

PSATS NewsBulletin

A NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING
THE LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

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Capitol Roundup

2023-2024 State Budget Agreement Evades General Assembly — The state's new fiscal year has begun, but without a final 2023-2024 state budget. While both chambers passed an identical budget bill, the House only approved the bill after the governor agreed to line-item veto funding for a school voucher program for low-income students in the lowest performing schools that he had previously supported and had been approved by the Senate.

The governor has stated that he will sign the budget when it arrives at his desk. It is unclear when the Senate, unhappy with the outcome on school vouchers, will return to sign the budget bill (a procedural function) and forward it to the governor. The Senate has asked the House to work together on the authorizing companion legislation that is needed to implement the budget. The Senate had set September 18 as a return date and the House set September 26. Both could return earlier if agreements are reached.

Senate Committee Unanimously Approves PTSI Benefits for First Responders — The Senate Labor and Industry Committee unanimously approved [SB 365](#), which would provide workers' compensation coverage for post-traumatic stress injuries to first responders, including professional and volunteer firefighters, members of a volunteer ambulance company, and police officers.

While supportive of our public safety officials, PSATS strongly opposes SB 365 because it is a very broad and costly unfunded mandate to local governments while creating new state bureaucracy. PSATS is asking that this bill be delayed and amended to clarify and narrow its provisions to make it reasonable and address the needs of first responders suffering from such an injury. The sponsor has acknowledged the opposition and pledged to work to address the concerns.

Senate Approves EV Charge Legislation — The Senate approved [SB 656](#), which would levy an electric vehicle road user charge on noncommercial passenger vehicles that are less than 14,000 lbs. The annual charge of \$290 would be part of registration renewal, could be paid in monthly installments, and would be dedicated for roads. The bill would generate about \$20 million annually and 14% of the funds would be deposited into the Liquid Fuels Fund for the local share. PSATS supports the bill as it would address existing resolutions.

Those paying the fee would be exempt from the alternative fuel tax on electricity used at their home to charge their vehicles, which most noncommercial vehicle owners are not currently paying. The alternative fuel tax would remain in place at all public charging stations and the bill would clarify that all owners of charging stations in Pennsylvania, including the commonwealth and local governments, are required to collect and submit the tax on charging stations open for public use. Township vehicles remain exempt.

Senate Passes Increase to Auditor Compensation — The Senate passed [SB 740](#), which would amend the Second Class Township Code to authorize the board of supervisors to increase the compensation for the elected auditors by resolution from \$10 per hour up to \$18 per hour for performing the annual audit and the other duties of office. PSATS supports SB 740, which would fulfill a PSATS resolution. The bill now goes to the House.



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PSATS opposes
HB 291 because
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Legislation Would Lower Municipal Claims Priority in Modified Mortgages — The House Finance Committee approved [HB 291](#), which would give modified mortgage holders payment priority over municipal claims, such as delinquent taxes and sewer and water bills. In addition, a property owner who seeks modification of their mortgage would no longer be required to pay delinquent municipal claims before obtaining loan modifications, and the bill would elevate modified mortgages over municipal claims at sheriff's sale.

PSATS opposes this legislation because it would make municipal claims more difficult to collect and decrease revenues for townships. While supportive of home ownership, it is unfair to expect neighboring taxpayers to pay more to replace unpaid delinquent obligations. To help with our efforts, please provide any examples or totals of outstanding municipal claims that your township has to Joe Gerdes, PSATS Director of Government Relations, at jgerdes@psats.org. Thank you for your assistance!

Pennsylvania to Receive \$1.16 Billion in Federal Broadband Funding — The Commonwealth will receive more than \$1.16 billion in federal funds to expand broadband in unserved and underserved areas to make sure every Pennsylvanian has access to affordable, high-speed internet. This funding is through the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD). This funding will be administered by the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority.

ARPA State and Local Fiscal Relief Funds NOT Part of Debt Ceiling Agreement — ARPA's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (*Section 9901 of Public Law 117-2*) **is not referenced at all** in the rescission of unobligated funds section of the federal debt limit bill. The bill refers to COVID relief funds that have not been obligated by various federal agencies, but there is NO IMPACT on township ARPA funds!

Give Your Township Access to Salary Survey Results!

Be sure your designated township staff (*PSATS Salary Survey Plus processor*) enters your township's wage and benefit data by **July 31** to ensure the earliest access to all PSATS Salary Survey Plus reports for 2023! With inflation and challenges to find and keep quality employees, townships should participate to find out how other townships most like theirs are compensating employees and what benefits are provided. It is a good practice to update your data regularly to capture new employees and current pay rates to make this tool even better!

Participants can currently view 2018-2022 results if you participated previously. Once enough data is collected for this year, 2023 results will be released and participating townships will be able to access comparisons to 2018-2023 results, question-by-question comparisons, and reports by region, population, budget size, union status, benefits, and more! To protect anonymity, results are only provided for questions that receive at least five responses.

To access Salary Survey Plus, log onto psats.org and look under "My PSATS" for "Salary Survey Plus." If you have any issues or need to change the township official designated to enter data, email memberservices@psats.org.

Questions about the survey? Need help with a report? Email salarysurveyplus@psats.org or call (717) 763-0930, ext. 126, for Katie Lizza.

HB 88 would authorize local governments to voluntarily place legal notices on a website, in addition to the newspaper. If the newspaper failed to publish the ad, the website advertisement would satisfy legal requirements.

Legislation Impacting Townships Moves Forward

The following bills of interest to townships recently saw action in the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

[SB 225](#) would **increase the per acre payment-in-lieu-of-taxes that municipalities, counties, and school districts receive for tax-exempt commonwealth property.**

[SB 442](#) and [HB 735](#) would create a **Flood Insurance Premium Assistance Task Force** to make recommendations for programs that would provide premium discounts, create incentives for local governments to undertake flood mitigation, and suggest changes to the administration of flood insurance, education efforts on flood mitigation, flooding risks, and insurance options to increase the number of people that purchase flood insurance.

[SB 749](#) and [HB 1230](#) would amend the Second Class Township Code to **clarify that a township official may not be surcharged by the auditors** if they acted in good faith reliance on an opinion of the solicitor. The bills would provide the option of appointing a partnership, association, or professional corporation as a township manager.

[SB 754](#) would **amend the Municipalities Planning Code** to clarify that when a municipality is currently required to transmit documents to the county, it may do so electronically by email or electronic link.

[SB 760](#) would **extend the municipal match requirement waiver** for multimodal grants issued by the Commonwealth Financing Authority until December 31, 2024.

[SB 775](#) would **authorize municipalities to hold emergency meetings** in another location, including another municipality, or hold a fully remote meeting if a disaster emergency is declared by the governor or the local government and it is unsafe, hazardous to human health, or impossible to conduct a public meeting at the location where the municipality's meetings are normally held. Notice of the emergency meetings would be required to be posted on the municipality's website or in a newspaper of general circulation at least 24 hours in advance.

[HB 88](#) would authorize local governments to voluntarily place legal notices on a website, in addition to the required newspaper advertisement. If the newspaper then failed to timely publish the advertisement, the redundant advertisement would satisfy the legal requirements for advertising. This bill would address a PSATS resolution.

[HB 123](#) would amend the Municipalities Planning Code to require developers to post signs at access points to each new subdivision or land development with a description of the posted project.

[HB 255](#) would create grants for municipalities to develop code enforcement programs to address blighted properties. The bill would also allow counties to adopt and enforce property maintenance ordinances in municipalities that do not have their own ordinances, subject to agreement with the municipality.

[HB 479](#) would **increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for ambulance** ground transportation at no less than \$4 for each loaded mile, beginning in 2025. This legislation, would address PSATS resolutions.

[HB 1296](#) would authorize the Attorney General to **designate critical crime areas**, where on-duty law enforcement officers must be accompanied by a second law enforcement officer because the area poses a substantial threat to law enforcement officers on duty in that area.

To read the bills, go to legis.state.pa.us and type in the bill number.

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities!

Don't miss these in-person training options! Go to learn.psats.org for details and to register.

- **Developing Your Township Budget** will be held in Lehigh on August 23, Lancaster on August 24, Northumberland on August 30, and Cumberland on August 31. Budgeting is a basic tool for managing municipal finances but it can be more than that. The budget process should allow the board to express its goals for community services in a single, readily understandable document. This class will provide proven and effective methods and techniques to help new and veteran township supervisors, secretaries, treasurers, managers, roadmasters, and public works officials develop effective budgets.
- **PSATS' Regional Forums are back!** This series of full-day educational sessions is scheduled for multiple locations statewide. Join us for the **Northwest event in Erie on August 23** and the **Southwest event in Cranberry on August 29**. Learn more about issues that matter to your community, discuss common interests with other local leaders, earn PMGA and other professional credits, and attend specialized workshops designed for township officials. This educational event will be the perfect opportunity to hear from experts on the local issues that matter to you and your municipality.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where you will find important reminders and information.

- **PSATS Accepting RFPs for 2024 Conference Workshops:** PSATS has issued a request for proposals for workshop presentations to be made at the 2024 Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, scheduled for April 14-17, 2024, at the Hershey Lodge. Workshops will be held on a wide variety of topics, including all aspects of township administration, planning and zoning, public safety and emergency management, and public works.

Interested parties must submit proposals to PSATS by **September 11**, through conference.psats.org. All applicants will be notified by November 27, as to whether their proposals have been accepted.

If you have any questions regarding the conference workshop RFP process for PSATS' 2024 Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, please contact Scott Coburn at 717-763-0930, ext. 171 or scoburn@psats.org.

- **See Your Township in the 2024 PSATS Calendar!** PSATS wants photos of township historical assets for its 2024 calendar. From historic buildings to covered bridges to battlefields, townships are home to many significant sites that help form the legacy of the commonwealth in U.S. history. In our 2024 calendar, we'd like to showcase township historical assets that add to the community's character, and we need your help to do so.

To reproduce well in print, photos must have a resolution of at least 300 dpi at a size of 4 inches x 6 inches. Photos taken with a smartphone are fine, but send them as "actual size" to ensure full resolution. Photos should be in color. Email photos as jpeg attachments to bwilt@psats.org by **September 15**. Provide your name, position, township, county, and daytime telephone number. Identify any township officials or staff in photos, along with their title or position.

- **PUC Announces All-Time Record Impact Fee Collections:** The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission collected \$279 million in natural gas impact fees for calendar year 2022, which will be distributed this month. This is a 19% increase over the prior year. Counties and municipalities directly affected by drilling will receive \$157 million of these funds. To find your township's distribution, go to www.act13-reporting.puc.pa.gov and choose "Reports," and then "County and Municipality Disbursement," and finally "2022" from the drop-down menu. This year's distribution is driven by the average price of natural gas in 2022 (\$6.64 per MMBtu) versus the average price in 2021 (\$3.84 per MMBtu) which generated a higher impact fee payment for each well, along with the 574 new wells. At the 2022 prices, the impact fee is at the highest possible level based on Act 13 of 2012.

Please note that higher total fees are not expected to continue as natural gas prices are expected to average only about \$2.85 through the end of the year. If the average price is below \$2.99, this means that lower fees will be levied, with the newest wells paying 25% to 36% less and older wells paying up to 50% less.