preventative maintenance program we exercise (turn and operate) water valves. This year we performed this maintenance on well over 75 valves in Berkshire Heights and west of Cambridge Avenue. We then returned to ones that are filled with grit or dirt and cleaned them out.

CAPITAL MAIN REPLACEMENT – We bid and awarded a water main replacement project for a portion of Trent Avenue. Due to supply chain issues, the contractor could not get the pipe to do the work. The project was delayed until 2023.

DEP REPORTS AND SAMPLING – Our permit with the DEP requires us to file three annual reports. The Water Allocation Compliance Report supplies information on total water consumption, per capita consumption, and general system maintenance. The Water Supply Report involves water consumption for each source meter and source water supply. The Consumer Confidence Report is a public document that explains general water quality for a calendar year. In conjunction with the Western Berks Water Authority our water is regularly sampled at 9 different locations for chlorine residuals, coliform, and disinfection by products. We have two certified water operators on staff. This mandated certification involves continuing education credits over a three year cycle.

MISCELLANEOUS – There are many additional things we do with the water distribution system. Respond to and investigate complaints of high water bills, read our five source meters daily, hand out shut off notices, shut off water services for plumbers doing interior work on residential plumbing, get final readings for real estate settlements and repair service laterals that are damaged by contractors.

SEWER

SEWER SAMPLING – We sample 28 food service locations for high strength waste twice a year. With the information gained, we then surcharge their sewer bills based on the results of the samples taken. This is an effort to lessen grease and other constituents that are bad for the sewer plant along with our collection system and pumping stations.

BLOCKED SEWERS – We responded to 76 calls for sewer backups. The vast majority of these are caused by tree roots in the sewer trap or lateral. We had two blocked sewer mains. One on Warwick Drive and one on Wyomissing Blvd.

SEWER MAIN DIG UPS – We did not have sewer main issues that required a dig up replacement of the pipe. We did however, have to replace the sewer lateral at Applebees due to chronic back ups.

PUMP STATION MAINTENANCE – We have four sewage pumping stations and two metering pits. All require regular and emergency maintenance. The pumping stations are located below the Shoppes at Wyomissing, Wynnewood Apartment complex, behind our Borough maintenance garage and near the pool at Old Mill Road and Evans Avenue. We drain and clean the wet wells once a year to keep them free of grease and other solids, and change pump fluids as necessary. Three of the four stations have back up emergency generators that are exercised and inspected monthly. We visit each station daily to confirm they are running correctly and to log run times. We also exercise valves within the stations or on the force mains keep them in good operating condition. The two metering pits are to measure flow we send to the Spring Township and City of Reading treatment plants. We have them calibrated twice per year.

PUMP STATION ISSUES – We were fortunate this year not to have any large issues with any of the stations or force mains. We did however, need to replace a three way valve at the Forth and Oley station that was not operating properly.

CAPITAL SEWER WORK – Each year clean and televise two to three sewage drainage basins. This is done to identify future repairs and clean lines from grit build up and root intrusion. We also do repairs based on the previous years televising. We cleaned and televised approximately 60,000 feet of pipe. This was done in the commercial area of Woodland Road and Berkshire Blvd, Greenwood Mall, and the residential area west of Cambridge Ave. We also lined 2,600 feet of older clay sewer pipe and installed three point repairs. This work was done mostly in the area between Penn Avenue and Parkside Drive North

MANHOLE CASTINGS- Very similar to water valve boxes, we went out ahead of paving and changed out manhole frames and lids that were in need on Garfield Avenue and Reading Blvd.

REPORTS AND CERTIFICATION – We annually fill out three DEP Chapter 94 reports. One for each of the three treatment plants we flow to. This report contains information of system maintenance, current flows, future flows and pumps station demands. The City also requires a special report for flow information as part of their consent decree. We have two certified sewer operators on staff. This mandated certification requires continuing education credits over a three year cycle.

STREETS

CRACK SEALING AND PATCHING – We crack seal roads that are relatively new, but have developed some minor cracking. This process extends the life of the road by limiting water infiltration into the base material. We sealed Parkside Drive South, along with patches done the previous year. We mill and patch bad sections of streets that may become pothole issues over time or areas that are showing signs of base failure. This practice is labor intensive for us, but can push back the need to fully pave a street for years. This year we did asphalt patches on Greenbriar Road, Wickford Place, Plymouth Place, Vista Road, Mayfair Road, Valley Road, and Wyomissing Hills Blvd.

STREET SIGNS – We do some type of sign work on a weekly basis. This could be replacing old or dirty signs, straighten sign posts, replacing signs after being hit in an accident or adding signs per a Police request.

SNOWSTORMS- We had seven events during the 2021/2022 season. None were major. The most snow we had was 4" on March 12th. Four of the storms we salted and plowed. Three were just salting events. For the year we used 477 tons of salt.

LEAF COLLECTION – We collect leaves from early October until the end of December. It is the most labor intensive thing we do. In addition to the curb line pick up, we also do Borough properties including the Library, Borough Hall, Playgrounds and Stone House. For the year, we collected 11,500 cubic yards of leaves, a new record.

STREET SWEEPING – We run our street sweeper more than most municipalities due to the heavy tree dirt. It is generally out at least four days a week during the spring, summer and fall season. We report street sweeping volume to the DEP as part of our MS4 program

ALLEY MAINTENANCE – All of the alleys in Berkshire Heights are stone along with a few in the older part of town. They are very prone to potholes and washouts after heavy storm events and attract a lot of residential complaints. We grade and level them each spring and after heavy storm events.

CAPITAL PAVING PROJECT – Roads paved in 2022 were Hill Avenue from Park to Reading Ave, Reading Blvd. form Cambridge Ave. to Squire Ct., Garfield Ave. from Wyomissing Blvd. to Clayton Ave, Spring Street from State Hill Road to North Wyomissing Blvd, and Plymouth Court. If there are non compliant handicap ramps at any of the involved intersections, they are replaced. As part of any paving project we identify bad and broken curb that needs to be replaced prior to paving. We then communicate and guide property owners to accomplish this prior to the paving being placed. In addition, we oversee construction, review and approve quantities for the payment applications, and bill for residential curb.

50/50 SIDEWALK PROGRAM – We had a 54 properties sign up for the program . After application is made, we visit each property and mark sidewalk that warrants replacement. We then confirm cost and get buy in from the resident before work is done. We provide construction inspection, residential billing and payment application review. There were also handicap ramps installed in the area of Valley Road and Wingert Road per a resident request.

ROADSIDE MOWING / SPRAYING – We mow roadway shoulders and right-of-ways once each year to keep vegetation from encroaching onto the road. This is done in many places throughout the Boro including Berkshire Blvd near the PSU Campus, Tulpehocken Road, Crossing Drive, Penn Ave, State Hill Road, Valley Road near the playground and Spring Street and Sixth Street in the area of the Berkshire Heights playground. We also spray weed control on medians and curbs in many of these same places.

MECHANIC – Jake Kaylor is our full time mechanic. He does all state inspections and repairs for the entirety of the Boro fleet including Public Works, Police and Administration totaling 45 vehicles. He keeps all other rolling stock operating, this includes 8 leaf collectors, two back hoes, two skid steers. There is also a quantity of small engine equipment that Jake keeps operational; blowers, mowers, generators, etc..

STORM SEWERS

CATCH BASIN CLEANING – We have well over 700 catch basins in the Borough. During the summer we clean debris off the tops of these basins before and after heavy rain events. We do not do all 700, but over time we know which ones need the most attention. We also identify basins that are clogged with debris inside the box. We then remove that material by hand or with our vacuum truck.

MS4 PERMIT – As part of our storm water permit we annually inspect pipe outfalls at the creek, inspect storm water facilities on private property, and educate our personnel and the public on storm water issues and pollution prevention. We are also part of the Wyomissing Creek Coalition. The consortium of seven municipalities works together to comply with our DEP permit.

CATCH BASIN REPAIR – Over time, the concrete inside of a catch basin deteriorates. This allows surrounding soil to get washed into the basin causing sinkholes and depressions. We did masonry repairs to 25 inlets to prevent this from happening.

CHELTENHAM AND WARWICK – There is a large drainage basin in Wyomissing Hills that enters a large storm sewer pipe at this intersection. The existing basin was of bad design and could not take enough water during heavy rain events causing flooding of the intersection and some property. We did a major retro fit of this basin and solved the issue.

FACILITIES, PARKS, RECREATION AND MISCELLANEOUS

HVAC – There was a lot of HVAC work done in 2022. The newer section of the Library had new heat and air conditioning installed. The Fire House also had new air conditioning and heat installed both in the living area and the garage bay. When this work was completed and the roof top units installed a new rubber roof was placed over the entirety of the building. We provide bidding documents, project oversight and payment application review.

RECYCLING CANS – If residents need a new recycling can they call the Boro Hall and we then deliver it to them. Over the year we delivered well over 200 cans.

PARADES AND EVENTS – In addition to the 4th of July and Memorial Day parades there are many runs and events in the Borough that need posting. We supply and install no parking signs, barricades and cones for these events.

CHRISTMAS TREES – We pick up Christmas trees a few times a week during month of January

POOL – Getting the pool up and running and then shut down takes a lot of time and manpower. The tarp needs to be removed, the pool drained, cleaned and filled, ladders, railings and lifeguard stands installed, bath house plumbing put together, and the filters and pumps started up. At the end of the season we basically reverse the process.

MOWING – Some mowing is done “in house” and some is contracted. The in house work is mostly in the parkland and consists of large field mowing with a brush hog twice a year and weekly mowing of trails many park areas that are kept as lawn. There are two in house employees that do nothing but mow grass from April until leaf season. The contracted work is for the recreation areas and street malls.

LIBRARY – We do maintenance work at the library, this includes minor plumbing and electric issues, leaves and winter snow removal and other requests they may have. In addition, this year we had some older light fixtures replaced, locks changed out, and interior painting done.

BICYCLE STATIONS – As part of the Wyo Ways cycling program we installed three docking stations for the rental bikes. This involved concrete pads and metal stands.

PARK BARN EXPANSION – Public Works in general has storage issues for trucks and equipment. We added much needed garage space along with a lunch room and bathroom to the existing barn. Even though the actual construction of the facility was contracted, we performed a lot of work ourselves. We leveled the ground, dug footers, installed underground utilities (water, sewer and storm drains), did masonry work on the existing barn and assisted the contractor when needed. This was a large project for us, but well worth it.

GENERAL PARK WORK – The work done by the parks department is very diverse. When not working on any of the items listed above they weed wack, maintain park trails, remove dead or fallen trees,

maintain plantings, fix bridges, assist in leaf collection, collect trash, and provide spring clean up and mulching.

DEAD ANIMALS – Somebody has to do it. We pick up dead deer, cats, skunks and any other animals bigger than a squirrel that are hit by vehicles.

TREES

PRUNING AND GENERAL MAINTENANCE - Maintenance pruning of street trees in the Borough includes hazardous deadwood removal, structural correction and repair, elevation over streets, sidewalks, traffic signals and signs, and training of all trees planted in the past ten to twelve years. In 2022 we pruned a total of 1,579 street trees in all sections of the Borough. Of this total, 247 were mature shade trees and 1332 were trees on our small training lists. We consider the training process one of the most important things we do. It involves directional and structural pruning to encourage an appropriate upright structure that reduces future maintenance and damage and gives street trees the best chance at long term survival between the curb and sidewalk. The sections of the Borough that we thoroughly and completely pruned in 2022 were Penn Avenue, the 1500 block of Parkside Drive North, Hobart Avenue, Regency Drive and Greenbriar Road. We constantly monitor high traffic areas with large trees (Penn Avenue, the Boulevards, Monroe Avenue, Van Steffy Avenue, Larchwood Road, Cedarwood Road) to keep hazardous deadwood to a minimum. There are a number of streets in the Borough, in addition to the Boulevards, that are lined with large mature oak trees which are at least 80 to 90 years old and require diligent inspection for deadwood, and structural or root problems. Monitoring these areas is part of our weekly routine and we resolve any hazards we find as soon as possible. Looking forward into 2023, we plan to concentrate much of our maintenance efforts on the 900 block of Hill Avenue, Bluebird Road, sections of Dauphin Avenue and the islands on Wyomissing Boulevard.

The pruning numbers above do not include resident requests. We responded to and resolved 124 resident requests in 2022, many involving multiple trees. Phone calls from residents are valuable in drawing attention to problems we may miss in our own scouting. These concerns include everything from dead branches, elevation and clearance to exposed roots and lifted sidewalks. When we look at damaged sidewalks, we tell residents that after their contractor has the old concrete removed, we will come in and grind or cut the exposed roots to allow the new slab to be formed and poured. We definitely insist that we do the root work, being careful not to grind too much, which could compromise the health and stability of the tree. Before the process begins, we encourage affected residents to apply for the Borough's 50/50 sidewalk replacement program.

REMOVALS - Trees that are declining and becoming hazardous or too costly to maintain are marked for removal. Significant crown dieback, severe decay of large limbs or the trunk, and signs of root rot are the main reasons for removing trees. In some of the older sections of Wyomissing, there are street trees that are probably approaching one hundred years of age. Some of these trees, especially on the narrower streets, are beginning to outgrow the space they were planted in. Though these trees may appear healthy and sound, a storm related failure of all or part of their structure could be catastrophic. Starting in 2015, we included massive size in relation to practical growing space as one of the criteria for considering a tree for removal.

Of the 167 trees removed from the streets of Wyomissing in 2022, 109 were taken down by our own crew and 58 were removed by private contractors. We also began in earnest to remove dead and dying ash trees in the parklands near walkways and trails. Using contractors to remove the largest and most time-consuming trees allows us more time for pruning and requests. We put out three to four bid requests per year and have been very satisfied with the results.

A large amount of firewood is generated in both our pruning and removal operations. We deposit this wood at the Park Barn parking area and behind the Tree House in Wyomissing Hills for residents to take free of charge. Occasionally we will save large oak trunks which are either sold to a saw mill or turned into boards for use on the park grounds. We grind all stumps to a depth that allows us to replant trees whenever practical and where space still allows.

PLANTING - We added 146 trees to the streets of the Borough in 2022, which we purchased from two area nurseries and Schichtel's Nursery in New York. Of the total number of trees planted, 121 were replacements for trees removed in 2021 and 25 were planted on new sites. We respond to residents' requests for street trees as much as our yearly budget allows.

In an effort to further diversify the tree population, we continue to look for unique species and varieties to plant, with an emphasis on trees native to our geographical area. Streets that were traditionally planted with a single species are gradually being transformed to contain up to four different species, displaying various sizes, shapes and fall colors. Some of the more rare or underrepresented species included in our plantings in 2022 were chinkapin oak, 'Galaxy' magnolia, 'Princeton' American elm, shumard oak, bur oak and dawn redwood.

We purchased 42 bare root trees from Schichtel's Nursery in New York. Among the advantages of the bare root method are lower cost, ease of transport and handling because of reduced weight, and possibly faster establishment and increased survivability. The only drawback is that there are currently no local nurseries with any bare root offerings. We would like to increase the percentage of bare root trees we plant each year as more local nurseries begin to sell them.

PESTS AND DISEASES - Historically, there have been few pest or disease problems among our street trees that warranted any major resources to control. In 2022 we used multiple applications of a fungicide on crabapples on High Road and Crossong Drive to control a rust disease and applied a soil injected pesticide to control aphids and scale in selected trees around the Borough.

The emerald ash borer continues to kill green and white ash in Wyomissing and throughout Berks County. In the fall of 2012, we began a preventative program of pesticide injections to protect native ash trees along the streets of Wyomissing. We are gradually removing ash that are already in decline due to EAB or other reasons. These removals will continue into 2023. In early summer, we continued the tree injection regimen by treating 136 trees mostly along Garfield Avenue and Crossing Drive. This is the fourth treatment these trees have received since 2012. We plan to continue treating more ash trees every summer into the future until the threat from the emerald ash borer subsides.

The current outbreak of spotted lanternfly in Pennsylvania is the latest pest concern that we need to monitor into the future. Though we have seen them feeding on some street trees in Wyomissing, mainly red maples and Norway maples, we have not noticed any damage that would justify significant chemical control efforts. For the third year there has been a significant decline in the total number of lanternflies in Wyomissing, by our own observation and far fewer calls from residents.

MISCELLANEOUS - Tree Department staff continues to attend one or two seminars each year for continuing education and to keep pesticide certification and ISA Certified Arborist credits updated.

In 2022 Wyomissing received The Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City, USA status for the eighteenth year. Each year that we renew the award, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry recognizes our effort and presents Wyomissing with a commendation and new banners and signs to post at various entrances to the Borough.

In accordance with the 50/50 sidewalk repair program instituted by Wyomissing in 2015, the tree department worked closely with concrete contractors to prepare sites for new sidewalk construction. Our involvement and input aided in the installation of new sidewalks adjacent to many street trees throughout the Borough.