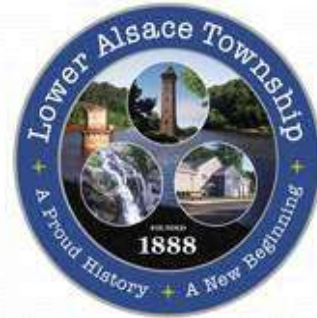


LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP 2017 Budget

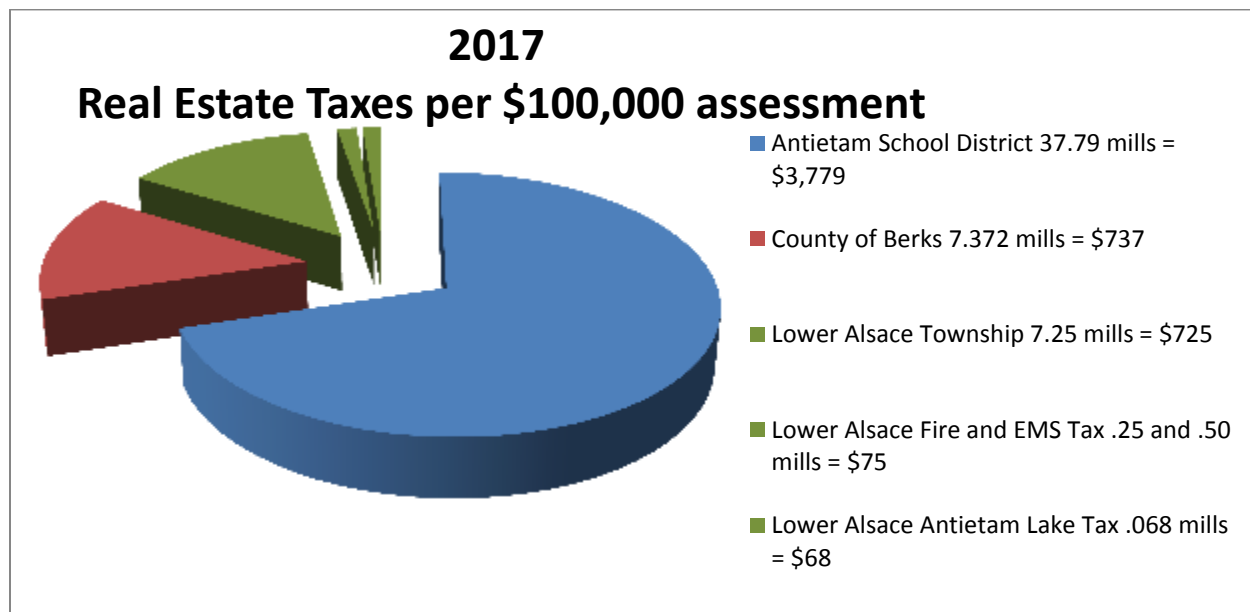
1200 Carsonia Avenue
Reading, PA 19606
Phone (610)779-6400 - Fax (610) 370-0797



To the Taxpayers of Lower Alsace Township,

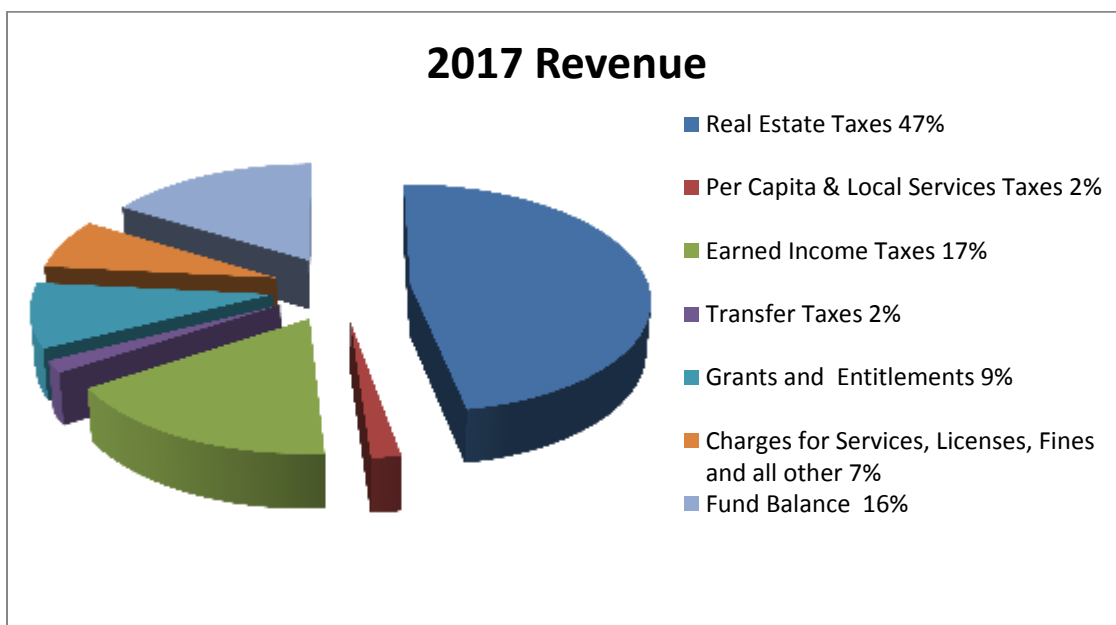
The following information is presented to help you understand that the many vital services you receive as a citizen in this community are funded by the taxes you pay to the Township and are completely separate from those taxes you pay to the Antietam School District.

As you review the 2017 approved budget, please pay particular attention to the real estate tax millage chart below. Most people do not fully understand that the smallest portion of their overall real estate tax burden is what actually funds your basic township services. In 2017 the annual Township real estate tax bill for a home assessed at \$100,000 is proposed to be a total of \$868.00. For that annual tax bill your family receives 24 hour police protection from the Central Berks Police Department and fire protection from the Lower Alsace Fire Company; snow removal and road construction improvements for the 24 miles of township roads, leaf and brush collection for the densely populated neighborhoods, building, zoning and property maintenance code enforcement, a free recycling drop off facility and spring and fall clean-up programs, and a summer playground program. Starting in 2016 with the new EMS Tax, the Lower Alsace Ambulance Service became an automatic membership to all Township residents.



Real Estate Taxes will continue to be the largest source of revenue for the Township. The proposed 2017 budget proposes to draw down approximately \$489,000 from the fund reserve balance. As in prior years, the township will pursue other sources of funding through grant programs and will review permit fee schedules to assure that they are designed to cover the cost of those municipal services. If the Township's Earned Income Tax revenue increases sufficiently to cover increasing costs, the future budgets may avoid additional property taxes, but absent any significant increase in that tax revenue derived from the W-2 earnings of the residents, the Board of Supervisors will be faced with the decision of cutting services or increasing property taxes. The current board believes that the incremental increases will be less of a burden than putting off the inevitable larger tax increase, so the 2017 budget was approved with a ½ mill increase for the General Fund . That one half mill equates to \$50 per home assessed at \$100,000. Additionally the Board of Supervisors also improved an Ambulance Tax increase up to the maximum amount of .50 mill from the current .27 mills to help keep this vital service financial stable.

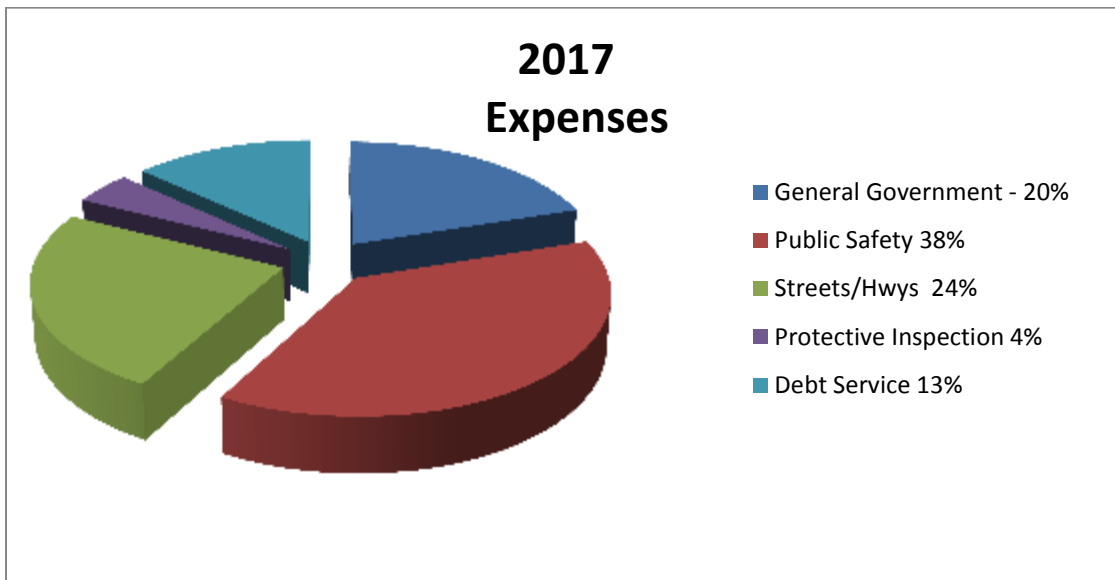
Revenues	\$3,014,116
Real Estate Taxes 47%	\$1,420,352
Per Capita & Local Services Taxes 2%	\$53,368
Earned Income Taxes 17%	\$510,000
Transfer Taxes 2%	\$52,010
Grants and Entitlements 9%	\$274,249
Charges for Services, Licenses, Fines and all other 7%	\$214,447
Fund Balance 16%	\$489,690




Lower Alsace Township participates as a member in a self-insured insurance pool along with hundreds of other municipal entities across the Commonwealth called the Pennsylvania Municipal Health Insurance Cooperative. While this coverage option is projected to increase in 2017 by 17.5% it remains more cost effective compared to similar groups across the commonwealth which are predicted with renewal increases at 30% or more.

2017 TOWNSHIP BUDGET

Expenses	\$3,014,116
General Government - 20%	\$601,336
Public Safety 38%	\$1,149,702
Streets/Hwys 24%	\$733,337
Protective Inspection 4%	\$131,265
Debt Service 13%	\$398,477



This budget was adopted at the December 8, 2016 meeting of the Lower Alsace Township Supervisors.

The Township Web site can be found at www.latownship.org and the Township’s Face Book page  contains a constant stream of information posted about community activities, our local business specials as well as other pertinent Township information. This is a wonderful community inclusive of a number of volunteer organizations and partnerships continuously working to help your community to grow stronger. The Township Board of Supervisors encourages you to get involved. What follows summarizes the many initiatives and programs currently underway in your community.

Playground program

The joint playground program which involves the cooperation with Antietam Valley Community Partnership, the Antietam Valley Recreation and Community Center , Lower Alsace Township and Mount Penn Borough continued in 2016 with increasing attendance .

<u>Year</u>	<u>Camper applications</u>	<u>Program attendance</u>	<u>Average daily attendees</u>
2013	81	657	22
2014	110	1014	33
2015	113	1271	41
2016	120	1403	45

The 2016 Playground Leaders, Jenna M Martorana, Lydia Faro and Andy Wrobel created a Face Book page for the information to get to the campers families each day and can be found at www.facebook.com/Antietam-Valley-Playground-Program

As in prior years, the campers took part in a program to learn about stormwater pollution that included the causes, the effects and ways we can all prevent it in our backyards. Representatives from Lower Alsace Township, Mount Penn Borough and Mount Penn Water Authority presented this valuable lesson to these eager campers. Following the hands on demonstration, the campers were asked to help us design the storm drain stencil. Below depicts the winning design which is a combination of art work created by Ava Adamczyk and the logo idea from Lyndsey Kline. Debbie and Gary Rowland, owners of the The Little Old German Signmaker, made the storm water inlet stencils based on the art work of these two campers.



Antietam Valley Regional Park Commission:

The Park Commission has had a successful year and we are pleased to inform our residents that the following Grants have been awarded for the implementation of Phase I of the Carsonia Park Master Plan that includes new basketball courts, volleyball court, baseball field and parking along Harvey Avenue. Those grants include:

- DCNR Conservation and Community Partnerships Program: \$250,000
- DCED Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program: \$150,000
- DCED Watershed Protection: \$65,000
- In addition a grant was approved for the future acquisition of additional land from the Conservation and Community Partnerships Program: \$27,500

These grants were secured with matching funds of \$75,000 from Mt. Penn, Lower Alsace, Water Authority and Antietam Valley Community Partnership

For Phase II the following grants are pending:

- Phase 2 of Master Plan (Enlarged and Renovated Tot Lot, new Pavilion and Parking lot along Byram)
- DCNR Conservation and Community Partnerships Program: \$250,000
- DCED Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program: \$250,000
- Matching Funds of \$65,000 from Mt Penn, Lower Alsace and AVCP



PROTECTION OF PERSONS AND PROPERTY

Police Protection

Established in 1993, The Central Berks Regional Police Department serves the Township of Lower Alsace and the Borough of Mount Penn, and is currently contracted to provide police service to St. Lawrence Borough. The Department is staffed by a Police Chief and Administrative Assistant, a Detective, Four Sergeants and eight patrol officers. The Police Commission is overseen by a six-member board of local officials who meet once a month. Those meetings are open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

- In 2014 there were nearly 6,000 calls handled by the Police Department
- In 2015 the called were 6,500 calls handled by the Police Department
- As of 9/30/16 there were 5000 calls; note: those calls often result in additional incidents including accidents and arrests
- In 2014 there were 1,996 reported incidents
- In 2015 there were 2,495 reported incidents
- As of 9/30/16 there were 628 reported incidents

Working to prevent blight

With the goal of enhancing the Central Berks Police Codes Department, Lower Alsace Township enacted a new Blight Prevention Ordinance modeled after property maintenance efforts other municipalities across the Commonwealth. This expedited process will enable the Codes Officer (s) to react a bit more quickly to the “nuisance” type of property issues such as grass, weeds and rubbish issues thereby allowing the Codes Officers more time to address the more complex and time consuming property maintenance enforcement actions through the Property Maintenance Code summary citation process with the Magisterial District Court.

It is the belief of this Board of Supervisors that blight is the single most threatening issue facing communities with aging urbanized neighborhoods and it will not go away on its own; The costs of dealing with blight are far outweighed by the costs of not dealing with it; because poverty follows blight and crime follows poverty. If communities with aging urbanized neighborhoods don’t exercise every tool at their disposal to combat blight, poverty and crime will follow. With that, there will be a need for more police at a great expense. Then, taxes will increase to pay for the cops and people will have even less resources to care for their homes and properties. While the board understands that this Blight Prevention Ordinance is not the “savior” of the community, they believe that it is a piece of the puzzle with rental unit inspections, home transfer inspections, joint Borough/Township Codes enforcement and other initiatives that Lower Alsace has worked to institute. As other tools to eliminate blight become available or developed, this Board of Township Supervisors will be considering them all.

In addition to the blight prevention efforts the township enforces the Statewide Building Code as well as other township land use ordinances to assure land uses are compatible with the zones the properties are located. To date the total fees collected for those related permits totals \$67,000.00 which helps to offset the cost of the codes administration. Future considerations will include ordinances to require vacant property registrations to assure those properties going through foreclosure receive prompt property maintenance care from those responsible during the foreclosure process.

Debt service payments explained:

While no one likes to create debt, it can be a fiscally sound method to pay for the cost of major long term projects. The Lower Alsace Township Supervisors have made significant improvements in the township's roads beginning in 2009 and each year since. Rather than paying for those necessary road re-construction costs in one year, the cost was spread over the projected life of the improvements through a program initiated by the Commonwealth of PA called the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Bank or PIB Loans.

This program allows a municipality to pay back a loan in 10 years at the current fixed rate of 1.625% interest. There is no other means at this point in time for a community to obtain a rate that low, and there is no means for the Commonwealth to receive a rate of interest that high for their investment. So the taxpayers of the township receive a low interest loan and receive road improvements and the taxpayers of the Commonwealth receive a higher rate of return on their investment. The third of these three PIB loan projects was received in 2014 and the Township was able to reconstruct and or repave a total of nine Township Roads.

The other debt service payments are for the 2004 Township Building renovation and the \$1.5 million contribution to the County of Berks for their purchase of Antietam Lake Park. Since Antietam Lake Park serves all county residents, the Township Supervisors have requested the County Commissioners to assume the lake debt from the Lower Alsace Taxpayers.



Skyline Drive Multi Modal Grant Award Granted!!

Funds totaling \$232,202 will continue to be set aside in this proposed budget as the 30% match required for the Multi Modal Grant application filed by Lower Alsace Township on behalf of Alsace Township and the City of Reading to reconstruct Skyline Drive and provide safer biking and hiking facilities on this scenic route. The entire \$969,000 was approved by the PA DCED in grant funds that will be used to improve and enhance the use of this historic roadway during the spring and summer of 2017. The roadway was originally constructed in 1932 as an unemployment relief project that provided jobs to 1,200 men. The original building of the “Skyline Drive wall” was funded and constructed by the Federal government under the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his creation of the W.P.A. The workers constructed the magnificent wall in 1939 that extends the length of Skyline Drive. The wall begins at Reading's most famous landmark, the world-famous Pagoda, and past the equally prominent landmark, the William Penn Memorial Fire Tower in Lower Alsace Township.

The wall extends to McKnight's Gap Road in Alsace Township, where it curves around Oak Lane for a total of 2.55 miles. This project will develop a clearer separation of bike, pedestrian and vehicular travel lanes to enable the safe passage of all three forms of transportation while providing greater access to those forms of transportation to one the area’s most scenic views.

Improvements to the storm water management system of the existing roadway will also help to preserve and protect the structural integrity of the historic wall as well as to the roadway itself.



Respectfully submitted,

Terry L. Styer

Terry L. Styer, Manager / Secretary-Treasurer
Lower Alsace Township