

Executive Budget Summary

November 14, 2024

TO: The Northampton Township Board of Supervisors

Introduction

The Administration is pleased to submit the proposed 2025 Budget for your consideration. The budget document consists of three sections:

Letter of Transmittal

The Letter of Transmittal is an overview of the budget generally referred to as the Budget Message. It highlights areas of importance in the financial section, department programs and services, infrastructure improvements, cash position, and revenue and expense projections.

Operating, Capital, and Trust Funds Budgets

The proposed 2024 Budget includes 20 Funds detailing projected revenues and proposed expenditures for the new fiscal year. A three-year history of audited revenues and expenditures and year-end estimates for the current year provide trends to guide budget proposals. Fund balances show cash position. A summary of the General Fund by revenue and expense category offers an overview of the Township's largest operating fund, and a Summary of Operating, Capital, and Trust Funds provide a high-level snapshot of all Township operations.

Budget Schedules

The Budget Schedules provide detail on proposed appropriations in each Fund, and the alphabetical index is an easy way to reference details for specific line items. This information supports budget projections.

The Budget Format

The Budget is prepared in a line-item format using the Pennsylvania Chart of Accounts for local governments published by the State Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). This format provides uniformity of account numbers and titles across departments and Funds. Maintaining this uniformity in each annual budget improves accuracy in budget projections across all fund and accounts.

There are individual operating funds for each specific tax levy, and separate proprietary funds for refuse services and Country Club operations. The *Result from Operations* in the General Fund represents the difference between annual revenues and expenditures before inter-fund transfers for capital appropriations, or appropriations to other operating budgets.

Capital appropriations are shown in separate funds to minimize fluctuations in the operating budgets due to variations in capital spending from year to year.

Budget Summary

The Township has had a very busy 2024. Residents witnessed the final construction and dedication of two new fire stations to house career staff serving the community on a 24-hour, 7-day per week basis, the resurfacing of 10-miles of the Township road system, the assignment of a second School Resource Officer at Holland Middle School, the adoption of a 3-year Strategic Plan for the Library, and a restructuring of senior center operations under supervision by the Parks and Recreation Department.

In addition, on-going negotiations with the International Union of Operating Engineers representing Public Works employees will ultimately yield a new collective bargaining agreement that will promote worker safety and training, and allow employees to advance based on their skills and abilities rather than length of service.

The Township was also successful in attracting a developer to purchase and restore the former Mill Race Inn property, and construct luxury condominiums on the site. The plan is currently working its way through the plan approval process. The property had been abandoned in 1999 when it was flooded by the Mill Creek during Hurricane Floyd. Through a similar Agreement with the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority, the Township is currently seeking proposals to redevelop the former police station on Township Road to enhance the commercial tax base.

The Township has at least 14 significant infrastructure projects underway in various stages of engineering design and state permitting. These capital projects often require years of planning and time to secure permits and identify funding, particularly when Federal and state grants are involved. For example, the roundabout and Township Road extension project at Bustleton Pike and Second Street Pike started with concept plans in 2014. Construction has finally been scheduled by PennDOT for 2026. The bridge replacement on Buck Road in Holland is also scheduled for construction in 2026. The Buck Road Streetscape Project, including the bridge replacement, was also a project conceived in 2014-2015 timeframe.

Other infrastructure improvements funded solely by State grants include construction of a roundabout at Jacksonville and Almshouse Roads, and reconstruction of two detention basins to improve groundwater recharge as required by the Township's DEP Stormwater Management System (MS4) permit.

The proposed 2025 Budget continues to further the Board of Supervisors vision and priorities for public safety and infrastructure improvements. Appropriations include installation of a new traffic signal at Newtown-Richboro Road and St. Leonard's Road, a flashing pedestrian crossing signal at Fir Drive, sidewalk construction connecting residential neighborhoods to downtown Richboro, and numerous upgrades to traffic signal systems and school crossings to improve motorist and pedestrian safety. Many of these projects are funded with State grants.

In addition, the Budget includes hiring three additional police officers to enhance public safety in the community. One of these positions will fill a vacancy created by the School Resource Officer assignment to Holland Middle School. Two positions will increase the number of officers on each patrol shift.

For the sixth year in a row the Budget will fund resurfacing 10-miles of the Township's 182-mile road system.

Other Township services such as road maintenance, recreation programs, park maintenance, refuse and recycling collections, library, and senior center operations will remain unchanged. Payments on short-term leases and long-term bonds will also remain unchanged.

Wage increases in 2025 are budgeted 3.5% for both union and non-union workers. Medical insurance rates will increase less than 3% and there are modest appropriation changes for materials and supplies, professional services, utilities, and insurance. Country Club operations continue to be self-supporting and funded by fees charges for services. There is no proposed increase to the refuse collection fee and no proposed reduction in any Township services.

The proposed 2025 Budget for all funds is \$65.4 Million. This includes \$44 Million for operations, \$13.5 Million for the Proprietary Funds (Refuse Fund and Country Club Fund), \$5.2 Million for capital equipment and projects, and \$2.8 Million for fiduciary obligations.

Public Safety Remains a Top Priority

The first priority and obligation of any local government elected body is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. The construction and staffing of two state-of-the-art fire stations, increasing police personnel, and placing a dedicated ambulance unit in Holland demonstrates the Board of Supervisors commitment to its primary responsibility.

These important decisions have already paid dividends in lower response time to emergencies and the availability of more qualified emergency services personnel. Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad Chief Jason Dowd recently stated that the placement of a dedicated ambulance unit at the Holland Fire Station has reduced response time to medical emergencies by more than 30 percent. The Fire Department reports an even more dramatic reduction in response time.

Speaking at the Fire Station dedication ceremony on October 19, 2024 Deputy Chief of the State Fire Commissioner's Office Harvey Boyer stated that *"In today's fire service, quick response is critical. The time frame of fire spread in today's world has increased exponentially. It isn't the same fire it was 30 years ago"*.

Construction and staffing of the new fire stations and a dedicated ambulance unit in Holland ensures rapid deployment and faster response times to all areas of the Township in emergency situations. For the first time, our response to a fire call is meeting two important National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards: 1) to have firefighter personnel leave the fire station within 80 seconds of dispatch, and 2) to have 15 qualified personnel on-scene in 9 minutes. This is a remarkable achievement.

It is important to note that the Township still relies on additional support from adjacent municipal agencies in major emergency situations such as building fires. A County-wide system of mutual aid for police, fire, and ambulance services is the backbone of all emergency response. Northampton Township relies on our neighboring departments for assistance and our department responds in-kind. As municipalities throughout the County and in the region address the volunteer shortage and hire additional emergency response personnel, public safety for our residents will also improve.

The cost of providing additional resources for public safety has increased, but these services are built on the risk profile of protecting more than 40,000 residents. Emergency preparedness and responsive public safety services rely on the availability well-equipped and well-staffed personnel being prepared to respond to emergency situations. Additional police officers, full-time firefighters, and dedicated ambulance units increase public safety.

The proposed 2025 Budget will provide the financial resources necessary to further this goal.

The Operating Funds

Appropriations

The Township has 8 Operating Funds that account for the annual cost of all township services. These include police, fire, and emergency medical services, planning and zoning, finance, administration, the library, parks and recreation, road and facility maintenance, and debt service.

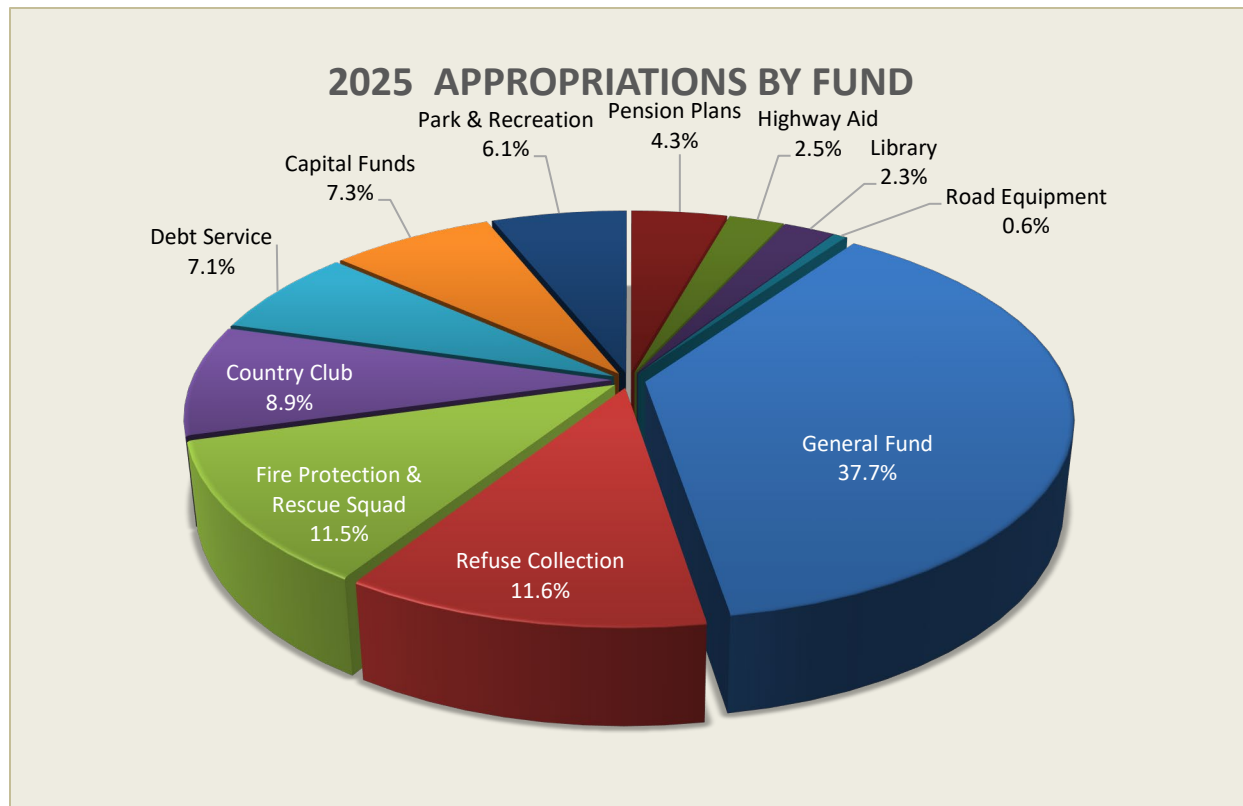
Total 2025 appropriations for government services in the Operating Funds is approximately \$45.8 Million, an increase of \$2.6 Million over the prior year. \$1.9 Million of this increase is for police, fire and emergency medical services, and \$431,000 is for parks and recreation services. The latter includes senior center operations that are now part of the Recreation Department budget. An additional \$300,000 is for road maintenance services.

Proposed appropriations for government services, excluding capital infrastructure and proprietary funds, are as follows:

Administration/Finance	\$2.20 Million	4.8%
Police Services	\$12.1 Million	26.4%
Fire and Rescue Services	\$8.11 Million	17.7%
Public Works	\$8.10 Million	17.7%
Code Enforcement/Zoning	\$1.42 Million	3.1%
Debt Service	\$4.63 Million	10.1%
Parks and Recreation/Senior Center	\$4.22 Million	9.2%
Library	\$1.63 Million	3.6%
Interfund Transfer to Capital	\$3.40 Million	7.4%

\$45.8 Million

The following chart shows total proposed 2025 appropriations for all Township Funds:

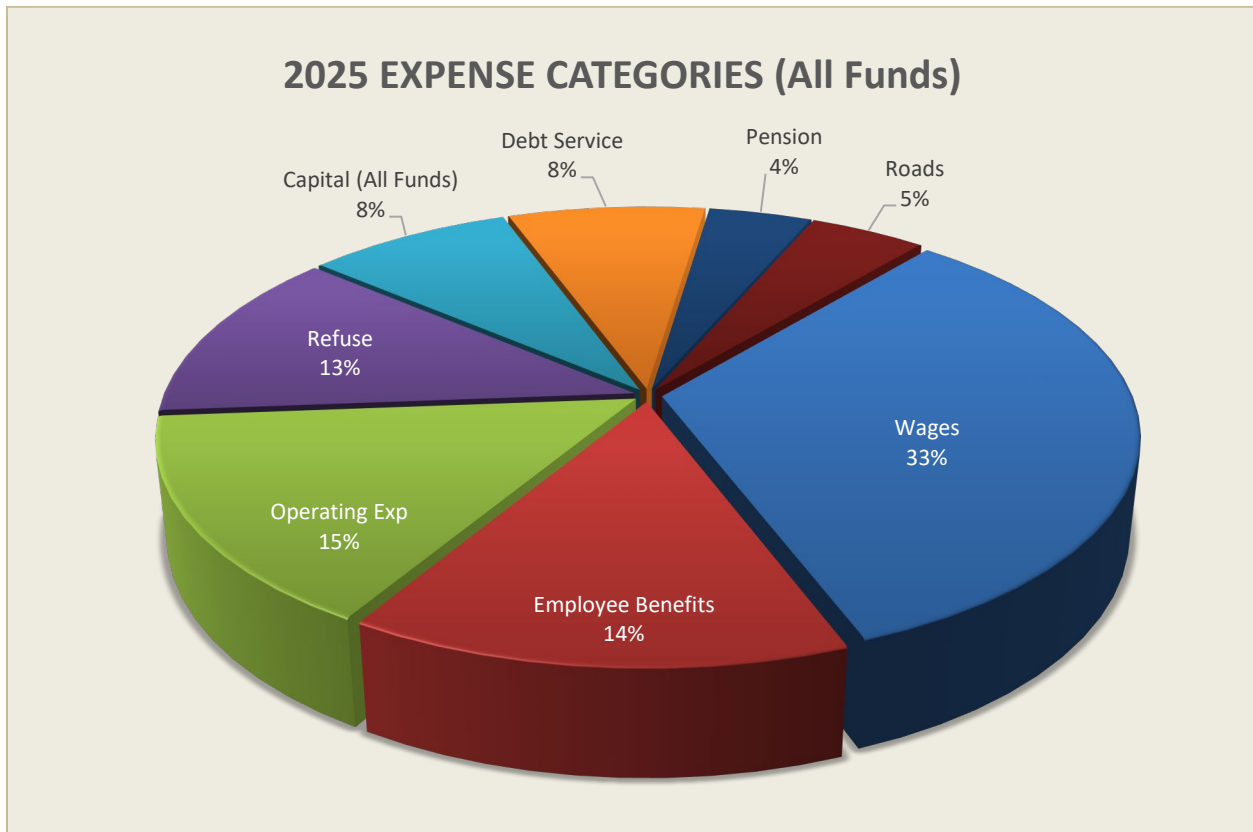


The total cost for personnel, including employee wages and benefits, is the single largest expense in the Township budget, representing 51% of total appropriations.

Operating expenses including insurance, utilities, legal and engineering services, repairs and maintenance, materials and supplies, contracted services, motor fuels, road salt, paving materials, minor equipment, and training represent an additional 20% of the total budget.

Refuse collection and waste disposal services are 13% of the total budget. Debt service represents an additional 8% of the total, and capital appropriations represent 8%.

The following chart shows total appropriations for all Funds by expense category:



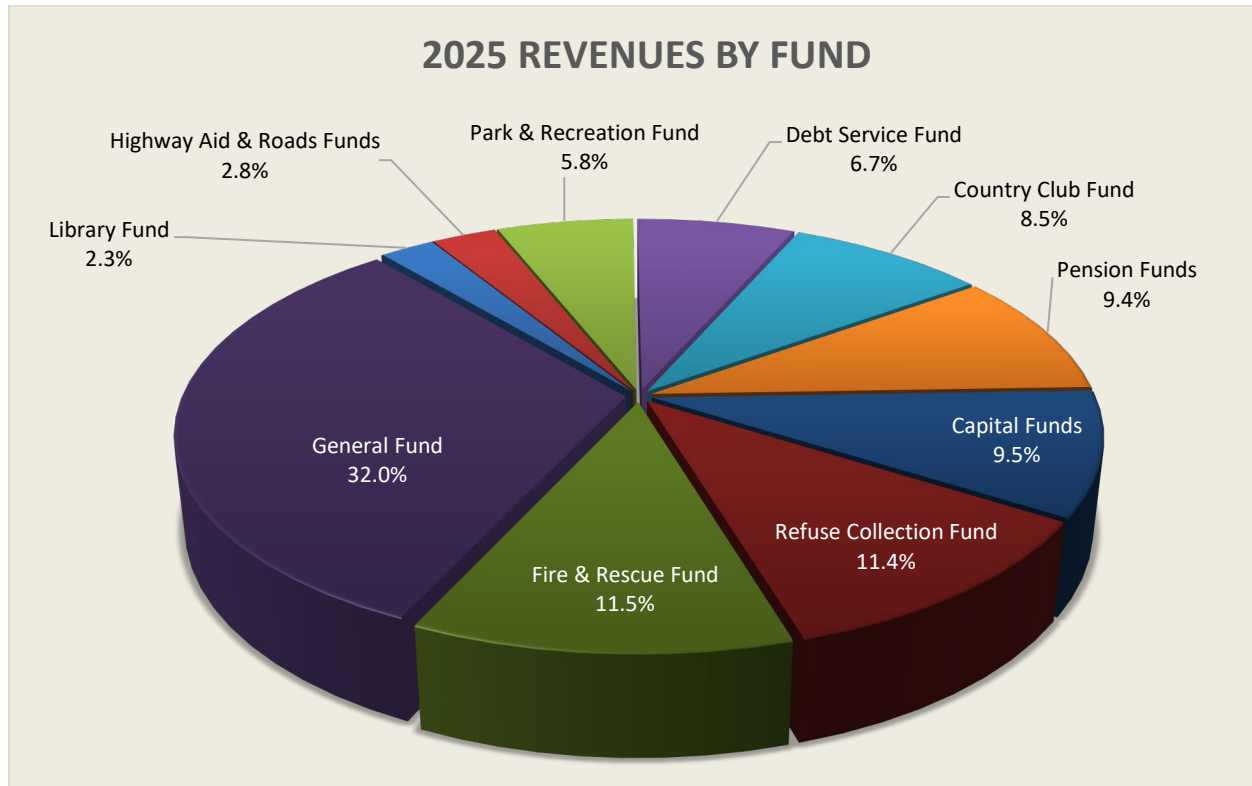
Revenues

Total revenue in the 2025 operating budgets is approximately \$42.6 Million, and is \$2.4 Million higher than the 2024 Budget. This includes a proposed tax increase of 4.5 mills. \$2.05 Million will fund additional emergency services and \$585,000 will fund additional debt service on the 2022 bond issue for fire station construction.

Earned income taxes are projected to grow by 2% next year while transfer taxes are expected to slightly decline due to with the uncertainties in the housing market. Permit fees are also projected to slightly decline in the new year with the completion of the Spring Mill development.

Parks and Recreation Department revenue is projected to increase by over \$400,000 next year as the Department continues to build program participation and has increased the rates charged for program and camp services. Increased program fees comprise \$350,000 of the total additional projected revenue.

The following chart shows the expected Revenues for 2025 for all Township Funds:



Proprietary Funds

The Township has two Proprietary Funds that are categorized on the Township's financial statements as Business-Type Activities. These include the Refuse Fund and the Country Club Operating Fund. These operations charge fees for their services and function independently from tax-supported operations. User fees charged by these Township agencies pay for the costs associated with these business-type activities.

Total appropriations in the Proprietary Funds are approximately \$13.5 Million. The Refuse Collection Fund accounts for all costs associated with trash, yard waste and recycling collection and disposal. The annual cost for this service is \$7.6 Million which is 13% of the Township Budget. The current refuse collection fee is \$575 per year and will remain the same through 2027.

The Country Club Fund accounts for revenue and expenses associated with the operation of the Northampton Valley Country Club. Total appropriations for Club operations in 2025 is \$5.8 Million. This includes staff wages and benefits, golf course and facility maintenance, food and beverage costs, insurance, and debt service.

Demand for golf remains strong with 52,000 rounds played last year and 2024 projected revenue exceeding budget by \$86,000. Food and beverage sales at the Tavern on Ten are also expected to exceed budget by \$116,000. These revenue gains are offset by lackluster banquet sales endemic throughout the industry; however, Club management is optimistic about future sales growth. Year over year, booked wedding sales in 2025 are already 37% higher than last year. To address industry trends, the Club has plans to create ceremonial gardens at each banquet room patio to allow for outdoor wedding ceremonies and banquets at one location.

Country Club operations help offset certain administrative expenses in the Township General Fund, and pay \$500,000 per year in debt service on Township bonds.

Capital Improvement Funds

The Township Budget includes 6 Capital Funds used to account for the cost of Township infrastructure improvements and capital equipment acquisition. Infrastructure includes the Township's roads, bridges, storm sewer system, traffic signals, park system, and all Township-owned buildings and property. According to 2023 audited financial statements, the value of the Township's capital assets was approximately \$220 Million. Since 2018, the Township has appropriated between \$3.5 Million and \$6.5 Million annually to maintain or improve its capital infrastructure but relies heavily on state and federal grants for this purpose.

In the last ten years, the Township has secured more than \$40 Million in grant funds for infrastructure improvements, and continues to pursue grant opportunities whenever possible. The Township's Capital improvement Plan serves as a guide when budgeting for capital needs.

Fiduciary Funds

Fiduciary Funds are used to account for pension plan benefits held in trust for eligible Township employees. These resources are not available to support the general operations of the Township Government. The accounting used for Fiduciary Funds is similar to that used for Proprietary Funds; however, the pension plans are supported by tax revenue, unlike the Proprietary Funds.

The Township has three (3) different employee pension plans. Police officers are enrolled in a defined benefit pension plan in accordance with State Act 600. The Act establishes minimum pension plan benefits for all police officers working in departments with more than three full-time officers. It is the only state-mandated pension plan for municipal employees.

Two other pension plans provide benefits to non-uniformed employees. They include a defined benefit pension plan and a defined contribution pension plan. The defined benefit plan was closed to certain new hires in 2015 when the defined contribution plan was established. Public Works employees hired after March 1, 2019 are enrolled in the defined contribution pension plan in accordance with their collective bargaining agreement.

The General Fund

The General Fund is the largest Operating Fund in the Township budget at \$24 Million or 55% of total operating appropriations.

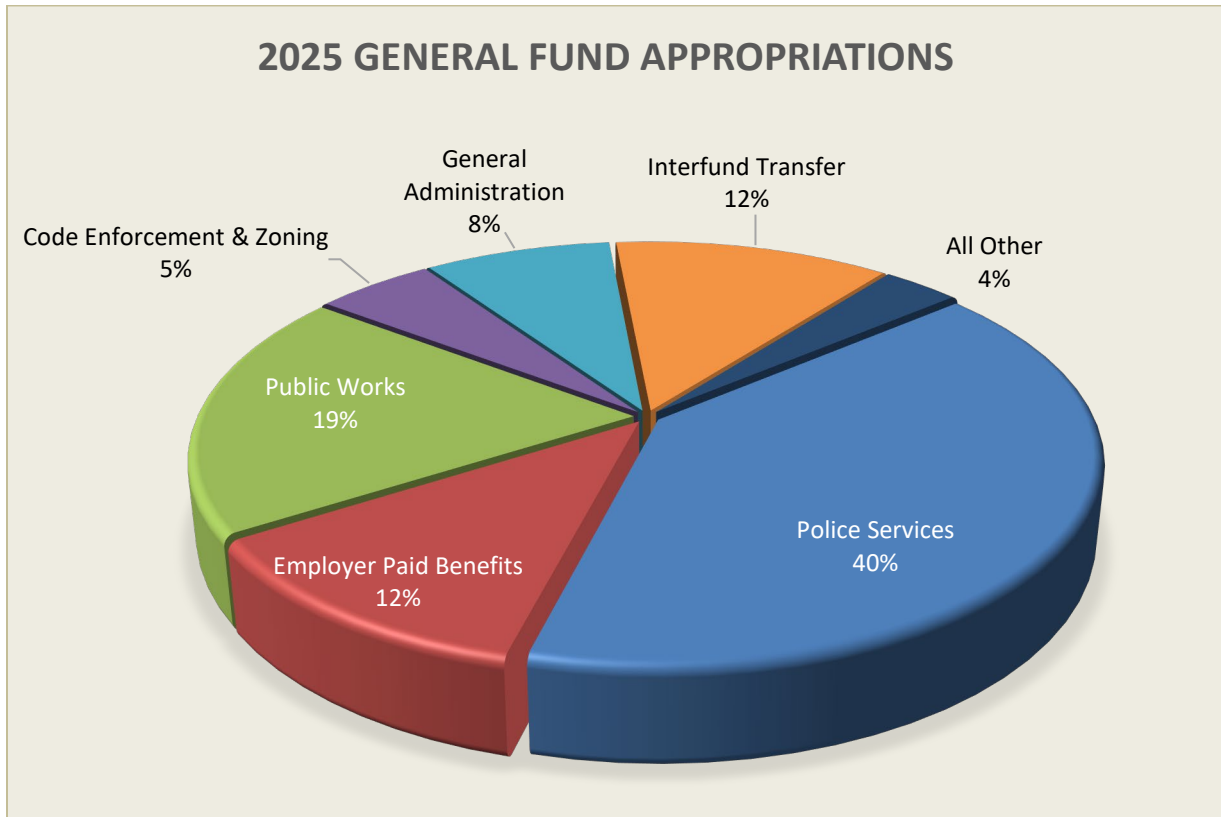
The General Fund accounts for the cost of police services, planning, zoning, and code enforcement, administration and finance, legal and engineering, information technology, tax collection costs, the Fire Marshal's office, public works services, facility and fleet maintenance, insurance, and employee benefits.

Key revenue sources in the General Fund include real estate and earned income taxes, real estate transfer taxes, cable television franchise fees, and permit fees; however, cable television franchise have steadily declined since 2016. The Township also receives state aid to offset its pension obligations. Pension system state aid is approximately \$1.16 Million and represents 48% of the Township's annual pension funding requirement.

Police services represent 40% of total General Fund appropriations. Public Works accounts for 15%, and employer paid benefits are 10% of the total. Interfund transfers make up 12%, and code enforcement, administration, professional services, insurance, and facilities maintenance make up the remaining 23% of total General Fund appropriations.

The 2025 Budget includes a proposed 1.4-mills decrease in the General Fund tax levy. This is offset by an increase in the tax levy for fire services.

The following chart show proposed General Fund appropriations in 2025:



Special Purpose Tax Levies

The Township has special purpose real estate tax levies to fund fire services, emergency medical services, park maintenance, the library, acquisition of road equipment, road paving, and debt service. Certain special purpose tax levies have maximum allowable limits as detailed in the Second-Class Township Code, which is the State Law governing the organization of Township government.

Appropriations in these special tax levy funds represent \$18.4 Million of the total operating budget. \$7.6 Million is appropriated for fire and emergency medical services, \$4.6 Million is for debt payments on outstanding bonds, \$4 Million will fund the parks and recreation services, and \$1.5 Million is for library services. An additional \$700,000 will supplement road resurfacing and maintenance.

The special tax levy for fire services is limited to 10-mills, and the levy for emergency medical services is limited to 5-mills. Any additional tax levy to support these services must be paid from the General Fund. There is a 2-mill limit on special tax levies for road equipment. There is no limit on special tax levies for parks and recreation services or for debt service obligations.

The proposed Budget includes a 3.5 mill increase in the fire tax levy to fund the expanded fire service and a 1-mill increase in the debt service tax levy to fund annual bond payments for fire station construction. The total debt service tax levy of 7.1 mills will fund bond payments through 2035. Annual debt obligations decrease in 2036 and the tax levy can be reduced at that time.

Governmental Services

Police Services

Police services in the Township are provided by a full-time force of 44 sworn officers and 12 civilian employees. The police force is multi-disciplined with bilingual officers, a K-9 program, school resource officers, accident investigators, bicycle officers, and polygraph examiners, and other specially trained units. The Department successfully implemented a K-9 program in 2022 which has been fully funded to date by community contributions.

The Department is accredited by the Pennsylvania Association of Chiefs of Police. Only about 10% of police departments in the Commonwealth receive this distinguished designation. Accreditation requires the Department to maintain standardized policies, procedures, and training to enhance professionalism and reduce potential liabilities to the Township. Its community policing philosophy has built relationships between the department and the public that assist officers in preventing and solving crimes.

In cooperation with the Council Rock School District, a School Resource Officer has been assigned to Council Rock South High School for many years. The Officer works in the school to train school staff, educate students on safety, and assist with crime prevention and rapid response to emergencies. A second School Resource Officer was assigned to Holland Middle School this Fall. Both officers will visit all elementary schools in the Township as part of their regular duties.

The Department averages approximately 20,000 calls for service each year. Approximately 20% of these calls are self-initiated by our officers. These are reported calls observed by officers while on duty that generate an Incident Report.

There are currently 7 officers scheduled on each patrol shift. Paid time off reduces this number to an average of 5.2 officers per shift. With approval from the Board of Supervisors, the department began the process of hiring additional officers to increase manpower on each shift. Many police departments in the region are also hiring, and there is significant competition given the small candidate pool. The department expects to be at full complement with 47 officers by late 2024 or early 2025.

The table below shows both Part 1 and Part 2 crimes from 2019 through 2023. These crime statistics are reported by the department to the Uniform Crime Reporting Program at the Federal Bureau of Investigations:

<u>TOTAL CRIMES</u>	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Reported	Cleared	Reported	Cleared	Reported	Cleared	Reported	Cleared	Reported	Cleared
Part I	167	72	148	63	117	53	138	69	160	49
Part II	343	197	315	180	297	136	305	144	284	178
Total Crimes	510	269	463	243	414	189	443	213	444	227
Clearance Rate	52.75%		52.48%		45.65%		48.08%		51.13%	

Most Part I crimes are classified as violent and include aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder, robbery, arson, burglary, and motor vehicle theft, although fraud can be classified as a Part I crime depending on the dollar amount involved. Part II crimes include simple assault, embezzlement, forgery, disorderly conduct, alcohol and drug offenses, fraud, vandalism, and weapons offenses. Clearance rates represent the percentage of reportable crimes that were solved by the Department. They can serve as an indicator of police effectiveness and police-community collaboration.

While the chart shows a reduction in clearance rates over the five-year period, it is important to note that certain crimes have an almost 100% clearance rate, but cases like mail fraud and the theft of delivered packages, which are more difficult to solve, skew these rates downward.

The Department devotes significant resources each year to traffic enforcement. In 2024, the Department performed 3,250 traffic details and issued 4,620 citations or written warnings to motorists. The details focus on high accident areas or where the Department has received resident complaints. In addition, the Traffic Safety Unit deployed the speed board 65 times and conducted 36 traffic studies based on resident inquiries. The Department also responded to 670 traffic accidents, and deployed bike patrols 75 times during the summer months.

Total appropriations for police services in 2025 is \$12.1 Million, which includes a 3.5% wage increase in accordance with the current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Township and the Northampton Police Benevolent Association. An officer in the sixth year of employment with the Township will earn a base salary of \$118,000 in 2025. Wages and benefits provided to our officers are collectively bargained and competitive with other police departments in the region.

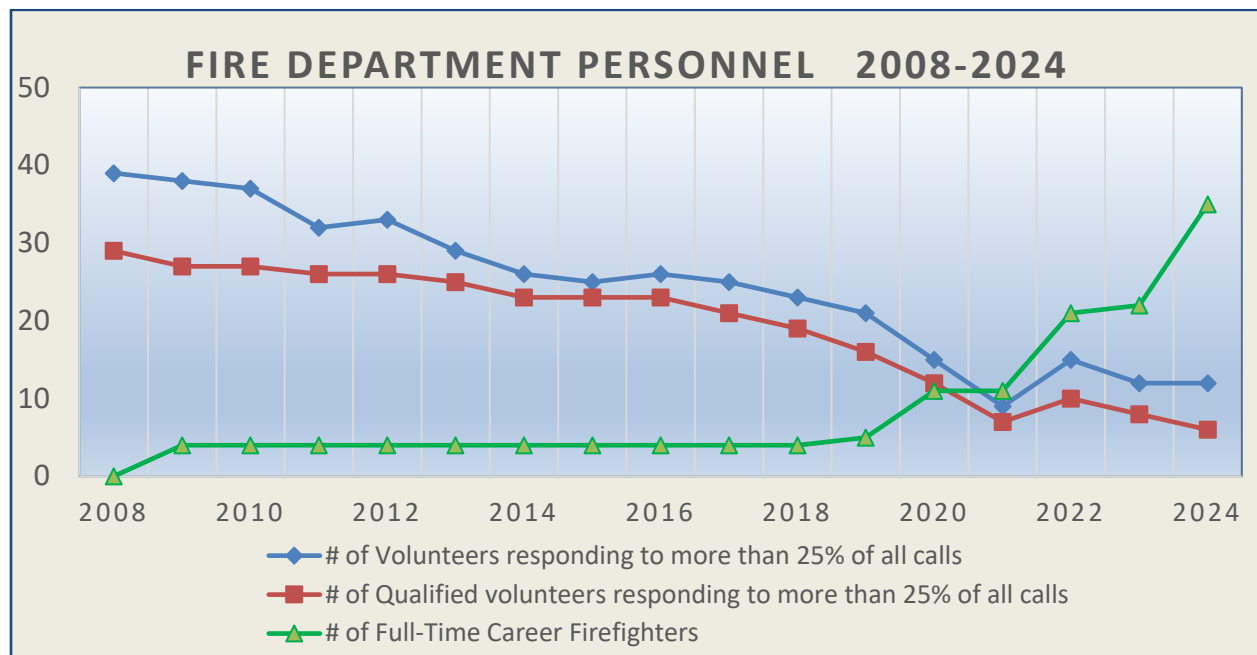
Fire Protection Services

The Northampton Township Fire Department is comprised of 38 paid firefighters supported by a handful of volunteers, which classifies it as a “combination” Fire Department. Both the Richboro and Holland fire stations are capable of staffing one truck on a 24 hour per day, 7 day per week schedule.

This staffing level provides adequate personnel for most calls: however; some building fires require a more robust response. In those cases, personnel from other stations, including those department in the mutual aid system, will also respond to the call.

There are 15,000 properties and 40,000 residents in the Township’s 26.5 square mile area. Having two fully staffed locations increased response time and improved the Township’s readiness to respond in emergency situations.

The following chart shows the decline in volunteers and the corresponding increase in the number of paid firefighters to ensure adequate response:



As part of its community outreach, the Fire Department offers public safety programs for residents. These include CPR and first aid training, fire safety training, car seat installations, and other safety-related programs. The Richboro Station will also serve as the Township's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

By design, all Fire Department personnel are trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's), in addition to their training as firefighters, and respond to many medical emergencies. While these firefighters only provide basic life support services, they are often first "on-scene" and perform initial patient assessments, stabilizing care, and when required, immediate life-saving activities. This provides an additional level of emergency response and care to the community.

In 2025, a paid firefighter will earn a base salary of \$74,814 after 5 years of service. The starting salary is \$65,500.

The projected cost for fire protection services in 2025 is \$6.4 Million. These services will require a tax increase next year, and a 3.5 mill fire tax levy increase is included in the proposed Budget. The additional cost to a property owner at the median assessed value of \$40,000 is \$140 per year. An increase of \$110 per year in 2026, and an a \$50 per year in 2027 is required to fully fund these services going forward.

Emergency Medical Services

The Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad is the Board designated emergency medical services provider in the Township, operating from facilities in Richboro and Feasterville. Tri-Hampton provides this service on a 24/7 basis in Richboro, with a dedicated paramedic ambulance unit at its Richboro station.

With completion of the Holland Fire Station, Tri-Hampton now has a dedicated ambulance unit operating from that facility 7-days per week, from 8 am to 8 pm. This time period correlates with the busiest call volume in the Township. Emergency medical response at other times is handled by Tri-Hampton from its Richboro or Feasterville stations. As previously stated, the placement of an ambulance unit at the Holland Fire Station has reduced response time for emergency medical calls by more than 30%.

The Township is currently in discussion with the Rescue Squad about how to expand this service, and the Board of Supervisors has a stated goal of providing a dedicated ambulance unit in Holland on a 24-hour, 7-day per week basis.

Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad transitioned from a volunteer organization to full-time paid staff in the early 1990's due to a lack of trained volunteers. The paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMT's), working as full-time employees are required to have extensive medical and first responder training. Paramedics must earn 36 Continuing Education Credits (CEU's) every two years, and EMT's must earn 24 CEU's every three years to maintain their required certifications.

The Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad is a private, non-profit entity. Like many similar Emergency Medical Service agencies, Tri-Hampton has had difficulty in recent years with employee retention due to lower wages and the inability to provide competitive benefits, causing high turnover. The Township believes the Rescue Squad has improved this situation with increased funding from the Township in 2020 and 2022, and has stabilized its workforce.

The Township currently contributes \$1.2 Million annually to the Tri-Hampton Rescue Squad from a 2-mill real estate tax, approximately \$30 per resident per year. A property assessed at the median value of \$40,000 pays \$80 annually for emergency medical services. There is no proposed increase in the Rescue Squad Fund tax in 2025.

Public Works Services

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the road system, storm sewer system, parks system, and rights-of-way of the Township, and is one of the few departments in the region to perform in-house road paving services. This maintenance responsibility includes a 183-mile road system, 97 miles of storm sewer piping, 5,100 stormwater inlets, 125 detention basins, 220-acres of developed park property, and 500 acres of open space.

The Department also maintains 19 buildings, almost 100 licensed vehicles, and various types of construction equipment. The Department operates with 30 full-time employees, including 3 mechanics. The department also hires 8 seasonal workers each year.

The in-house paving program proves less costly than contracted paving services, and department employees complete a variety of construction projects, including drainage system improvements, concrete work, street light repairs, and facility maintenance. The department contracts out micro surfacing as part of its road maintenance program, and will use a new process called Nova Chip in 2025. Both processes involve the application of material designed to extend the life of roads in good condition and seal road surfaces to minimize cracking and potholes.

The Department will again achieve the Board of Supervisor's goal of re-surfacing 10 road miles of the Township road system each year. This goal assumes that a paved surface has a 20-year life expectancy; however, this varies based on traffic volume, water infiltration, and sun exposure, among others. The Department performs storm sewer inlet repairs prior to resurfacing projects.

The re-surfacing program is almost wholly funded by a State allocation of motor fuel taxes distributed by PennDOT to local municipalities. The grant allocation fluctuates annually based on fuel consumption by the motoring public. The Township receives approximately \$1.2 Million annually from this program.

In addition to the state allocation, the Township levies a 1-mill real estate tax to supplement the cost of road resurfacing. This funding has allowed the Department to achieve its annual resurfacing goal of 10 miles per year.

The Township relies on a technology called RoadBotics to determine which streets are resurfaced each year. The process uses advanced photographic imaging for each road to assign a condition rating of 1 to 5. The program is used to identify the highest priority roads for resurfacing.

The proposed appropriation for paving and micro-surfacing in the 2025 Budget is \$1.9 Million that includes \$700,000 from the Road Maintenance Fund and \$1.2 Million from the Highway Aid Fund.

In addition to road maintenance, the Department also maintains nineteen different Township facilities including the Administration Building, Police Station, Library, Senior Center, and its own Public Works buildings. These services include roofing and HVAC maintenance, cleaning, ground maintenance, and most repairs. The Department recently assumed maintenance responsibility for the new fire stations.

The Parks Maintenance Division in the Public Works Department performs all maintenance work in the parks and recreation facilities. This includes building maintenance, mowing, trail repairs, snow removal, lighting systems, and repairs to basketball, hockey, and tennis courts. The numerous sports leagues operating in the Township also perform some field maintenance.

Waste Collection and Disposal Services

The Township has four separate contracts for its solid waste management program. These include collection and transportation services, trash, recycling, and yard waste disposal. Whitetail Disposal has the current contract for collection services. The cost for this service in 2025 is \$5.7 Million. Waste Management has contracts for yard waste disposal at \$164,000, and recycling material disposal at \$226,000. Household trash disposal services are provided by Win-Waste, Inc. for \$875,000.

Whitetail Disposal began waste collection and transportation services in January 2023. The company provides automated collection to approximately 10,600 households and manual service to another 2,400 households. Automated collection reduces manpower requirements, improves the visual appearance of neighborhoods, minimizes spillage, eliminates the problem of empty trash containers being placed in front of driveways or thrown into the street, and reduces employee injuries. The manual service is provided to higher density residential developments.

Household trash, recyclable materials, yard waste and bulk items are collected weekly. Yard waste is collected separately from household trash between April 15 and December 15 each year.

The current contract with Whitetail Disposal for household trash collection expires on December 31, 2025, but the Board of Supervisors has the option to extend the contract for two additional one-year periods. The Administration will present a recommendation to the Board in late summer on whether or not to extend the contract.

The current rate for trash, recycling, and yard waste collection and disposal is \$575 per year per household. There is no proposed fee increase for 2025.

Parks and Recreation Services

The Parks and Recreation Department provides countless recreation and program opportunities for the community each year. It is also responsible for coordinating maintenance of the 220-acre park system with the Parks Maintenance Division of the Public Works Department.

Participant recreation services in the Park and Recreation Fund are fully supported by program fees, while park maintenance and administration services are funded by a special levy tax recommended at 2.93 mills in 2025. This is an increase of .73 mills, which is offset by an equivalent reduction in the General Fund tax levy previously funding Senior Center operations.

The Recreation Department offered a catalog of different activities throughout the year with more than 750 children between the ages of 6 and 15 enjoying the summer camp program. Several thousand people participated in special events like the summer concert series. In addition, the Department operates a State-Certified pre-school program.

Program revenue is projected to increase by 14% next year, with a significant portion of that revenue from summer camp participation. Special event revenue more than doubled in 2024. Summer Camps comprise 52% of the total projected program revenue, with other programs and preschool services comprising 29%. There were 188 swim club members in 2024 and over 460 individual and group swimming lessons provided.

The Department has also successfully tripled its social media engagement on Facebook and Instagram since July, which has increased attendance and engagement by the public.

Recreation programs and camps are operated from the Recreation Center, Welch Elementary Gymnasium, the Municipal Park, the Senior Center, the Library, the Community Room at the Fire Station in Churchville and three elementary schools.

Senior Center operations were recently placed under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Department following the retirement of long-time Director Sheila Jobs. The new management team has already begun to transform the Center into a more efficient, vibrant, and flexible programming space to allow for more events and programs to attract a wider audience in the growing senior community. About 30% of the Township population is over 50 years old.

The Senior Center is one of the busiest of the 13 centers in the County with almost 1,000 members. The Center's full calendar of activities and events include organized activities such as bus trips, exercise programs, card games, billiard and bocce tournaments, arts and craft programs and other seasonal events.

The Center operates with 3 full-time employees and a host of volunteers. The Center is funded partially by the Parks and Recreation tax levy and supplemented by revenue from bus trips, facility rentals, social events, and dues. The Center also partners with local businesses to support its programs. Membership is \$25 per year and includes a monthly newsletter.

Total appropriations for the facility next year are \$393,000.

Library Services

The Free Library of Northampton Township is a hub of community activity and serves residents of all ages. It is open 7 days a week except in the summer months and is expected to be visited by approximately 160,000 customers this year.

The facility has offered more than 600 different programs for both adults and children in 2024 with an attendance of over 17,000 people. These include a summer reading program, kids STEM classes and craft times, 8 different book clubs, computer classes for adults and educational and entertainment programming. The staff provides one-on-one technology learning opportunities with their Book A Librarian service for almost 100 people annually. Staff also serves our remote student population with test proctoring services enabling more than 235 students to take required tests in 2024.

In addition, the library partners with Bucks County's "Welcoming the Stranger" organization to provide a comfortable location for their ESL (English as a Secondary Language) classes. They've expanded to hosting 3 classes each week. In addition, the library also hosted its first U.S. Citizenship class in 2024.

Volunteers have donated more than 3,000 hours so far in 2024 with almost 50% of those hours provided by teens. The library partners with Tyler State Park to host a gardening series for children, and new adult programs are continually added to maintain the library's award-winning PA Forward Gold Star status.

Meeting the needs of its patrons, the library retains the largest collection of materials in the County with books, periodicals, videos, e-books, audiobooks, magazines and a ton of e-resources. The collection is updated monthly. In addition, they offer e-resource materials for our residents which few other libraries in the county provide.

This year the Library Board began working to implement a 3-year Strategic Plan that established measurable goals for library services in the future. The Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in late 2023. The Library Board and staff are now embarking on a new branding initiative which will enable them to be more uniquely recognized in and out of our community. Immediately following this work, a new website will be designed and created providing even more efficient public access funded by a donation from the Friends of the Free Library of Northampton.

The appropriation for library services is \$1.5 Million, supported by a tax levy of 2.4 mills.

Capital Appropriations

There are two types of capital appropriations in the Township Budget: infrastructure improvements and equipment acquisitions.

Infrastructure improvements include road, traffic signal, park, and facility improvements. Many of these projects are funded by grants, with the Township share of cost as a matching requirement of 20% or 30% of the total project cost. In some instances, the Township has funded engineering design with grants paying for the cost of construction.

Capital equipment acquisitions such as vehicles, construction equipment, HVAC systems and other facility improvements are generally funded by the Township.

Total capital appropriations in 2025 are \$4.4 Million which includes \$558,000 for engineering services, \$2.63 Million for project construction, \$487,000 for facility improvements, and \$730,000 for equipment acquisition. The Administration does not propose a capital equipment loan in 2025 due to the current interest rate environment.

There are numerous infrastructure improvements in the design phase, and several projects are scheduled for construction next year. Here is a brief description of the more significant projects:

Transportation System Improvement Projects

Township Road Extension and Roundabout Construction

This project involves a realignment of Township Road southbound to intersect at Second Street Pike and Bustleton Pike. It includes the construction of a Roundabout at the intersection, and the relocation of a new public parking area to replace a portion of the public parking lot located behind the Rescue Squad building. A portion of the existing parking lot will be used for the new alignment of Township Road.

The Township completed preliminary engineering design in 2022 and received a State Highway Occupancy Permit following acquisition of all rights-of-way needed for construction. The total cost for this engineering design phase was \$580,000, which was partially funded by \$425,000 in grants. PennDOT will complete the final engineering design and construction with no further financial obligation by the Township. The estimated bid date for this project is January 2026, and the estimated project cost is \$6 Million.

PennDOT recently advised that Federal Government regulations require the Department to acquire all necessary rights-of-way for project construction. This will require the Township to rescind its condemnation actions in 2022 and the Township will no longer need to pay just compensation for the additional right-of-way.

Streetscape Improvements in Holland

This project will re-align the intersection of Buck Road and Old Bristol Road at a 90-degree angle, add dedicated left turn lanes on both roads, and replace the traffic signals. In addition, a new bridge will be constructed over Mill Creek to allow greater vehicle stacking in the left turn lane westbound on Buck Road to improve traffic conditions.

Finally, the eastern portion of Buck Road from Chinquapin Road eastbound to Old Bristol Road will be improved with sidewalks and decorative streetlights. PennDOT has indicated that Buck Road will be open to traffic during construction, but delays should be expected.

The Township completed preliminary engineering design in 2021 at a cost of \$460,000, and PennDOT has assumed the cost of final engineering design and construction. The estimated bid date for this project is June 2026. The estimated project cost is \$11 Million.

Iron works Creek Sidewalk Installation

This project will install sidewalks on Second Street Pike between Tanyard Road and Crossroads Plaza Drive, and includes a pedestrian bridge over Iron Works Creek. It will complete sidewalk connections from Manor Drive to Tanyard Road through the Village of Richboro.

The Township completed preliminary engineering design in 2021 at a cost of \$230,000 and secured a \$1.4 Million grant for construction. The estimated bid date for this project is December 2024. The estimated project cost is \$1.6 Million. The Township is responsible for the cost for construction inspection estimated at \$190,000.

Richboro Sidewalk Installation Project (Phase 2)

This project is an extension of the Phase 1 Sidewalk Project completed along 2nd Street Pike in 2022 with a \$500,000 grant from the PennDOT Multi-Modal Program. Phase 2 will extend sidewalks along Temperance Lane, Bustleton Pike, Tanyard Road, and Almshouse Road that will connect with existing sidewalks in neighboring developments.

The Township received a \$988,000 grant to construct Phase 2 of the plan. The estimated bid date for this project is October 2025, with construction completed in 2026. The estimated construction cost is \$988,000. The Township will fund design and construction inspection services of \$115,000.

Trail Construction along Newtown-Richboro Road

There are two proposed projects to construct pedestrian trails along Newtown-Richboro Road.

The first project involves construction of a walking trail from St. Leonard's Road to Tyler State Park. The trail would connect to the Park using an existing pedestrian walkway under the bridge over the Neshaminy Creek. The project will also provide a connection to the planned Neshaminy Greenway Trail. Engineering design and permitting at an estimated cost of \$225,000 is underway, The Township received an \$825,000 grant for construction, which is anticipated to begin in 2026.

The second project involves construction of a walking trail from Rock Way to St. Leonard's Road that will connect to an existing sidewalk to the west. The Township was awarded a \$500,000 grant for construction. Engineering design is underway at a cost of \$85,000. The estimated bid date for this project is September 2025. The estimated construction cost is \$500,000.

Traffic Signal at St. Leonard's Road and Newtown-Richboro Road

The Township received a PennDOT permit for construction of a traffic signal at this intersection. The engineering design was coordinated with the trail projects to ensure proper pedestrian signal installations as part of the traffic signal project. The estimated bid date for this project is February 2025. The estimated construction cost is \$521,000.

Pedestrian Crossing Signal on Newtown-Richboro Road at Fir Drive

This project is intended to provide a safe connection for the Deerfield North, Long Lane Farm, and Northampton Crossing developments to the Township's Recreation Center, Civic Center, and Tyler State Park. The project includes installation of a pedestrian crossing with an overhead flashing warning system, signage, and a walking trail from the intersection to #1 Trail Lane in Tyler State Park. The lane connects to the Civic Center trails system.

Engineering design is underway and the Township expects to receive a PennDOT permit for construction by year-end. The estimated bid date for this project is February 2025. The estimated construction cost is \$300,000.

Jacksonville and Almshouse Road Roundabout

This project involves the construction of a single-lane Roundabout to improve traffic flow and eliminate the current backup conditions at the intersection. The existing traffic signal will be removed as part of the project that also includes stormwater improvements to reduce the potential for flooding at the intersection.

The Township originally submitted concept plans to the Bucks County Planning Commission and the project was subsequently included on the State Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), making it eligible for State funding. Engineering design is underway and the estimated bid date is August 2025. The estimated construction cost is \$5 Million. Project construction will begin in 2025 and be completed in 2026. The Township invested \$35,000 in the concept plans.

Traffic Signal Improvements

The Township successfully obtained grants each year since 2017 from the PennDOT Green-Light-Go (GLG) and Automated Red-Light Enforcement (ARLE) Programs for traffic signal system improvements. This includes camera systems that trigger signal changes, emergency pre-emption, dilemma zone detection, pedestrian crossing activation systems, and modern signal controllers.

The Township is working to complete signal improvements with its 2022 and 2023 GLG grants. This includes a \$152,000 grant for signal improvements at Bristol Road and Churchville Lane/Bustleton Pike, and a \$368,000 grant for signal improvements at Holland Road and Spring Garden Mill Road.

While these signal improvements are not generally visible improvements, these improvements enhance traffic signal system efficiency and reduce congestion. These projects also improve pedestrian and motorist safety at signalized intersections.

Pedestrian Crossing Improvements

The Township has identified 11 locations throughout the Township for pedestrian crossing safety improvements. Several of these locations are school crossings.

The Township is moving forward this year with improvements to the intersection of Middle Holland Road/Old Jordan Road/Justice Drive. Improvements include updated accessible curb ramps, and more visible signage and pavement markings. The estimated cost for these improvements is \$26,000.

The 2025 Budget includes \$75,000 for work at other locations; however, grant funds may be available for these projects through the Local Share Account Statewide Program. (LSA-Statewide). An application will be filed by November 30, 2024 for the next round of funding. If a grant is approved, the Township can leverage its budgeted funds to complete additional improvements.

Other identified locations include New Road and Norton Drive, New Road and Jennifer Lane, Middle Holland Road and Liberty Drive, Stoneyford Road and Mustang Court, Stoneyford Road and Arabian Way, and East Holland Road and Grant Drive.

Public Facility Improvement Projects

The 2025 Budget includes appropriations for several facility projects. These include installation of an emergency generator at the Administration Building, improvements to the Board meeting room, and tennis court repairs at the Recreation Center.

HVAC units at the Country Club Pro Shop will be replaced with a \$76,000 Federal Grant. No matching fund are required. The grant program is funding energy efficiency projects.

The Township also completed a design to construct new patios and install landscaping at the banquet facility. This project is expected to enhance marketability of the property as a wedding venue. A portion of the project will require a contractor to complete stamped concrete work contemplated in the design. The remaining work will be completed by the Golf Course Maintenance Department.

The Budget also includes funding to engage an architect for design services to further the Library's Strategic Plan initiative. This may include interior re-design for efficiency and exterior improvements. The architect will be tasked with developing concepts for further consideration. The concept plans and cost estimates will be helpful in obtaining grant funds to implement project recommendations.

Park System Improvements

A project to resurface the existing hockey rink and basketball courts at Municipal Park was recently authorized with a State Contract Vendor for \$525,000. The project involves removing the existing asphalt, installing subsurface drainage and new asphalt, and applying a surface treatment appropriate for play. Asphalt repairs and installation will be completed this year and the surface treatment is scheduled for installation in Spring 2025.

The Township is funding these improvements with existing capital funds. They will address a significant safety issue with the courts. As part of this project, two of the existing basketball courts will be converted to pickleball courts and striped accordingly. The cost for this project will be incurred in 2024.

The 2025 proposed Budget also includes a \$60,000 appropriation to repair tennis courts at the Recreation Center and an \$18,000 appropriation to purchase a pool cover. This will reduce staff time required to clean the pool each year in preparation for summer camps.

Total appropriations for Parks and Recreation capital expenditures is \$83,000.

Equipment Acquisitions

The proposed 2025 Budget includes appropriations to purchase police vehicles, ballistic vests, police rifles, a drone, radio equipment, a gantry lift in the Public Works garage, snow plows, and salt spreaders. These acquisitions will replace existing equipment. Appropriations also include scheduled payments for police body cameras, car cameras, and tasers.

These acquisitions will be made with existing capital funds and no short-term borrowing is proposed as in prior years. This will allow the Township to reduce its existing short-term debt obligations.

The total appropriation for equipment acquisition is \$622,000.

Real Estate Taxes

The total Township real estate tax levy will be 32.5 mills if the proposed Budget is approved as presented. For a property assessed at the median value of \$40,000, the total annual real estate tax is \$1,300 or \$108 per month for all Township services. The tax millage is allocated to the Operating Funds as follows:

Administration, Police, Zoning & Public Works Services	10.00 mills
Fire and Emergency Medical Services	8.50 mills
Library Services	2.40 mills
Parks and Recreation Services	2.93 mills
Road Maintenance Services	1.00 mills
Public Works Equipment	0.57 mills
Debt Service	7.10 mills
<hr/>	
	32.50 mills

The Township tax levy is approximately 15% of the total real estate tax bill County Government is another 15%, and the Council Rock School District is 70% of the total.

Conclusion

The proposed 2025 Budget furthers the goals established by the Board of Supervisors in providing outstanding public service to Township citizens. These goals prioritize public safety, economic development, good roads, a park system with opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, a library with resources for learning, open spaces, and a country club where residents can enjoy golf, great food, and make lasting memories.

The proposed Budget emphasizes the importance of public safety and the Board's commitment to emergency services that protect life and property.

In addition, the proposed Budget provides appropriations for projects that promote economic revitalization of our commercial districts, including transportation system improvements that enhance motorist and pedestrian safety, reduce traffic congestion, and promote business development to increase the tax base.

Township departments continue to provide outstanding service to the community and work collaboratively to improve the efficiency of government operations.

Many thanks to the Board of Supervisors, Department Directors, and Township staff for their participation in the budget development process. It is the single most important policy document adopted by the Board each year.

The proposed 2025 Budget continues the high level of service our residents expect and provides the necessary resources to achieve the goals and priorities established by the Board of Supervisors. It represents, in dollar terms, an accurate estimate of the Township's commitment to the health, safety and welfare of the community. The Administration is pleased to present the proposed budget for Board consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Pellegrino

Robert M. Pellegrino
Township Manager