



PENN
TOWNSHIP
LANCASTER COUNTY, PA

Township News

Fall 2026 Edition

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www.penntwplanco.org

Community Spotlight

Penn Township Humus Compost Manufacturer Aims to Revive Soil

A curious mind and the desire to farm in accord with nature led Penn Township farmer, Jonathan Keller, owner of Penn Valley Farms, to the fertile business of making humus compost.

He had a solid foundation to build on, as his late father, Bob Keller, had been making regular compost and farming organically since the 1990's when Jonathan was a young boy.

As a teenager, Jonathan couldn't find the soil knowledge he was looking for from conventional sources, so he went on an educational quest of his own.

"I wanted to learn more agronomy, but universities weren't teaching what I wanted on soil health", said Keller.

He found a mentor in Illinois, humus composting pioneer Edwin Blosser of Midwest Bio Systems. Keller also traveled internationally to study and work with composting systems.

He used what he learned to help revitalize the "wrecked soils" on the home farm that had been damaged from the over application of manure through the years.

If the soil revival was done on his own farm, then he believed it could be done anywhere. He experiments on his own 140 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat in addition to managing the growing humus operation.

Humus compost, whether dry or liquid, is more valuable than traditional compost because it

(continued on pg 2)



“Humus is a more complex and stable soil-building material than organic matter alone. Organic matter is not humus,” he said. **“Wheat is to bread what organic matter is to humus.”**

Humus can form naturally, but the process takes years. Through an eight-step composting process, Keller is able to make it in 10 to 12 weeks.

The windrows are monitored daily for temperature, moisture and carbon dioxide and are turned frequently with a tractor-pulled turner. After composting is complete, the product is covered with tarps for storage.

Excess nitrogen competes with the uptake of other nutrients, whereas humus helps regulate uptake. He also maintains that liquid nitrogen promotes disease in plants by causing their cells to leak and attract insects.

Keller finds a strong connection between faith and soil building.



Want to Revive the Soil in Your Garden?

Homeowners can purchase both the dry and liquid humas at the farm.

2 Celebrates 250 years

How Stormwater Moves Through the Landscape

Stormwater starts as precipitation from either rain, melted snow, or ice. Stormwater that reaches the ground and flows across the land is called stormwater runoff.

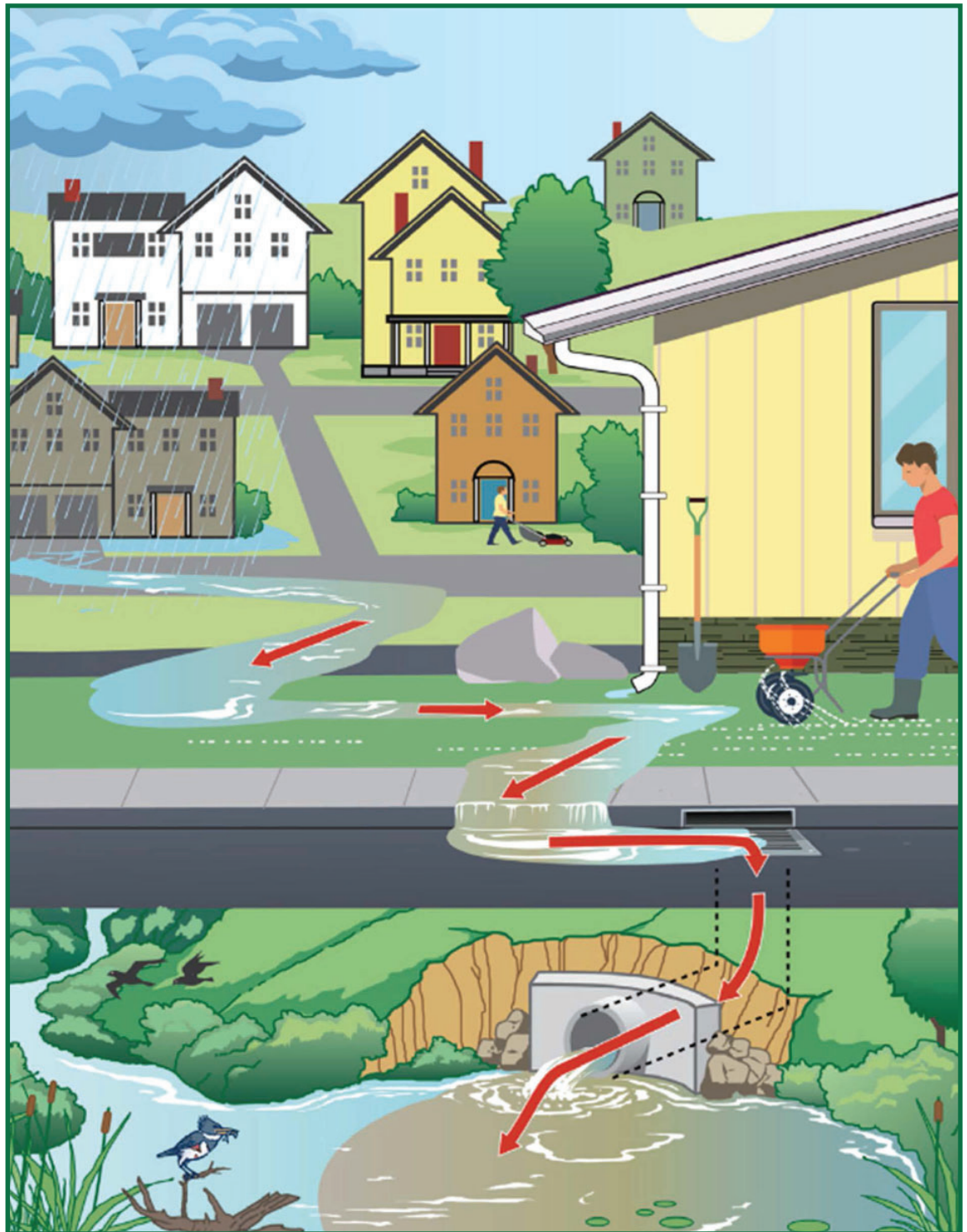
As the diagram shows, unchecked runoff from lawns, farms, pastures, forests and impervious surfaces that drain into waterways can carry water pollution and increase stream bank erosion and flooding. These problems can be worsened any place where land cover changes are made.

Storm sewer systems include grated inlets, underground pipes, ditches, and other structures. These systems are designed to prevent local flooding but do little to remove stormwater pollutants that wash off urban landscapes. These pollutants include sediment, fertilizer, toxic substances, and bacteria; two major plant and soil nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorus.

Acre for acre, urbanized places can produce more stormwater than rural areas. This is because they have more impervious surfaces and drain into storm sewer systems that efficiently capture and transport runoff into nearby waterways. Additionally, rural areas, where trees have been removed to create plowable farm fields, also create stormwater issues. Sediment and nutrients now run freely into waterways previously filtered by the removed trees, and flows are increased.

Impervious surfaces are anything that does not allow water to go directly from the sky and infiltrate into non-compacted soil below. Examples include: roofs, sidewalks, driveways and compacted soils.

Contributions from:
Watershed-Friendly Lawn
Fertilization and Care: A
Guide for Pennsylvania
Residents.



Grants

Penn Township is applying for two state multi-modal grants. If these projects are approved and executed, then they will provide vital pedestrian connections and provide safety for motorists and pedestrians alike.

The grants that the township is pursuing are:

1. \$2,863,207 Hamaker Road Bridge Replacement and Sidewalk Connector Project with Rapho Township and the Manheim Central School District. A \$300,000 grant match is committed by each of the three partners.
2. \$2,261,900 Fruitville Pike and South Oak Street Intersection Project. The township is committing \$668,000 of matching funds.



General Election Day

Scheduled for November 3, 2026

Poll Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Last day to register: October 19, 2026

Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot: October 27, 2026

You can now register to vote through the Pennsylvania Department of State's online application. Before you begin, be sure to have your Pennsylvania driver's license or PennDOT ID card handy. If you don't have either of these, there are other options. Once you submit your online application, it will be forwarded to the appropriate county voter registration office for processing.

Visit www.votespa.com for more information.



TOWNSHIP OFFICE CLOSINGS

September 7, 2026 - Labor Day

October 12, 2026 - Columbus/Indigenous People's Day

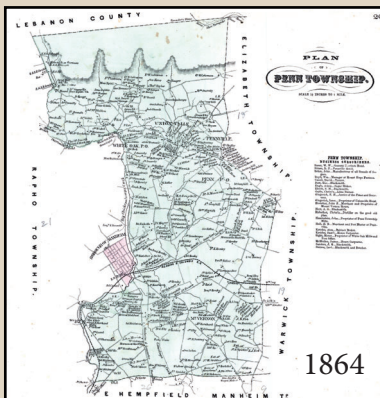
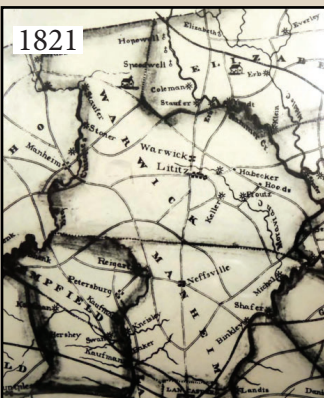
November 26 & 27 - Thanksgiving

Trick or Treat

October 31, 2026

6-8 pm

PENN TOWNSHIP HISTORY STORYBOARD



READING AND COLUMBIA RAILROAD.

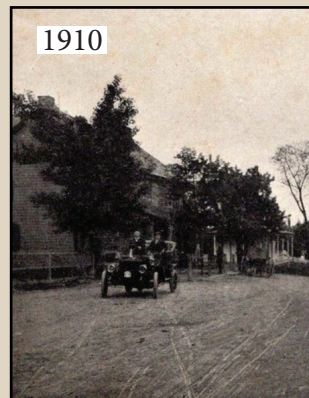
TIME TABLE NO. 1.

On and after Monday, January 5, 1863, Trains will run on this Road as follows:

TRAINS SOUTH.		STATIONS.	TRAINS NORTH.	
PASSENGER.	ACCOMMOD. N.		ACCOMMOD. N.	PASSENGER.
Leave 6,40 A.M.	Leave 4,20 P.M.	MANHEIM,	Tr. 9,40	Tr. 7,50 P.M.
6,55	4,30	SELLERS' MILL,	9,30	7,35
7,05	4,15	SPOOK HOUSE,	9,15	7,27
7,10	4,50	P. R. R. CROSSING,	9,10	7,22
7,18	5,05	SILVER SPRING,	8,55	7,15
7,30	5,20	KAUFFMAN'S,	8,40	7,05
Tr. 7,50	Tr. 6,00	COLUMBIA.	Leave 8,00 A.M.	Leave 6,40 P.M.

ROBERT CRANE, Superintendent.

First Reading & Columbia Timetable — January 5, 1863
 (Courtesy of George Hedges, Lancaster, Pa.)



LANCASTER CONSERVANCY

Trail Fest - Saturday, October 17, 2026

Gather your family and friends to celebrate the trails that connect us with nature and

the thousands of acres of natural lands Lancaster Conservancy has protected.

For more information and tickets, visit <https://www.lancasterconservancy.org/trailfest/>.



The Lancaster Conservancy also has many other events for adults and families alike. To find out more, visit <https://www.lancasterconservancy.org/events/>.

Events include:

- Bird-Ability
- Native Garden Design for Stormwater Management
- Volunteer Workdays
- Tree ID 101
- All About PawPaws
- Guided Nature Hikes
- Exploring Beginner Astronomy
- Mindful Movement: Root & Restore Yoga
- Building Biodiversity in Our Community
- Dine on Harvest Moon

...and so much more. Register today!

Bicycles, E-Bikes, E-Scooters & Segways

What's the difference?

Bicycles are considered vehicles in Pennsylvania and have the same rights and responsibilities as a car driver.

E-bikes, motorized pedalcycles, e-scooters, and segways each have different rules and may not be permitted on public property.

For more information, visit:

<https://penntwplanco.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ebikes-scaled.png>

<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/penndot/documents/public/pubsforms/publications/pub%20875.pdf>

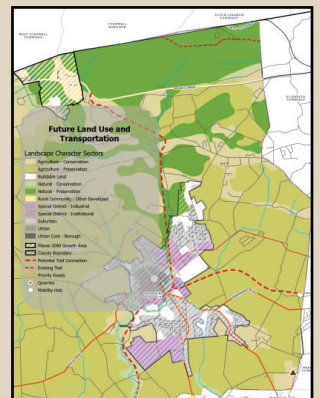
E-Bikes

E-bikes and other electric mobility devices have different needs and rules in Pennsylvania:

- E-bikes must weigh less than 100 pounds, have a motor not more than 750 watts/1 brake horsepower, have operable pedals, and not be capable of going faster than 20mph on a level surface when powered by the motor only.
- Trail owners determine if e-bike use is permitted. Check with trail owners regarding e-bike use.
- E-scooters can only be operated on private property. They cannot be legally operated on public roadways.
- Learn the rules for your community as local rules vary.



Penn Township has created a mini-version of the storyboard which has been posted on our website. Visit <https://penntwplanco.org/about/about-penn-township/>. Sign-up for the alerts at <https://penntwplanco.org/alert-signup/> where you'll be the first to view the full version of the storyboard. Later this year, it will also be put on the hallway wall for you to visit and enjoy.



Volunteer Firefighters – What does it cost?

Supporting your local fire company is critical to community safety because most communities rely heavily on volunteers and local fundraising. With operational costs easily exceeding \$10,000 just to fully outfit one firefighter, local backing keeps stations open and enables essential training.

Key reasons to support your local Pennsylvania fire company include:

- **Life-Saving Response Times:** Local companies provide immediate responses, arriving first for fires, vehicle accidents, and medical emergencies. According to a study in the American Economic Review, faster response times can decrease fire spread, reducing the likelihood of serious injuries and property damage.
 - **Volunteer Shortages:** Our stations rely on volunteer staff; supporting them ensures your community remains protected without costly transitions to full-time career departments.
 - **Essential Upgrades:** Donations and local support help purchase necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), breathing apparatuses, and specialized rescue tools.
 - **Training:** Firefighters need extensive training, to be prepared for a wide variety of incidents, that takes time and money.
 - **Insurance:** Our township pays for firefighters' worker's compensation insurance and more so we want the firefighters to be well-trained and safe.
 - Fire trucks are much more expensive and take up to two years to get delivered, so financial planning becomes more important.
 - Supporting our local volunteer fire department has a direct and measurable impact on public safety. According to the Insurance Services Office, communities with well-funded and adequately staffed fire departments often have lower home insurance rates, reflecting the lower risk of significant fire damage.
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How You Can Help:

- **Direct Donations:** Financial contributions are vital. Visit your specific local fire company's official website to donate online.
 - **Community Events:** Attend local fundraisers, which are a cornerstone of firehouse budgets (e.g., the mud sale).
 - **Volunteer:** If you have the time and aptitude, consider joining as a volunteer firefighter or administrative or auxiliary member. Contact your local fire department or visit <https://www.makemeafirefighter.org/listing.html?s=volunteer-firefighters-and-fire-police-officers> or scan QR code below.
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Assuming 80 percent of all the property owners in our township each contributed \$100 annually to the Fire Company Fund, the total annual donations would reach \$290,960. Instead, about 31 percent contribute.

Below is an example of costs to outfit a firefighter:

- Turnout Coat and Bunker Pants \$5,000-\$7,000
- Bunker Boots \$500-\$800
- Helmet \$500-\$1,000 per Helmet
- Structural Firefighting Gloves \$100
- Nomex Hood \$100
- SCBA (air pack without air cylinder) \$8,500-\$14,000
- Pager \$700
- Hand-held Radios \$8,000-\$10,000



These costs do not include radios for vehicles, fire engines, pumper trucks, costs firefighters pay for additional supplies such as flashlights or tools, fuel, training fees, vehicle insurance, tires, inspections, etc.





FALL

AT MANHEIM COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Finding Peace in the Pages: Autumn at the Library

As summer winds down, autumn arrives at our library with vibrant foliage, crisp air, and quiet charm. Framed by rolling farmland and colorful trees, our scenic walking path offers the perfect spot to pause, take a breath, and dive into a good chapter.

As autumn colors begin to fill your feed, let it be a gentle reminder to take a moment for yourself. Inside, our shelves are filled with uplifting memoirs, inspirational books that spark fresh perspectives, and stories that ignite the imagination.

Our library was built to foster lifelong learning, curiosity, and connection—completely free for public consumption. Whether you're looking to relax, learn something new, or simply enjoy the view, all are welcome here.

Come pause, connect, and grow with us this season!



Use This QR Code | Select "Manheim Community Library" and register for our events online!

MANHEIM COMMUNITY LIBRARY
LEARN. CONNECT. GROW.



Follow US!

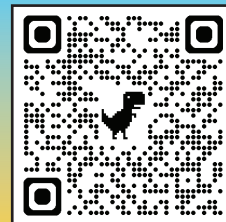
PA FORWARD



Be in the know... Sign-up for ALERTS

Visit: <https://penntwplanco.org/alert-signup/> or use QR code

- Road Closings
- Penn Township Public Hearings
- EMS/Ambulance Services
- and much more



This newsletter is packed with great information!
Open me to find important information YOU need to know!

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Chairperson-Ben Bruckhart
Vice Chairperson-Richard Landis
Treasurer-Thomas Walsh
Supervisor-Gary Stevens
Supervisor-Harrison Myer
Secretary-Mark Hiester

PLANNING COMMISSION

Chairperson-Fred Hammond

Vice Chairperson-Skylar

Gingrich

Secretary-Cullen Ketcham

Member-Carrie Swarr

Member-Donna Shaw

Alternate-Heidi Abbey Moyer

ZONING HEARING BOARD

Chairperson-Gerald Wolfe

Vice Chairperson-Aaron Kopp

Member-Bill Postel

Member-Catherine Minnerly

Member-Alan Shaffer
Alternate-Thomas Benjamin

NORTHWESTERN LANCASTER

COUNTY AUTHORITY

Chairperson-Barbara Horst

Vice-Chairperson-Cullen

Ketcham

Member-Phil Donmoyer

Member-Ryan Snyder

Member-Les Houck

NORTHERN LANCASTER COUNTY REGIONAL POLICE

Chief-Josh Kilgore

TOWNSHIP STAFF

Manager-Mark Hiester

Planner-Jennifer Tulonen

Zoning Officer-Matt Reeser

Finance-Connie Weidle

Sewer & Water-Barbara Grable

Receptionist-Stephanie

Whitehouse

File Clerk-Trevor Hiester
Public Works Director-Shannon Martin

Foreman-Clayton Fidler

Maint. Worker-Neil Fittery

Maint. Worker-Keith Iehle

Maint. Worker-Andrew Fisher

SEWAGE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

Charity Hain-

David Miller/Associates, Inc.

