

# THE EVERGREEN

## Historic Pine Grove . . . Early Settlers Noted the Area's "Fine Stand of Pines"

Vol. XVI, No. 1 – Issued Quarterly

BOROUGH OF PINE GROVE, PA

February 2024

### Pine Grove Council President's State of the Borough

## 2024 Budget Calls For 1st Water Rate Hike in a Decade

In a significant development to local governance, the 2024 Pine Grove Borough budget has passed, marking the first increase in water rates in more than ten years. This move, while initially appearing burdensome to residents and businesses, is a crucial step towards ensuring the long-term sustainability and efficiency of the Borough's water system.

For the past decade, residents have enjoyed stable water rates, a rarity in the face of rising costs in other public sectors. This long period without rate adjustments, however, has led to an inevitable need for financial restructuring. Our aging water infrastructure, with its maintenance and operational costs escalating over the years, now requires urgent attention.



**WADE GETTLE**  
Council President

### **Increase needed for grants and funding**

This rate increase is not just a fiscal adjustment, but a necessary condition mandated to qualify for essential grants and funding. These financial aids are pivotal for the repair and maintenance - updating old pipes, improving water treatment facilities, and ensuring compliance with environmental and health regulations of the existing water system.

Without these rate adjustments, the Borough would stand ineligible for these crucial funds, leaving the water system's future viability in jeopardy. The



**2024 PINE GROVE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND OFFICIALS** - Front row, from left, Councilors Aimmee Reilly, Elaine Holley (pro tem) and Devin Lymaster; back row, Shane Hobbs (Solicitor), Councilors Leroy Bates (vice president), Wade Gettle (president), and Kyler Burke; Mayor Willard Shiffer, and Melissa Dyer, (Borough Secretary/Treasurer). Not present for photo - Councilor Skip Butler.

grants and funding secured through these increased rates will play a pivotal role in modernizing the water infrastructure, thereby ensuring safe and reliable water services for all residents.

### **Balancing costs with needs**

The decision to raise water rates was not made lightly. It reflects a balance between the immediate financial impact on the community and the long-term benefits of a robust, modern water system. This rate revision is seen as a responsible step towards safeguarding the Borough's water infrastructure against future challenges, including increased demand, regulatory changes, and environmental considerations.

Borough Council understands the concerns that come with rate increases and is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in how these additional funds are utilized. Our focus remains steadfast to optimize the water system's performance, ensuring public health, and meeting the community's water needs efficiently and sustainably.

In conclusion, this water rate increase in the 2024 Borough budget, though a marked change after a decade of stability, is a necessary and strategic move. It ensures that the Borough's water system remains reliable, safe, and capable of meeting the demands of its growing population, all while securing the financial support essential for these crucial upgrades.

## On the inside . . .

Protect Yourself from Fraud..... Pg.	3
Borough Services Update..... Pg.	4
Stanhope School 2024 Events.... Pg.	6
PGJTA Rate Hike & Upgrades..... Pg.	7

# 2024 BOROUGH OFFICIALS

Regular Council Meeting:  
2nd Thursday of Each Month - 6 p.m.  
Municipal Building - 1 Snyder Ave.

## OFFICIALS

Mayor ..... Willard Shiffer  
Chief of Police..... Thomas J. Trotter, IV  
President of Council..... Wade Gettle  
Vice President of Council..... Leroy Bates  
Pro Tem..... Elaine Holley  
Secretary/Treasurer..... Melissa A. Dyer  
Tax Collector..... Katie Burke  
Solicitor..... Shane Hobbs, Esquire  
Engineer..... One Atlas  
Floodplain Admin. .... Light-Heigel & Assoc.  
EMA Coordinator..... Dave Sattizahn  
Code Enforcement..... Light-Heigel & Assoc.  
Health Officer ..... Lew Moyer

## COUNCIL

Leroy Bates • Kyler Burke • Skip Butler  
Wade Gettle • Elaine Holley  
Devin Lymaster • Aimme Reilly

## POLICE

Thomas J. Trotter, IV - Chief  
Mike Dissinger • William Gelgot  
Greg Pritchard • Gino Ricigliano  
Mark Vandermartin • Beau Yarmush

## STREETS & WATER DEPARTMENT

Earl Kreiser, Streets Crew Leader  
Jacob Dinger • Robert Kolb  
Zach Peters

## BOROUGH OFFICE

Melissa A. Dyer  
Amanda Lutz • Mandy Miller

## COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

### ADMINISTRATION, BUDGET & FINANCE

Leroy Bates • Wade Gettle  
Elaine Holley

### PERSONNEL

Leroy Bates • Wade Gettle  
Elaine Holley

### PUBLIC WORKS

Skip Butler • Wade Gettle • Devin Lymaster

### PROPERTY & NATURAL RESOURCES

Leroy Bates • Skip Butler • Elaine Holley

### FLOOD MITIGATION

Skip Butler • Wade Gettle • Devin Lymaster

### COMMUNITY DEV. • PARKS & RECREATION

Leroy Bates • Devin Lymaster • Aimme Reilly

### PUBLIC SAFETY

Skip Butler • Elaine Holley • Aimme Reilly

### STORM WATER COMMITTEE

Leroy Bates • Devin Lymaster

# Smoke Detectors Save Lives

## Where should I install them?

A smoke detector should be installed on every level of your home. Since many home fires occur while the residents are asleep, smoke detectors should also be installed in every bedroom and in the hallway outside each sleeping area.



Detectors come in two types, hard-wired and battery operated. Hard-wired detectors are usually installed by an alarm service technician or by an electrician. Battery-operated detectors are the most common type and can be purchased in most hardware stores or department stores. They are easy to install. Most require inserting two screws into the ceiling or wall and some come with adhesive strips that stick to the surface.

Ceiling-mounted detectors should be positioned at least four inches from the nearest wall. Wall-mounted detectors should be placed four to twelve inches away from the ceiling. If you have peaked ceilings, install the detector near the ceiling's highest point.

Don't install detectors near doors, windows or ducts where drafts might interfere with the detector. Never paint smoke detectors or apply stickers or decorations, since these too may affect the ability of the detector to respond to a fire.



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# Avoid Online Fraud; Protect Your Personal Security

## Beware! Don't Fall Victim at Tax Time – Here's Help!

By Wade Gettle, Council President

As tax season approaches, the threat of cyber fraud becomes increasingly significant. Cyber security experts warn that this time of year is ripe for a range of fraudulent activities, primarily targeting unsuspecting taxpayers and the integrity of national tax systems.

Tax time fraud typically involves identity theft and financial deception. Fraudsters often employ phishing schemes, sending emails or messages that appear to be from legitimate tax authorities or financial institutions. These messages trick individuals into disclosing sensitive information such as Social Security numbers, bank account details, and other personal data.

Another common tactic is the filing of fraudulent tax returns. By using stolen personal information, cybercriminals can file false returns and redirect refunds to their own accounts.

### *A rising threat in the digital age*

The digital age has exacerbated the issue. Each year, more people are filing their taxes online and sharing their personal information through digital channels. The increasing sophistication of cybercriminals, coupled with the vast amount of personal data available online, has surged these types of crimes.

To combat this, cybersecurity experts advocate

taking preventative measures with a multi-faceted approach:

- **Awareness and Education** – Taxpayers should be educated about the common tactics used by fraudsters. Recognizing phishing emails and understanding the importance of not sharing personal information impulsively are crucial first steps.

- **Secure Practices** – Using secure and trusted platforms for filing taxes, employing strong, unique passwords, and utilizing two-factor authentication, where possible, can significantly reduce risk.

- **Monitoring and Reporting** – Regular monitoring of financial accounts and credit reports can help in early detection of any fraudulent activity. Immediately report suspicious activity to the authorities.

- **Collaboration Between Agencies** – Government tax agencies, financial institutions, and cybersecurity experts must collaborate closely, sharing information and strategies to stay ahead of cybercriminals.

As technology continues to evolve, so do the tactics of cybercriminals. The threat of tax time fraud is a stark reminder of the ongoing battle between cybersecurity measures and cybercriminals. Vigilance, education, and secure online practices are the key tools for taxpayers to protect themselves against these evolving threats.

## Help for Heating Bills

Residents struggling to pay home heating bills can apply for assistance from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) now. This program runs until April 30, 2024.

The federally-funded LIHEAP program helps individuals and families pay their heating bills through home heating energy assistance cash grants sent directly to your fuel/utility provider. The program includes crisis grants should there be an emergency or if a resident is in danger of losing his or her heat due to broken equipment, lack of fuel, or termination of utility service.

The income limit for an individual is \$21,870; for a couple, the limit is \$29,580; and for a family of four, it is \$45,000. Other family sizes have income limits, as well. The grant award amounts vary from \$300 to \$1,000 depending upon income, fuel source, and household size.



### **Pine Grove Borough Info**

For Up-to-Date Information Concerning  
Borough Services, Ordinances, Etc.:

[www.pinegroveborough.org](http://www.pinegroveborough.org)



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# Borough Services Update . . . And Seasonal Tips!

## RAVE “Smart911” reminder

Just a reminder - Pine Grove Borough and Pine Grove Water Department utilize the RAVE-Smart 911 automated services to notify our residents/customers of emergencies and water leaks.

If you are new to the area, please go onto our website at [www.pinegroveborough.org](http://www.pinegroveborough.org). Click on the “RAVE-Smart 911” tab to sign-up for notifications and alerts. Note: this is only for Pine Grove Borough residents and Pine Grove Water Customers.

Also, if you change your phone number, email address or even move out of the area, please let us know of these changes so we have the most accurate information.

## 2024 pool season

The Pine Grove Community Pool is planning its opening for the 2024 season; but, in order to do so, we need your help!

**The Pine Grove Pool is looking for  
Snack Shack and Front Desk Workers  
for the 2024 Summer Season.**

Please check the Borough website at [www.pinegroveborough.org](http://www.pinegroveborough.org) and click on the Pine Grove Community Pool tab for more information.

## Borough holiday closures

Pine Grove Borough offices and operations will be closed in observance of the following holidays in 2024: Friday, March 29 (Good Friday); Monday, April 1 (Easter, observed); Monday, May 27 (Memorial Day); Thursday, July 4 (Independence Day); Monday, Sept. 2 (Labor Day); Monday, Oct. 14 (Columbus Day); Thursday and Friday, Nov. 28-29 (Thanksgiving); Tuesday, Dec. 24 (half day) and Wednesday, Dec. 25 (Christmas); and Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025 (New Year’s Day).

## Get growing with the Master Gardeners

The Schuylkill County Master Gardeners invites avid gardeners to their annual Spring Educational Event on Sat., March 2 at the Penn State Extension Office, 1202 Ag Center Drive, Pottsville. Registration for this day-long session costs \$30 and includes a light breakfast and lunch. Register online by linking at [extension.psu.edu/master-gardener-spring-series](http://extension.psu.edu/master-gardener-spring-series). Hurry! The deadline to register is February 23.

Beginning at 9 a.m., five topics will be discussed by members of the Master Gardeners - Garden Rotation and New Vegetable Cultivars by Tom Reed; Seed Starting for the Home Gardener by Kim Ost Stramara; Propagation of Plants by Mychael Corson; Monarchs and Milkweed by Russell Lanf; Growing and Caring of House Plants by Gretchen Brinich.

## Gabriel Chamber Ensemble



### Final 2 Concerts of our 34th Season

**SUNDAY, FEB. 25**

**Beethoven Septet & Brahms String Quartet #1**

Featured Musicians: Doris Hall-Gulati (clarinet)

Susan Shaw (bassoon) • Domenick Fiore (bass)

Shari Gleason-Mayrhofer (French horn)

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7**

**Dohnanyi Piano Quintet, Mozart Clarinet Quintet  
& Prokofiev Overture on a Hebrew Theme**

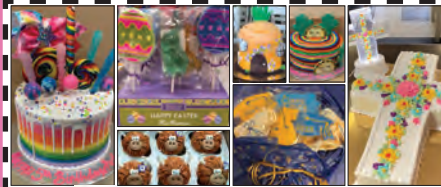
Featured Musician: Doris Hall-Gulati (clarinet)

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252 Dock St., Schuylkill Haven at 3 p.m.

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# Historical Society Preserves the Past

## Stanhope Schoolhouse Prepares for 2024 Season

What will you do to make the community a better place in 2024? Are you looking for a rewarding and flexible volunteer opportunity? Do you have a day, week, month, season or more to volunteer with the Stanhope Schoolhouse, the only one-room schoolhouse in Schuylkill County that is open to the public?

Girl Scouts working on their Gold Award, Boy Scouts seeking their Eagle project, any student needing community service hours, or any age individual can find purpose and satisfaction in helping to preserve history. Contact us at [info@pghs-stanhopeschool.org](mailto:info@pghs-stanhopeschool.org) or [www.pghs-stanhopeschool.org](http://www.pghs-stanhopeschool.org).

Currently, we have identified 13 projects ready for action - basement restoration, bell installation, docentry (teaching others about the schoolhouse), exterior restoration, fundraising coordinator, general volunteers, historical research, landscaping, program coordinator, public relations, slate chalkboard installation, creating a replica outhouse, and organizing and writing historical accounts.



### Programs, museum hours, and events

Three hour-long educational presentations have been scheduled this year, each on a Saturday beginning at 1:30 p.m. - History of Pine Grove Township will be presented May 18; Bringing Student Field Trips to the Stanhope One-Room Schoolhouse will be the topic on July 20; and "Pottsville Maroons; The Case of the Stolen 1925 NFL Championship" will be featured September 21.

The Schoolhouse museum will be open to the public following the above programs from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. In addition, public visitation has been scheduled on Sunday, June 9 and Sunday, August 11, both from 2 to 4 p.m. Plan now to visit. Admission is free, donations gratefully appreciated. No handicap access or restrooms.

Other events that celebrate our efforts to restore the Stanhope School include: Saturday, April 20 - Spring Clean-up (rain date is April 27); Schuylkill Gives (24 hours of online fundraising) from noon-to-noon, May 8 to May 9; and a special Stanhope Schoolhouse exhibit will be featured during July and August at the Schuylkill County Historical Society (Pottsville).

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**FOREIGN & DOMESTIC REPAIRS**

## Pine Grove Lodge #409

The public is invited to enjoy the following monthly meals prepared and served at the Pine Grove Lodge #409 of Free and Accepted Masons, 23 Oak Grove Road in Pine Grove Township.



Scheduled meals will be served for dining-in or take-home-and-enjoy on the third Friday - March 15, April 19, June 21, and October 18 - from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Each of these meals will cost \$14 per serving. Patrons have their choice of featured entrées - grilled chicken breast or beer-battered fish. Meals will include mashed or baked potato, candy carrots or mixed vegetables, lettuce salad with bacon dressing, roll and water/coffee to drink. Apple sauce may be substituted for the listed vegetable or salad. Soft drinks (\$1) and a dessert (\$2) will be available for purchase.

Three special event dates have also been scheduled. Chicken BBQ (\$12 per serving) will be served on Memorial Day (Monday, May 27) and also on Saturday, Sept. 21. A traditional Pork & Sauerkraut with mashed potatoes meal (\$12 per serving) will be served on Election Day - Tuesday, Nov. 5.

# Pine Grove Joint Treatment Authority (PGJTA)

## Rate Increase, Grant Award, and Capital Improvements

A \$5 increase was approved at the December year-end board meeting of the Pine Grove Joint Treatment Authority (PGJTA). Notice of the increase, effective as of January 1, 2024, was placed on the December billing invoice and will be added to the March billing invoice for the first quarter service period.

The decision for the rate increase was based on the Joint Treatment Authority being notified that it was awarded a \$1,000,000 grant for its application to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for capital improvements, estimated to cost \$2,250,000 total.

The rate increase will be earmarked for the capital improvements debt service payments.

### Items needing to be done

The Lift Station Improvement project is designed to solve numerous problems within the Authority's Sewage Collection System. The first part of the project is the rehabilitation of 10 existing sewage lift stations, first installed in the early 90s and now at the end of their lifespan. The Authority is in a constant battle to

keep the pumps operational. This work would replace each lift station's pumps, controls, and rails. Cracks in the lift stations will be repaired and each wet well will be lined with a polyurethane structural liner.

A second part of the project will be upgrades and repairs at the primary pump station, located at the former treatment plant site. The station contains several control panels that are not functioning properly, not structurally sound, or connected to equipment not in use. This creates issues for both operations and safety. The work will involve repairing failing electrical systems, structural repairs, and disconnecting equipment that is no longer in service.

The third area of the project is on Orchard Street, suffering from a severely deteriorated gravity sewer main and manholes that allow large amounts of stormwater infiltration. This work would replace a section of gravity sewer and the manholes, including lateral connections.

Funds will be used for the design, purchase, and installation of all the equipment needed to meet the project goals.



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