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Business District Workshop on Jan. 22

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JANUARY 2009

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Business District Revitalization Workshop on Jan. 22

I will host a workshop at 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22 for local business owners, public officials, and civic group members, as well as the general public, who are interested in improving and revitalizing local business districts (e.g. Oakmont and Manoa). The workshop will be held at the new Manoa Elementary School, Manoa and Eagle roads, in Havertown. Reservations are not necessary.

Representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, the Delaware County Commerce Center, the federal Small Business Administration, and the Widener Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will discuss resources and programs available for interested parties to breathe new life into our business communities, addressing both physical/streetscape revitalization as well as organizational improvements that can strengthen your businesses.

Please call my office if you have any questions.

Pa. Office of Open Records Now Operational

Starting on Jan. 1, 2009, the newly organized Pennsylvania Office of Open Records began assisting the public in accessing public records across the Commonwealth. The office was established by the General Assembly in February 2008.

Records are directly accessible from the agencies who maintain them. The Open Records office can assist you in accessing these records if you encounter any difficulties.

The new law declares that all state, county and local records are public unless specifically exempted and shifts the burden to the government agency to prove why the record should not be made public.

If a government agency withholds records in bad faith it can be fined up to \$1,500, and an agency or public official who does not comply with a court order to release records can be fined \$500 a day.

The law is retroactive and covers records already collected. For the first time, the Pennsylvania legislature will be subject to the law.

There may be a fee for the duplication and certification of records which reflects the costs involved in retrieving and copying the record.

Gov. Rendell appointed Terry Mutchler, an attorney and former journalist, who previously served as the Public Access Counselor in Illinois, to head the office.

A Web site has been created to address questions and concerns regarding accessing records at openrecords.state.pa.us. Also, the office can be contacted directly by e-mail at openrecords@state.pa.us or by phone at 717-346-9903.

Claim What's Yours!

The Pennsylvania Department of Treasury is seeking the owners of more than \$1 billion in unclaimed property.

Each year, the state Treasury receives millions of dollars in unclaimed property from abandoned bank accounts, forgotten stocks, uncashed checks, etc. The Treasury maintains custody of the unclaimed property until the rightful owner or heir is found. Last year alone, the Treasury returned \$88.8 million to more than 63,000 owners.

If you think you may have unclaimed property, use the Treasury's Unclaimed Property Online Inquiry Form at www.patreasury.org or call 1-800-222-2046.

There is no time limit to claim your property. If at any time you can prove ownership, Treasury will return your property to you at no charge.

My office can assist with the notarization requirements and forwarding your completed paperwork to Treasury.

Assistance for Seniors Available at Local Office

The County Office of Services for the Aging (COSA) is a valuable resource for seniors in Delaware County.

COSA coordinates programs and services for all residents over the age of 60, especially those who are frail, living alone and are functionally disabled. Helping seniors stay in their homes as long as possible by providing or coordinating various in-home services and augmenting the care already being provided by family and friends is one of its main goals. Senior centers, nursing home eligibility determination, and legal referrals are some of the other services offered by COSA.

COSA does not handle health insurance-related questions. For assistance with these matters, contact AP-PRISE at 610-237-6222, ext. 24.

COSA is located at 206 Eddystone Ave., 2nd Floor in Eddystone. You can contact COSA by phone at 610-490-1300 or 1-800-416-4504, by e-mail at COSA@co.delaware.pa.us or by visiting its Web site at www.delcosa.org.

Join my E-mail Update List

I maintain an e-mail list of constituents who wish to receive periodic e-mail updates from me about specific legislation, issues, local meetings and events, and state and local programs and services that are announced between publication of my newsletters. If you would like to be added to my e-mail list, please send me an e-mail at greg@gregvitali.com.



New Haverford Township Maps Available

My office has printed revised street maps of Haverford Township.

The maps include the newest ward and precinct lines, according to the final redistricting decision, released in late 2008. The maps also include new streets in Haverford Township from the past few years.

We have comparable Radnor and Marple maps as well. Please stop by or contact my office for a free map.

FREE Notary Services at District Office

If you are a resident of the 166th Legislative District, you can have most official documents notarized FREE in my district office. Please call ahead to make sure our notary is in the office and can accommodate your type of document. Notary work is done most weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The person whose signature is to be notarized must sign the document in person, in the presence of the notary, and provide proof of identity such as a valid driver's license, photo ID card or passport.

Please let my staff know if witnesses are needed, in addition to the notary, for your documents. We also ask that residents observe a five-signature limit.

My office is on the second floor. If you are unable to climb stairs, please let us know when you call ahead and we can arrange to have our notary meet you on the ground floor.

2009 House of Representatives Calendars Available

Free copies of the 2009 House of Representatives calendars are available now in my district office. Area residents are invited to stop by and pick up one of these calendars, which include color photographs of the state's Capitol complex and the House of Representatives chamber, and list all major holidays. The calendars make a great gift for a friend or family member. Due to limited numbers, our office can provide only two calendars per household.



Home Heating Assistance Program Expands

The Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been expanded to help more families pay their heating bills this winter. LIHEAP provides home heating energy assistance grants and crisis grants. The income limits to qualify for this program have been raised and the amount of the individual grants has also been increased. For example, the income limit for a family of four has increased to \$44,443 and crisis assistance grants now reach a maximum of \$800.

Cash grants help families pay their heating bill by providing funds directly to the utility company. Crisis grants—available 24 hours a day—help with emergency situations such as broken heating equipment, leaking lines, and termination of utility service.

A missed payment is not necessary to qualify for a grant and no lien will be placed on the home.

Residents of Delaware County may obtain more information from the Delaware County Assistance Office at 610-447-3099. The office is located at 701 Crosby St., Suite A, in Chester. To view income limits for the program, apply online, or download paper applications, you may visit the Web site: www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/LIHEAP.

2009 Delaware County Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Events

If you are looking for a place to dispose of your household hazardous waste items, please see the following schedule for Delaware County. All drop-off events will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., rain or shine. Household hazardous waste includes household products that are labeled poisonous, toxic, flammable, caustic, corrosive, reactive or explosive. Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs, or CFLs, should also be recycled as household hazardous waste.

Items NOT accepted include latex (water-based) paint, explosives, ammunition, appliances, radioactive waste, tires, infectious waste and unidentified waste.

The 2009 dates for Delaware County are:

March 28 (Saturday)

Marple Transfer Station, Marpit Drive & Sussex Boulevard, Broomall

No computer equipment or TVs will be accepted

Sept. 19 (Saturday)

Covanta Delaware Valley, 2nd & Harwick streets, City of Chester

No computer equipment or TVs will be accepted

April 25 (Saturday) **

Emergency Services Training Center, 1600 Calcon Hook Road, Sharon Hill

Oct. 8 (Thursday) **

Rose Tree Park, North Providence Road (Route 352), Media

** Computer equipment and TVs will be accepted at these events (maximum 3 systems per vehicle)

For additional information on these or other HHW events in Pennsylvania, you can contact the Household Hazardous Waste hotline at 1-800-346-4242, or visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: HHW.

Single-Stream Recycling Comes to Haverford Township

Beginning this month, all recycling is combined in one container and recycling collection has been reduced to one day a week.

Haverford Township has mailed out calendars, but if you did not receive yours, the calendars are available on my Web site: www.pahouse.com/vitali. Here is a summary: if you recycled on Mondays and Thursdays in 2008, your collection day is Thursday; if you recycled on Tuesdays and Fridays, your collection day is Friday. If you previously recycled only on Thursdays or only on Fridays, your pick-up day remains the same.

In addition to using one container, more items have been added to the list of recyclable items. Now green and brown glass and plastics #1-7 are collected. At the bottom of this article, I provide examples of the newly accepted plastics.

The township has switched to larger recycling containers. There is an \$18 fee for the new containers; however, the township has free decals available you can use on spare trash cans rather than purchasing a container. Decals and containers are available at the township building in the Public Works office building at 2325 Darby Road in Havertown, Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

I am working to secure a \$10,000 grant from the Community Revitalization Program under the state Department of Community & Economic Development to further defray the cost of containers.

Besides clear environmental benefits of increasing recycling in our communities, there may be a financial savings. The county has enacted trash disposal fees that will cost the township \$30 a ton to dump. By recycling more materials, we minimize our trash and our trash dumping fees.

Examples of types of plastic products

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| #1: soda bottles, oven-ready meal trays | #5: medicine bottles, aerosol caps, drinking straws |
| #2: milk bottles, detergent bottles, grocery/trash/retail bags | #6: packaging Styrofoam peanuts, plastic tableware and cups |
| #3: plastic pipes, outdoor furniture, liquid detergent bottles | #7: certain kinds of food containers, Tupperware, any other plastics not listed in #1-6 |
| #4: dry cleaning bags, produce bags | |