Winter 2013

Westtown Train Station C.1890

The Gander—The Newsletter of Thornbury Township, Chester County

2014 Budget Outlook

2014 Budget Discussion

The Board of Supervisors has been busy this fall discussing the 2014 Budget. Since 2007, the Township has cut its annual budget by $295,000, or about 15%. With expected cost increases over the next few years, the Board must consider whether to reduce levels of service, or find additional revenue.

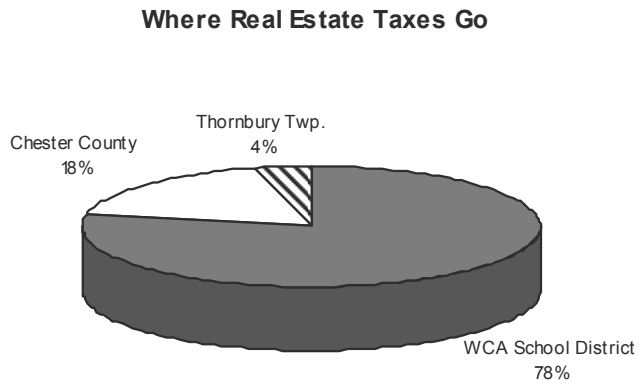
The Board has had a number of public sessions to discuss the budget, and has considered the real estate tax as a source of revenue in order to prevent a degradation of service to residents and businesses of the Township. In the discussion, the Board has made the following points:

Low Real Estate Taxes

The Board has made it a point to keep real estate taxes as low as possible. Currently, Thornbury Township enjoys one of the lowest real estate taxes in the region amongst Townships that have a full-time, full-service police force. Thornbury's tax rate is even lower than some nearby townships that do not have a full-time, full-service police force.

Understanding Your Real Estate Tax

Some people may not fully understand where their real estate taxes go. In Thornbury Township, your real estate tax is broken out as follows: 78% goes to the West Chester Area School District, 18% goes to Chester County, and 4% goes to the Township. In other words, the average home owner in Thornbury pays $6,368 in taxes, with $5,022 going to the school district, $1,120 going to the county, and $226 going to Thornbury Township.



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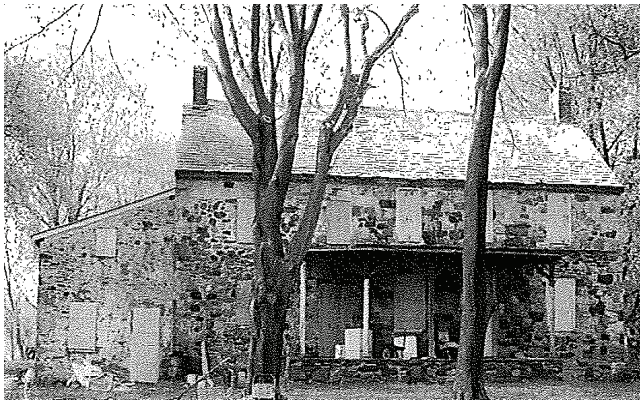
Squire Cheyney Farm:



In each issue of the Gander an article by the Thornbury Historic Preservation Commission tells about one of our Historic Home Resources.

When the Revolutionary War erupted in Boston in 1775, Thomas Cheyney was in the prime of his life, forty-three years old, married with nine children, the youngest only two years old. He was working his farm of 150 acres and living in the house he had inherited from his father, a house now gone, with its precise location unknown.

Cheyney was about to launch his public career. Two years later, as war bore down on Chester County; he was appointed Justice of Peace, which became a virtual lifelong position. Only months later, in September 1777, Cheyney was catapulted into American Revolutionary lore. The British Army was advancing from the head of the Chesapeake through Chester County toward the rebellious colonies' largest city, Philadelphia. Cheyney certainly knew of the armies' proximity and spent the evening of September 10 in Marshallton. The next morning, as the armies were forming for battle, Cheyney was riding along the Brandywine toward Chadds Ford and to his surprise saw British troops crossing the river far north of where the Continental Army was positioned. Cheyney rushed to General Washington to warn him of the grave danger of being enveloped. Washington lost the Battle of Brandywine but saved much of his army. While the British took Philadelphia, and spent the winter enjoying the city's creature comforts and young belles, the Continental Army shivered in Valley Forge and prepared to fight again.

Having cast his lot with the cause for independence, Cheyney received a series of appointments. A month after the battle, he became a sub-lieutenant; a county civilian post responsible for organizing and equipping the militia. A week later he was appointed a commissioner to seize Loyalists' personal property, and in December joined others in taking subscriptions to finance the Continental Army. In 1784, a year after the war's formal end, Cheyney was commissioned Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, in recognition of his patriotism and judicial mien. Three years later, Cheyney capped his political career when he voted in the Ratifying Convention in Philadelphia to adopt the proposed U.S. Constitution and have Pennsylvania become a member of a new union.

By this time, Thomas Cheyney was moving into his mid-fifties with an impressive list of offices to his credit. He was the most eminent citizen of Thornbury Township, a successful farmer and an esteemed public servant. It is about this point that neighbors began calling him Squire, in the fashion of English country gentlemen. Today we often forget that Cheyney's given name was Thomas, that Squire was only an honorific, but very deserved, title.

About 1797, Cheyney's youngest son, William, married and offered to stay on the farm to help his parents. Squire Cheyney responded by building a stone house, the one that stands today on the edge of the Squire Cheyney Park on Cheyney Road. It was less than half the size of the house that we see today. The three easternmost bays are the original house, which expresses the era's Georgian obsession for symmetry with a window flanking each side of the entrance door. By eighteenth-century standards, its four downstairs rooms and upstairs chambers afforded sufficient space for two families. Cheyney covered the randomly laid stone with stucco and inserted a pent roof between the floors.

Cheyney also built a springhouse on the small stream running through the property. This springhouse, large by eighteenth-century standards, remains the only historic structure in the township park. Squire Cheyney's study of agricultural treatises convinced him and his son about 1804 to build a barn near the new house. The original structure, still at the core of the present barn, was a stone bank barn with a pent roof in the English tradition. By this time, with the squire in his 70s, William would have been doing most of the farm work.

Squire Cheyney died in January 1811 and is buried in the cemetery that he laid out a few years earlier overlooking the farm. His grave marker remains there today, close to Cheyney Road.

Squire Cheyney's son and grandson successively inherited the farm, and enlarged the house to its present size and added to both the barn and the springhouse. The squire's grandson, Thomas W. Cheyney, died intestate in 1866 and the farm's fate was tied up until Thomas Dallett, a Philadelphia merchant, bought it at Sheriff's sale in 1875.

The farmstead remained in the Dallett family until the 1990s, when they sold 24 acres along Cheyney Road to the township for a park.

Township Information

The 2014 Thornbury Township Real Estate Tax Bills and Fire Hydrant bills will be mailed on March 1, 2014
The discount period ends on April, 30 2014.

Property Owners Must Register Rentals

Many property owners may not realize that all rental properties must be registered with the Township and there are penalties involved for those who choose to ignore the rental registration.

Thornbury Township Code, Chapter 96 states "It shall be the duty of the owner of every rental unit located within the Township to prepare and file a semi-annual report with the Township Secretary which shall contain the complete name and address of each person 18 years of age and older who is currently residing in each rental unit owned by the person required to file the report."

Thornbury Township is trying to update its rental information list. If you are not registered with the Township please call 610-399-1425 for a rental registration Form. If your property is listed, please continue to update the Township with any change of residents.

For Cold Winter Nights:

PUMPKIN SPICE WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE

4-5 cups whole milk
12 ounces white chocolate, chopped
4 teaspoons cocoa powder
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup pure pumpkin puree
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cardamom
1/8 teaspoon allspice
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger

Squire Cheyney Farm Con't:

The farmstead remained in the Dallett family until the 1990s, when they sold 24 acres along Cheyney Road to the township for a park. About 2003 the Dalletts made a sales agreement with Orleans Homes for the balance of the farm. Two years later in a development agreement with the township for the Preserve at Squire Cheyney subdivision, Orleans committed to deed 16 acres, including the house and barn, to the township. This occurred in 2012. Part of the land is being added to the Squire Cheyney Park, and the house and barn are currently being offered for sale as a private residence as the best way to preserve them. (See www.squirecheyneyhouseforsale.com.)

Caption

House: The three bays to the right compose the original c. 1797 house; the doorway is hidden behind the tree. William Cheyney added the two bays to the left c. 1815. The shed at the end was built c. 1830.

Barn: The original barn is hidden within the many later additions.

Springhouse: Squire Cheyney built the springhouse c. 1798. It was enlarged to the right, probably by his son William.

2014 Budget Discussion Cont'd

The Services You Get

If you were to receive a receipt for the services supported in part by your real estate tax dollars, it would read similar to the following, using the 2013 average residential real estate tax bill as an example:

Police Services:	$120
Customer Service, Complaint Response, Project Mgmnt, Finance & Budgeting, Administration of all other services:	$42
Gov't Facilities, Equipment, Insurance:	$17
Road Maintenance:	$13
Fire Services:	$9
Road Paving:	$9
Consultant Service:	$8
Park Maintenance:	$5
Code Enforcement:	$1.25
Park & Rec Activities:	$1
Sanitation/Recyling:	$0.50
Historic Preservation:	$0.25

Total Avg Annual Real Estate Tax Bill = $226

Known Cost Increases

Over the next five years, the Township will experience increases in costs of service. Many of the increases are already known because they are part of multi-year contracts that are already in place.

The most significant known cost increases are in the areas of police and fire protection, which the Board feels are basic services, and are the responsibilities of the Township, in the interest of public safety. Specifically, the contract with Westtown East Goshen Regional Police Department has cost increases built into it, with the 2018 contract year requiring $160,708 more than the 2013 contract year. In addition, the fire services contract with West Chester Borough will be an additional $27,737 compared to the 2013 contract year. Additional known cost increases include the rent for the Township building, with an additional $6,010 per year by 2018.

In addition to the known cost increases, are the unknown cost increases. For example, the costs of petroleum, stone, road salt, and labor impact everything from road paving and road maintenance, to park improvements and stormwater improvements.

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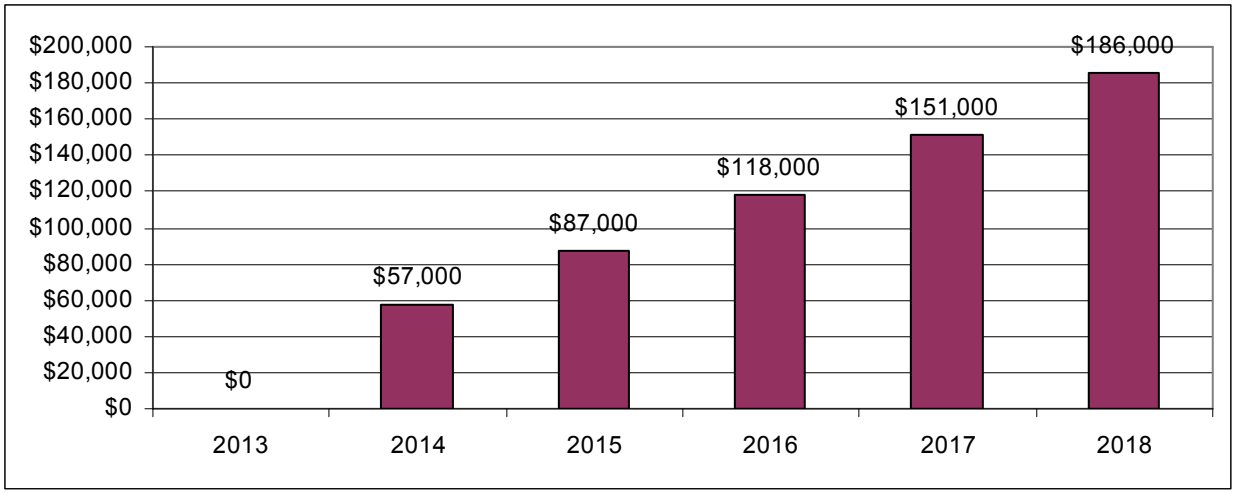
Additional Funding Needed to Support Future Police and Fire Services



2014 Budget Discussion Cont'd

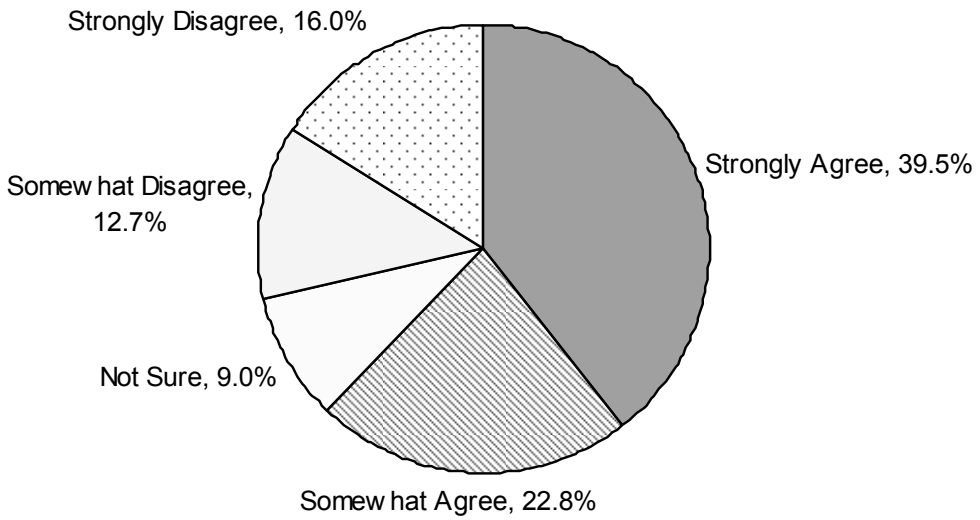
2014 Budget

Without additional revenue, the 2014 Budget would show a net loss of $37,743. The Board has discussed an increase of 0.155 mills in the real estate tax rate, which equates to an annual increase of $41.81 for the average homeowner. Since much of the discussion has centered on the cost increases in the police contract, the Board has moved forward with the confidence of the 2012 survey on police services. This survey was township-wide, and received an overwhelming response rate of 26% of all households, meaning its results were very reliable.

A portion of the survey addressed the expected cost increases for providing police services to the Township. Specifically, when asked if the survey respondent was willing to support the cost of full-service police, 62% reported they would be willing to do so. Additionally, when asked if they would accept a decrease in level of service in order to prevent a tax increase, 60.5% disagreed or somewhat disagreed. And finally, when asked what a "reasonable" amount of additional taxes would be in order to maintain full police services, 75.8% self-reported an amount in the range of $125 more, spread over three years.

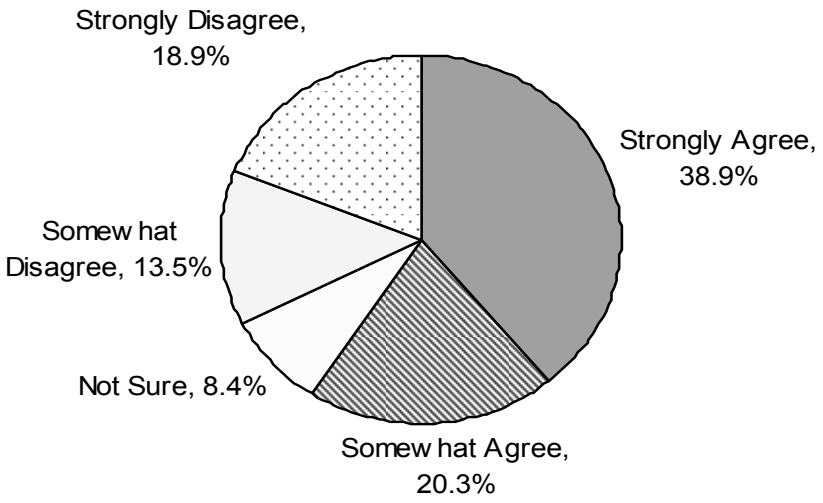
The Board of Supervisors values the input received from Township residents, and has constructed a 2014 budget with that input in mind. A copy of the proposed budget can be seen on the Township's website at www.thornburytwp.com . Additional information about the 2014 Budget discussions can also be found on the website. The Board expects to vote on the 2014 Budget on December 17th at 7pm at the Township Building.

Q: Are you willing to support the cost of police services?



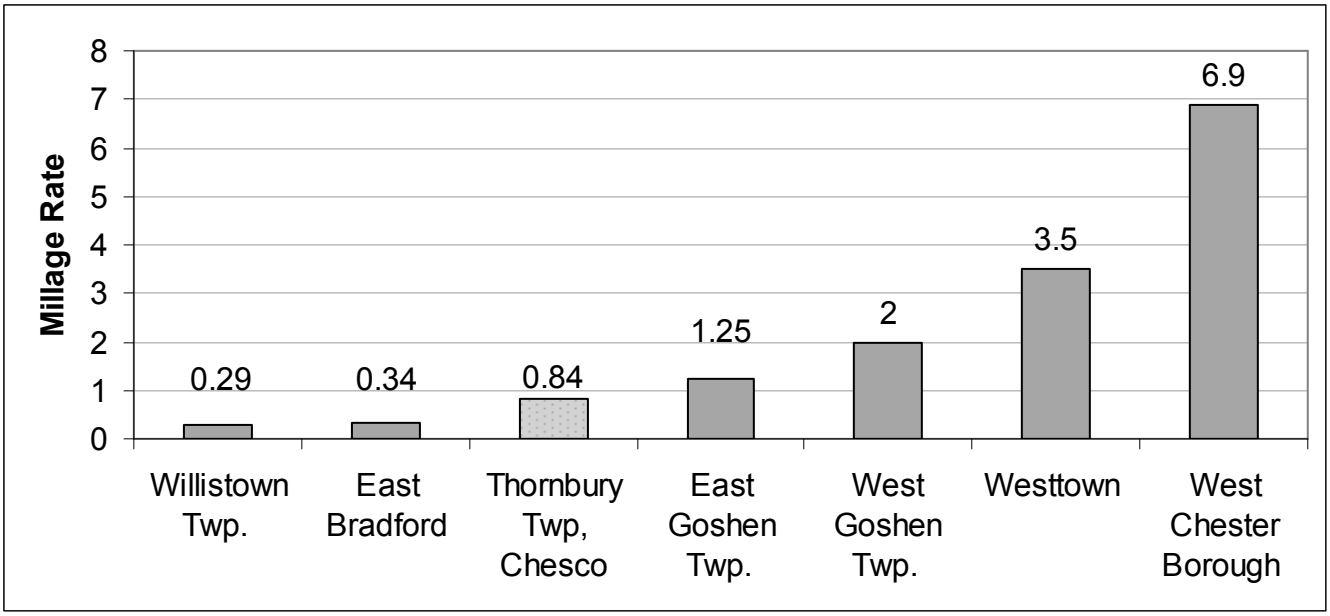
Source: 2012 Thornbury Twp. Police Services Survey

Q: Would you be willing to pay up to an additional $125 per year in taxes, spread across the next three years, to support the cost of police services?



Source: 2012 Thornbury Twp. Police Services Survey

How We Stack Up in Property Tax Rates vs. Nearby Townships with Full-Service Police Departments



Serve On a Township Commission!

The Township has the following commissions:

- Planning Commission
- Park & Recreation Commission
- Zoning Hearing Board

Visit www.thornburytwp.com/volunteer.htm for more info

Driving Safely this Winter and all Year Long....

With the Winter season firmly upon us there are a few things to remember to prepare yourselves and your loved ones for a safe time while driving:

1. Clear ALL snow and ice off of your windows, lights, roof, trunk and hood areas….not only will this increase your vision but it will also prevent snow or ice from dislodging from your vehicle and potentially causing an accident. In Pennsylvania if snow or ice from your vehicle causes an accident involving death or serious injuries, you could be liable and given a citation with a fine of between $250-$1000.

2. Prepare your vehicle for Winter driving by ensuring that you have tires with adequate tread depth to provide traction in snowy and icy conditions. Put a winter ready kit in your car that contains the following items:

* Flashlight with extra batteries
* Flares or reflective triangles
* Jumper cables
* Cell phone with extra batteries
* Extra car fuses
* Rags or paper towels
* General first aid kit
* Blanket, extra set of clothes
* Winter formula window washer solvent
* Non-clumping kitty litter to use for extra traction
* Ice-scraper, snow brush and shovel
* Tire chains

3. USE your headlights….By PA law you are required to use your headlights between sunset and sunrise as well as when you cannot discern something on the highway from 1000 feet away due to weather conditions (ice snow, rain, etc) and anytime that your windshield wipers are in use due to weather conditions. If in doubt turn them on…it makes you more visible to those around you and your surroundings more visible to you.

4. If the weather conditions are questionable….DON'T drive unless it is absolutely necessary. By reducing the amount of traffic on the road you allow emergency vehicles to get around more easily and have fewer non-emergency calls to respond to as well as allowing the plow truck operators greater ease in getting the streets cleaned up quickly and safely.

5. And lastly, this one applies all year long….PA has what is known as the "Steer Clear Law". When approaching a scene with emergency vehicles present (police, fire, ambulance, tow trucks, etc) you are required to move over or if that is not possible you must SLOW down. Those in violation are subject to fines and possible license suspension.

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Mike Aiello

Fire Marshal
F. David Smiley

Attentions all pets in the Township!

Trevor would like for some of his other friends in the animal world from the Township to submit some tips or ideas they would like to share with the residents of Thornbury Township to

tdestefano@thornburytwp.com. Make sure to attach a picture. Again your pet doesn't have to be a dog or cat, any creature you call family we would love to hear from.