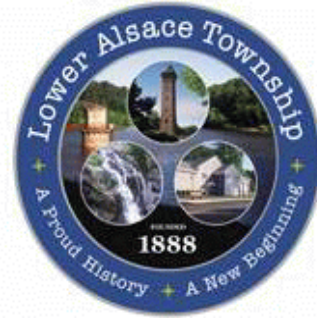


LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP

2019 Budget



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

To the Taxpayers of Lower Alsace Township,
As a citizen of this community, you receive many vital services that are funded by the taxes you pay to the Township. The Board of Supervisors is pleased to present a budget that allows those services to continue for 2019 within the existing real estate tax millage.

You pay Real Estate taxes to the Antietam School District, to the County as well as the Township. The chart on page three shows the amount of taxes collected by each taxing authority. Please note that the smallest portion of your overall real estate tax burden is what actually funds your township services. In 2019 the annual Township real estate tax bill for a home assessed at \$100,000 is proposed to be remain at \$868.00.

During 2018 the Board of Supervisors requested financial assistance from the Berks County Commissioners to refinance the Antietam Lake Debt. The decision to create that debt was made in 2009 and was intended to assist the County of Berks in the acquisition of the Antietam Lake property from the City of Reading and to assist the County Commissioners with the repairs and stabilization of the Antietam Lake Dam. With the County's financial assistance, the Township's municipal building debt and remaining Antietam Lake debt was refinanced and the annual debt service costs were reduced by approximately \$30,000.

During 2017 through 2018 the Township applied for and was awarded a recycling grant of \$283,000 from the PA DEP. The grant terms will require Lower Alsace residents to separate their residential refuse from recyclables and contract for curbside refuse and recycling services by April of 2019. In order to make this change more cost effective the Township advertised for sealed bids to award a contract to the lower responsive bidder for the 1,736 residential units in the township. This service was proposed to be available to residential properties with four or fewer units only. Properties with five or more residential units and all commercial properties will still be required to hire their own municipal waste and recycling contractor.

The DEP Recycling Grant will provide funding to the township to enhance brush and leaf collection services and replace some aging equipment that is currently used. One way to look at it is that the \$22,000 in required match funds will enable the township obtain \$315,000 worth of needed equipment that would have otherwise been paid by approximately 2 mills of taxes collected from the Lower Alsace property owners.

By considering the bids for both municipal waste and recycling, the Township hoped to reduce the number of large trucks causing added wear on the neighborhood streets as well as noise and air pollution. With municipal contracting the successful bidder for municipal waste and municipal recycling contracts would be required to follow the rules of the community that are established in the bid contract including restrictions of hauling on holidays, no collection on Sundays and all collections shall be made between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

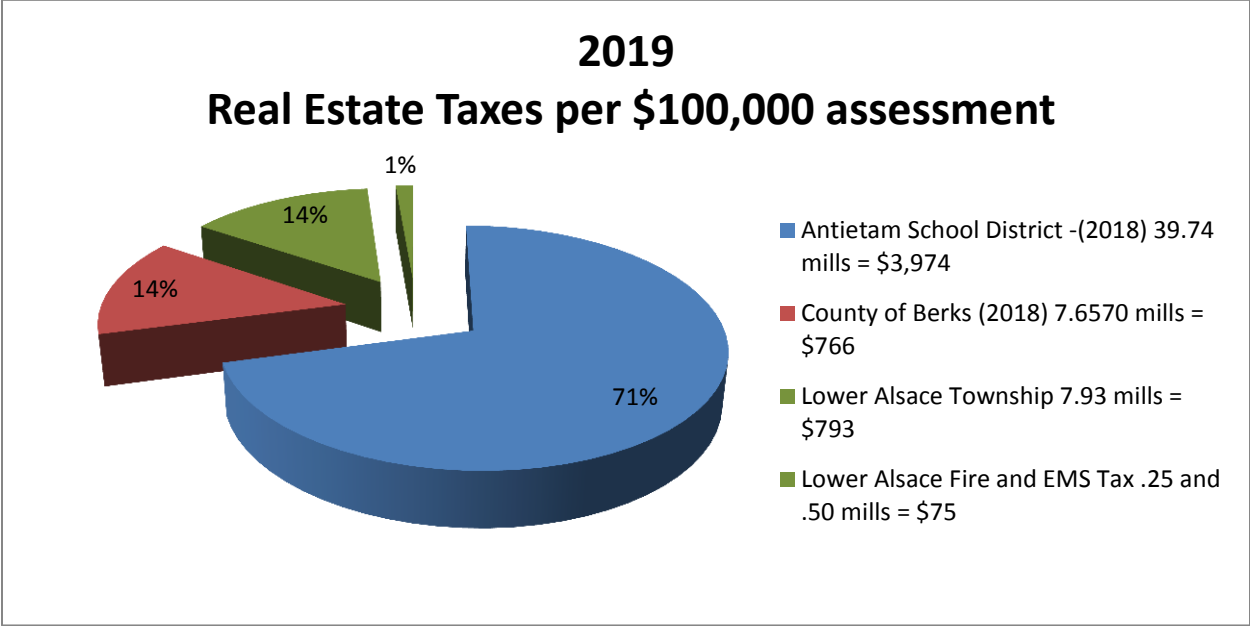
On December 13, 2018 the Township opened and read the bid results for three year contracts with two optional annual renewals from J.P. Mascaro, Eagle Disposal and A. J. Blosenski. The lowest bid received for weekly removal of up to six 35-gallon containers of trash, every other week recycling collection, and monthly removal of bulk items for 2019 was from Eagle Disposal at \$227.00 per residential unit. Eagle Disposal also offered the lowest annual bid price for a three year contract for just curbside recycling at an average cost of \$47.00 annually.

After careful evaluation of all the factors including comments received from residents, it was determined that a three year contract be awarded for curbside Recycling only. All residents will be required to arrange for a private municipal waste hauler and cooperate with the Township's contracted recycling contractor which will begin in April of 2019.

This new curbside recycling collection program will be similar to the refuse and recycling programs in St. Lawrence and Mt. Penn Boroughs as with many other communities in Berks County.

Starting in 2019 all property owners will see a recycling fee on their 2019 Township real estate bill. Since all residential properties will be part of this contract and all commercial and industrial properties will be required to hire their own refuse and recycling contractor and report the results to the township on an annual basis, the township expects to see more revenue received from the annual recycling performance grants received from the PA DEP and more convenience for Township residents together with the additional benefit that less recyclable materials will end up in area landfills.

The Lower Alsace Township taxes gives your family 24 hour police protection from the Central Berks Police Department and fire protection from the Lower Alsace Fire Company; EMS from the Lower Alsace Ambulance Association; snow removal and road construction improvements for the 24 miles of township roads; building, zoning and property maintenance code enforcement; and beginning in 2019 the township will be contracting for a curbside recycling program.

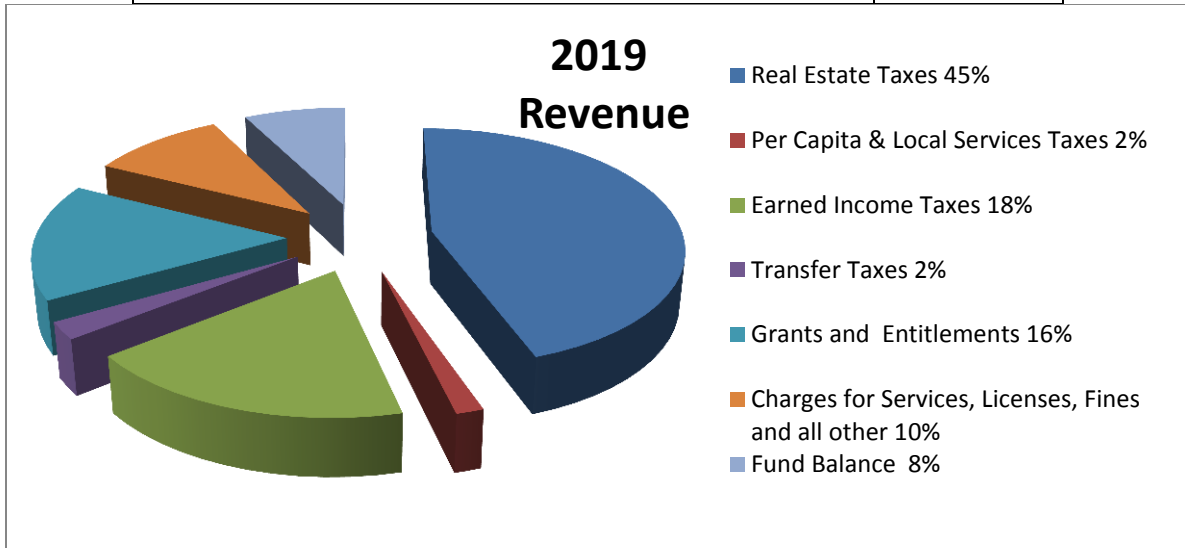


Real Estate Taxes continue to be the largest source of revenue for the Township. With the last recession and lack of buildable space in the township, the assessed property values were slowly declining since 2013. The Township has enhanced property inspections and codes enforcement and continuously seeks more efficient and effective means to stabilize the eroding tax base. For the first time since 2013 it appears that the trend has reversed property values is on the rise by .09%. The Township’s Earned Income Tax revenue continues to have slight increases as well and the hope is for that trend to continue.

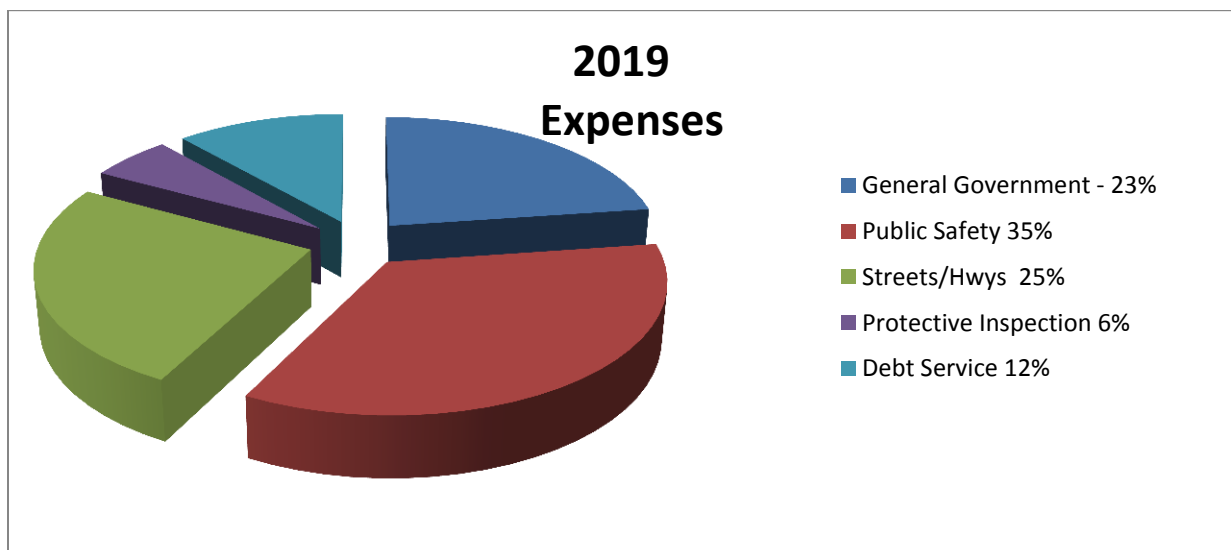
As these budget messages state each year, without any significant increase in those basic sources tax revenue (property and earned income taxes) the Board of Supervisors will be faced with the difficult decision of cutting services or increasing property taxes. For the prior two years and now three if this budget is approved, there is no proposed tax increase. The Board of Supervisors has worked very hard to oversee all municipal programs with the goal of avoiding an increase in the Township’s tax rate. In addition to seeking other sources of revenue such as with grant funds, the 2019 Township budget proposes to utilize approximately \$246,000 in fund balance.

As in prior years, the township will continue to pursue other sources of funding and will continue to seek more efficient means to provide for the needs and services of the community. Those efforts include the review of permit fee schedules with the goal of covering the cost of those municipal services. During 2018 the cost of property protection through codes enforcement was covered by permit and inspection fees by approximately 75 percent the remaining 25 percent is covered by township tax revenues.

Revenues	\$3,242,840
Real Estate Taxes 45%	\$1,448,161
Per Capita & Local Services Taxes 2%	\$49,660
Earned Income Taxes 18%	\$591,869
Transfer Taxes 2%	\$75,000
Grants and Entitlements 16%	\$508,213
Charges for Services, Licenses, Fines and all other 10%	\$324,691
Fund Balance 8%	\$245,246



Expenses	\$3,242,840
General Government - 23%	\$739,311
Public Safety 35%	\$1,128,922
Streets/Hwys 25%	\$820,887
Protective Inspection 6%	\$180,558
Debt Service 12%	\$373,163



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. A number of volunteer organizations and partnerships are 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.

PROTECTION OF PERSONS AND PROPERTY



Established in 1993, The Central Berks Regional Police Department serves the Township of Lower Alsace and the Borough of Mount Penn. The Commission contracts Police Services to St. Lawrence Borough and on January 1, 2018 began the contracting of 24 hour coverage to Oley Township. After thoughtful consideration and a few years of discussion with the Oley Supervisors, a contract was executed to provide services that will benefit the residents of Oley Township, and also enhance the services provided to the current police coverage of Lower Alsace Township, Mt. Penn and St. Lawrence Boroughs. When this coverage began, the Police Department added five additional officers, of which were two former officers of Oley Township. Those two seasoned officers allowed the police department to deploy professional police response to the area immediately, while enhancing service to the current coverage areas.

After a few months of service in Oley Township, an overwhelming positive response to the Central Berks Police service has been received from the many residents of Oley, including their Supervisors. The township has had a positive response from our residents, because they have seen more Police on the streets, and faster response times. Even with increased the service , the Police Commission has had the ability to lower the costs to the host municipalities.

For 2019, The Central Berks Police Department is staffed by a Police Chief, an Administrative Assistant, Two (2) FT and One (1) PT Detectives, Five (5) Sergeants and Thirteen (13) 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.

Total Police calls (Phone, 911, office visits) to Central Berks Police Department:

- 2014 - 6,000
- 2015 - 6,500
- 2016 - 6,600
- 2017 - 6,700
- 10/31/18 - 7,798

Police incidents (accidents, complaints, arrests) handled by Central Berks Police Department for Lower Alsace Township:

- 2014 - 1,996
- 2015 - 2,495
- 2016 - 2,560
- 2017 - 2,300
- 10/31/18 - 2,186

Working to prevent blight



Efforts continue to enhance and equip the Central Berks Regional Codes Department for the benefit of the entire community regardless of municipal boundaries. By placing our property codes professionals under the direction and management of the Central Berks Police Department, it enables the Township and Borough to work more efficiently and effectively with the police officers who regularly see property maintenance issues in the community.

Lower Alsace has also partnered with PROCHAMPS to combat neighborhood blight. Their website contains a link where citizens can report a property maintenance issue in your neighborhood.

<https://prochamps.com>

PROCHAMPS will then notify our Codes Department of your complaint. In addition to the above contact information you can always call the Central Berks Codes Department at 610-898-0780.



In 2018 Lower Alsace Township amended the rental ordinance to add a requirement to register all rental properties together with tenant names with PROCHAMPS on an annual basis. Landlords may now register their property and tenant information on-line at their desk top because ProChamps developed a web-based software program to accommodate the Lower Alsace Rental Registration program.

Lower Alsace Township has seen a greater incidence of disturbances at residential rental properties over the occupied residential property. To reverse that trend the Board enacted a new Rental Program Ordinance that requires each tenant of a rental property in Lower Alsace Township to agree to the signing of a "Crime Free" lease addendum with their landlord. This lease addendum informs tenants and landlords up front that the township, with the assistance of Central Berks Police Officers, will take actions necessary to minimize disruptive conduct by the tenants of a property including fines leading to evictions by the landlord.

Lower Alsace Township is home to a total of seven apartment complexes and 146 single and multi-family dwelling unit rentals with a total of 472 rental units. While most of the property managers / landlords of the community are very cooperative, often times tenants who are not often as invested in the community require more of an effort from our codes officials and police officers. Keeping up with the required inspection of those 472 rental units with one employee who also services as a Codes Enforcement Inspector and part time snow plow operator has been challenging.

With these facts in mind, Lower Alsace Township Supervisors are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. James Lorah, a Lower Alsace Township resident, who will be serving the community in the position of Central Berks Codes Program Administrator. This new position will be working with both communities and under the direction of the Central Berks Chief of Police as per Section 12 of the Central Berks Police Commission Articles of Agreement will work to more efficiently and effectively respond to resident needs and resolve property related problems in compliance with the adopted municipal regulations. Those “Quality of Life” regulations include the International Property Maintenance Code and Blight Prevention Ordinances, Rental Inspection Ordinances as well as any and all zoning and other Township land use ordinances.

QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES

The evening of Wednesday, July 25, 2018 was an historic one as representatives of the County of Berks, the City of Reading, the Borough of Mount Penn, and the townships of Alsace and Lower Alsace formally signed the document officially creating the Mount Penn Preserve Council of Governments agreement.

An initiative has been under way since the spring of 2016 to create this municipal partnership designed to coordinate plans to make Mount Penn a recreational and entertainment destination. The preserve will be governed by a council of governments – or a COG – comprised of representatives from the four municipalities and the county. The municipal legislative bodies or boards, as well as the county commissioners, all approved the ordinance creating the COG over the spring and summer.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association parks build healthy, vibrant and resilient communities. They are also powerful engines of economic activity. Thanks to some very energetic and dedicated community volunteers, 2018 has been a very good year for Parks and Recreation in the Antietam Valley.

The Recreation Commission of the Antietam Valley (RCAV), which was the first regional Park and Recreation Commission formed by the communities of Lower Alsace Township, Mt. Penn Borough, Antietam School District, Mt. Penn Water Authority, St. Lawrence Borough and Exeter Township is currently completing the Phase One construction of the Carsonia Park Master Plan.



Included in Phase one is two new basketball courts, a new volleyball and inline hockey court, parking lot and stormwater improvements, the removal of the blighted tennis courts and a new, safe walking path along Harvey Avenue from Byram Street to Carsonia Lake. With the township's contribution (grant matches) of \$40,000, the RCAV was able to draw down an additional \$605,000 for the community. Financially speaking, that is a 1,510% return on investment.

Thanks to the tireless efforts from so many volunteers of the Antietam Valley, many successful recreational projects took shape this year and many have been showcased in the Reading Eagle News including their editorial staff who commended credited the local volunteers and leadership recently by saying:

“It’s an impressive feat considering the nature of the Antietam Valley area in general and Carsonia Park in particular. Getting this done requires working with four municipalities: Lower Alsace and Exeter townships, Mount Penn and St. Lawrence. The Antietam School District is involved as well. The park is in Exeter and Lower Alsace. The Mount Penn Water Authority owns the property and leases it to the Antietam Valley Recreation and Community Center. Anyone who has spent time working with municipal or nonprofit boards knows how difficult it can be to get anything accomplished in just one group, let alone coordinating with a half-dozen or so different ones. The recreation commission board has representation from every governmental entity involved and is managing to get something accomplished. It’s heartening to see this work being done in an area of Berks County that’s been frustratingly resistant to calls for closer cooperation....”



*....the effort has been spearheaded by the Antietam Valley Community Partnership, which formed in 2011 and has made beautifying Carsonia Park one of its principal goals. The Antietam Valley partnership’s ongoing efforts to hold events that give local residents fun things to do and build a stronger community spirit already have produced some great results, **and it’s only getting started.**”*

With the support of the many dedicated leaders and volunteers of this little community, I present to you the 2019 Lower Alsace Township budget. It has been a privilege to work among the many volunteers and public officials who possess a positive vision and provide strong leadership towards the betterment of the community. While I am anxiously looking forward to my retirement at the end of 2019 I sincerely look forward to working with the Board Supervisors in their search for their new Township Manager.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry L. Styer

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