



TOWNSHIPS TODAY

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
 BROUGHT TO YOU BY
 (INSERT YOUR TOWNSHIP NAME HERE)

PSATS Launches 'Townships Today' Newsletter to Help Your Residents Better Understand Township Government

Welcome to the introductory edition of *Townships Today*, a quarterly newsletter that PSATS has developed for you, its members, to help you provide your residents with in-depth information about local government issues and their impact on the community.

The newsletter is part of a broader public relations and education campaign that the Association has recently undertaken. Known as "Take It to the Streets," the campaign is focused on making Pennsylvanians more aware of the positive and innovative things happening in townships.

"Pennsylvania has a rich history, and townships have played a significant role in shaping it," PSATS Executive Director R. Keith Hite says. "For most Pennsylvanians, however, their education about township government ends with their high school civics class and picks up again with the local newspaper, which decides what it wants your residents to know about townships and the issues they're facing."

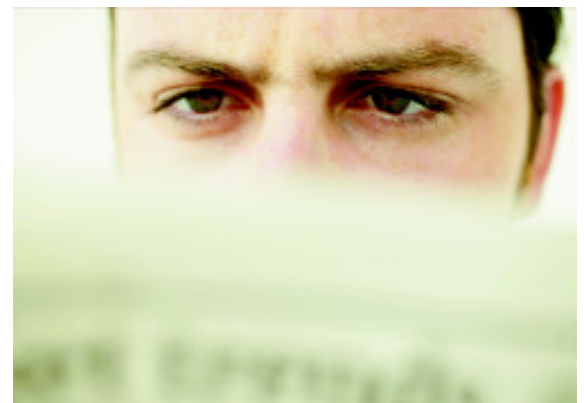
Townships Today, a newsletter written especially for your residents by the Association's staff, is the solution to this problem. Each edition will present the township perspective on timely local government issues.

"This is one more service we're providing to our members," Hite says, adding that the newsletter has two significant benefits. "Townships with newsletters will be able to take ad-

vantage of the Association's expertise to expand the information they're currently sharing with residents. At the same time, townships that don't publish a newsletter can start producing one with very little effort."

Upcoming issues of *Townships Today* will feature articles on mergers and consolidations, proposed state and federal laws that impact townships, and myths and facts about townships.

"The newsletter's sole focus will be local



Residents form their opinions of township government based on what they read in the local newspaper; but are they getting the full story? To overcome this information gap, PSATS is launching the *Townships Today* newsletter, which targets your residents, giving them the township perspective on timely local government issues.

Insert and Center
 Your Township
 Logo Here, If
 You Have One

Insert Name of
 Township Here
 Address
 City, State, and Zip
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government because the township story needs to be told — and told in a way so that your residents start understanding the challenges you face each day,” Hite says. “That’s why we’re tapping into the Association’s professional resources to make it easy for our members to do that.”

Each quarter, PSATS staff will write the articles, design the newsletter, and mail a hard copy to the Association’s members with detailed instructions on how to reproduce and distribute the publication, which will be posted at www.psats.org.

From there, townships will have several options, including personalizing *Townships Today* by inserting their township’s name and logo along with other information (*see first page*); copying or reprinting the newsletter as

is; or posting it on their Web site. Townships may also choose to download individual articles and insert them in their own newsletter.

PSATS has spent several months developing *Townships Today* and believes it will be a valuable communications tool, one that the Association hopes its members will use to inform their residents about local government issues and why they should care about them.

“It would be great if every township got behind this newsletter and put it in the hands of the people to set the record straight about local government,” Hite says. “If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. There are 5.4 million Pennsylvanians living in townships. That’s one big captive audience.”

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SHARE ARTICLE BELOW WITH YOUR RESIDENTS

TO WHET YOUR APPETITE for the first official issue of *Townships Today*, which will be mailed to your township in February 2007, we’re including the following article for you to share with your residents. It explains why township supervisors are sometimes forced to make unpopular land use decisions. (*See the attached instruction sheet for information on how to download the article from PSATS’ Web site.*)

‘JUST SAY NO’

To Comply with State Laws, Township Supervisors Sometimes Have to Make Unpopular Decisions

Wal-Mart is coming to town and wants to build its new store near your neighborhood. The township supervisors should just say no.

A pig farmer wants to set up shop down the road from your new dream home. The township supervisors should just say no.

A local businessman wants to open an adult bookstore a few doors away from your church. The township supervisors should just say no.

It’s that easy, right? Well, not really.

When making land use decisions, township supervisors must comply with a handful of state laws, including the granddaddy of them all, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, which was enacted in 1968 to guide local officials as they develop their communities.

And while the MPC, the courts, and the legislature have given township supervisors a certain amount of latitude and flexibility in making local land use decisions, they have been very firm about one thing: Townships with zoning ordinances must allow for every use.

In other words, townships must set aside land for such necessary things as homes and businesses and such controversial things as landfills and cell phone towers. And no matter how much residents may protest, township supervisors have very few options when faced with an unpopular use: If the applicant complies with state and local laws, the township must allow it.

“Township residents may not want an adult bookstore or a hog farm in their community, but the courts have determined that these are legitimate uses,” says Elam Herr, assistant executive director of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. “So unless a township wants to wind up in court, spending valuable tax dollars because it sidestepped a state law, it can’t ban or say no to these businesses. The supervisors’ hands are tied.

“Sometimes, that’s difficult for residents to understand,” he adds, “but townships must follow state and federal laws like anyone else or face the consequences.”

For more information about *Townships Today*, call Jill Ercolino, PSATS assistant director of communications, at (717) 763-0930.