

Local Government Week, April 10-14

Plan Events to Engage Residents, Promote Township Government

Townships have a lot to be proud of, and Pennsylvania Local Government Week is the perfect time to show residents what your township has accomplished and help them learn more about their local government.

This special week, held each year, focuses attention on the need for strong, independent, and active local governments and recognizes the valuable contributions their elected officials make in communities across the state.

Consider adopting a resolution to declare April 10-14 Local Government Week in your township. Start planning now to invite citizens, schools, civic groups, business leaders, and the news media to help celebrate and perhaps learn how they can play a more active role in the community.

The options are limited only by your imagination. Host an open house at the township building, work with

schools to teach students about local government, or hold special events to honor township officials and community volunteers.

Following are some ideas to consider for involving your residents in Local Government Week.

Work with area schools

✓ Transform your local high school into a municipal building for a day. Township officials can meet with students, hold an informational “open house,” and even conduct the regular meeting of the board of supervisors (*advertising any change of venue as required by the Sunshine Law*).

✓ Set up assembly programs and classroom presentations on the importance of local government.

✓ Organize field trips to the town-

ship’s municipal building for a tour of the facilities and a discussion on township government.

✓ Sponsor Local Government Week poster and/or essay contests.

✓ Invite several students to be “Supervisors for a Day.”

✓ Prepare a booklet to help students understand how local government works.

✓ Encourage teachers to take students to a township supervisors meeting to see how decisions are made and how citizens participate.

✓ Re-enact an old-fashioned annual meeting at which township supervisors and students can wear period costumes and discuss the kinds of issues local officials decided in the “good old days.”

✓ If your township has a local cable *continued on page 48* ➤

We want to hear about your Local Government Week activities

Is your township planning special events for Local Government Week? Tell the *Township News*, and you could help inspire others!

Send details and photos of your event(s) to *Pa. Township News*, 4855 Woodland Drive, Enola, PA 17025, telephone (717) 763-0930, ext. 127, fax (717) 763-9732, or email to ginns@psats.org.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Reach out to local students to engage the next generation of leaders

Local Government Week is the perfect time to reach out to the next generation of municipal leaders. Township supervisors might want to approach the local high school and offer to give a presentation on township government, especially to civics or social studies classes.

If the school district requires community service or senior projects, the township can encourage students to fulfill the requirement by working at the township to get a first-hand look at local government operations.

Supervisors could also invite students to attend a board of supervisors, planning commission, or parks and recreation board meeting, along with Local Government Week events at the municipal building. Encourage them to “shadow” a township official or employee for a day to see what their job entails.

Chester County township appoints junior supervisor

The board of supervisors in Lower Oxford Township, Chester County, has taken a great stride in fostering the next generation of local leaders. As local Oxford Area School District students began their senior year of high school in September, one was also sworn in as a junior supervisor for the township.

Seventeen-year-old Gabrielle Murphy became the township’s first junior supervisor and will serve in the position through the end of the school year in May. She will attend all meetings of the board except executive sessions, participate in discussions, and ask questions but will not vote.

The program also requires Murphy to provide a report on current events and concerns of the school district and complete a project of her choice that will benefit the township and demonstrate her leadership and organizational skills.

Township secretary-treasurer Sara

Laganelli told the *Chester County Press* that the township decided to begin the junior supervisor program after Murphy approached the board with the idea.

“She saw that Oxford Borough had a junior council person and the school board had a junior member,” Laganelli said. “She wanted to know if Lower Oxford had a similar program.”

The program guidelines allow juniors or seniors in the school district who are U.S. citizens and township residents to apply for the junior supervisor position. Applicants must submit an essay explaining their interest, along with a letter of recommendation from a high school teacher or administrator. They must also participate in an interview with the board of supervisors and the township secretary.

According to her application essay, Murphy sought the position to encourage community involvement, create positive change, and give students a voice.

“Students are the ones who are and will be directly affected by policy changes made by our township,” she wrote. “It is only fitting that they have an outlet to voice their opinions, and I

believe that I am that outlet. Students feel much more comfortable casually talking to their peers about policies that they do not agree with or believe should be revised, rather than a politician.”

Murphy has already racked up an impressive list of successes in her school career. As a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, she has served as chapter treasurer, public relations chairperson, and eastern region communications director. She has also participated in the organization’s state and national leadership conferences.

The senior has also been involved in Helping Hands, the Student Renaissance Club, student council, cheerleading, and various musical and choral groups. Murphy is also a member of the National Honor Society and the National English and Spanish honor societies.

Although Laganelli put a lot of work into getting the junior supervisor program up and running, she applauded the township supervisors for being willing to start the program to introduce students to local government and foster the next generation of leaders.



Lower Oxford Township Junior Supervisor Gabrielle Murphy, center, is welcomed by, from left, Secretary-Treasurer Sara Laganelli and Supervisors Ron Kepler, Joel Brown, and Ken Hershey.

CELEBRATE TOWNSHIPS

TV channel, sponsor an educational show on local government featuring students, board members, and other community leaders discussing local government issues.

Hold an open house or local government fair

- ✓ Invite civic groups, business leaders, and township residents to the municipal building for an open house and question-and-answer session with the board of supervisors.
- ✓ Make sure township employees are on hand to greet visitors and talk about their jobs.
- ✓ Highlight major projects, new programs, and any efforts by the township to save taxpayer dollars.
- ✓ Display township equipment and attach the purchase price and year of each to help residents recognize where their tax dollars are going — and how thrifty the township is with their money.

- ✓ Offer tours of township facilities such as police departments and parks. Consider setting up outdoor displays

- and having music and entertainment.
- ✓ Invite local and state legislators, distinguished citizens in the community, and other special guests.
- ✓ Notify the local media well in advance so they can cover the event.

Honor community leaders

- ✓ Plan an official ceremony or testimonial dinner to honor a township official, employee, or volunteer who has shown outstanding dedication to local government and made significant contributions to the township.
- ✓ Honor the selected individual with a plaque, certificate, or award.
- ✓ Contact your local newspaper about doing a feature story on the award recipient.

Encourage media coverage

- ✓ Notify local newspapers and radio and television stations of your plans to observe Local Government Week at least one week before the event.
- ✓ Find out your local paper's deadlines and get information to them on time.
- ✓ Use your township newsletter, website, and social media to let township residents know about your Local Government Week activities. ♦

Local Government Excellence Awards recognize innovation, cooperation

State officials will recognize townships and their leaders for their innovative and cooperative efforts during the presentation of the Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence during Local Government Week in April.

The ceremony, which will be held **Wednesday, April 12, 2017**, in Harrisburg, is attended by local government officials from across the commonwealth and is supported by PSATS and other local government associations.

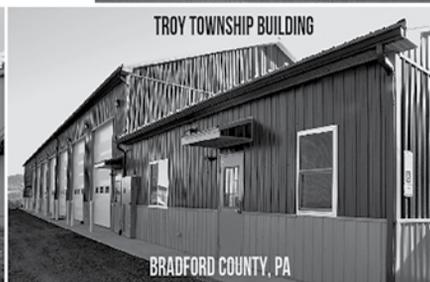
Eight categories of awards are presented: building community partnerships, responding to adversity, innovative community and government initiatives, innovative planning and sound land use practices, promoting community and economic revitalization, intergovernmental cooperation, fiscal accountability and best management practices, and information technology.

Awards are also presented to individuals who are nominated by local government organizations.

For more information, call the center toll-free at (888) 223-6837 or go to www.newpa.com, click on the magnifying glass at the top of the page, and search for "Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence."



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