

PSATS CONFERENCE – 2018  
Workshop Notes – Shirley Yannich, Supervisor

**PSATS Resolutions**

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) is a townships' lobbying group. The counties typically hold a meeting in autumn and spring wherein they receive proposed resolutions from townships regarding governmental issues facing their municipality. There were 30 new proposed resolutions and 22 resolutions about to expire. The following are some of the items that interested Warrington supported by PSATS and the general assembly consisting of approximately 2,000 attendees. Supervisor Carol Baker was the representative for Warrington.

- Increase the charge for a police report from \$15 to \$25.
- Restore funding to the state's D.A.R.E program for townships over 10,000
- Increase the cap for dedicated ambulance real estate tax from 0.5 mils to 1.5 mils, before a referendum is required.
- Multiple resolutions involving prevailing wages, workers' compensation, volunteer fire and emergency services, supervisor as employee and taxation.
- Reducing the need for a shadow vehicle in mowing operations along roadsides in certain circumstances.

The most important two resolutions about to expire were to 1) oppose any legislation that would dissolve municipalities into unincorporated territory governed by the county and 2) oppose any state or federal legislation that would pre-empt a municipality's authority to make local land use decisions.

**The Environmental Rights Amendment: What You Need to Know**

Attorneys from the law firm of Curtin & Heefner presented this workshop. It covered the "Legal explanation of standards for assessing compliance of municipal actions with the environmental rights amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution" (taken from the slide presentation handout).

The amendment addressed Article 1, Section 27 of the Environmental Rights which gives "People the right to clean air, pure water and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment" (slide 3). The amendment was the result of a law suit known as *Robinson Twp v. Commonwealth* involving Act 13 as it related to uniform zoning provisions levied by the state. The amendment protects all future generations through a trust, trustee obligation and trustee fiduciary duties, the point being that Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people including generations yet to come.

## **DIY Township Home Movies**

This workshop was given by a Production Manager of a video, web business. For a township broadcasting to their residents via social media the next step is to prepare videos. We were taught how long to make the video, less than two minutes, use the videos, essential components and tips on filming. Township Manager, Barry Luber attended this workshop with me and plans to implement videos into our Facebook and Tweeter accounts.

## **Why Do Public Sector Employees Have So Many Rights?**

This workshop was given by two attorneys proficient in labor law. A comparison was made between employees in the private verse public sectors. The point was that government employees remain citizens with rights under the United State Constitution; such as the right of free speech. The workshop covered hiring in the public sector, promotions and demotions, wage and hour, exceptions to at-will employment doctrine firing and post terminations rights.

Regarding free speech there is a balancing act. “In order to balance the speech rights of a public sector employee and the state’s interest as an employer; 1) the employee must be speaking as a citizen; 2) speech must be on a matter of public concern; and 3) the interest in expressing oneself on the matter must not be outweighed by any injury the speech could cause to the state” (slide 12).

## **How Technology and Demographics Are Changing Our Community**

A land use planner gave this workshop. He compared the changing generations separated into a ten year demographic model starting in the 1950s and going forward. Each generation brought something different in land use. Moving from the changes in demographics the presenter spoke to the jobs that will ultimately be lost; namely; jobs that are Dull, Dirty and Dangerous. He spoke to the driverless automobile and projected that traffic lights will become obsolete over time.

A township should be looking at the effects of the fifth generation of technology. We should be registering our AirBnB locations and Drone owner. These two components are essential to provide safe haven for stranded people during an emergency. We should be looking at the changing in our population and the economy; cultural diversity, lifestyle characteristics, E-Commerce and retail options.

The last slide said it best: “Key lesson is transitions are constant: only the speed varies. Reliant communities do the following; Repurpose, Renew, Reconnect all the time.”