

February 20, 2023, Meet Mack Monday



Welcome to Meet Mack Monday for February 20, 2023.

I am John Mack, your host and a Newtown Supervisor.

Each month I host a Meet Mack Monday Zoom meeting to inform residents of items that are of interest to them and to get feedback and comments from them. I have been doing Meet Mack Monday meetings on a more or less monthly basis since at least November 2019. This helps me keep better informed of residents' concerns when voting on important issues at supervisor meetings.

Thanks for attending.



Discussion Topics

- 2023 Road Repaving Program: How Are Roads Selected?
- Earned Income Tax: 2022 Data, Future Concerns
- Reduced Speed Limits: What's Next for Newtown-Yardley Road and Sycamore Street?
- 2022 Speeding Citations: Which Roads Saw The Most Citations? Which Saw None?
- Newtown Shopping Center Traffic Study
- Environmental Advisory Council Update: Earth Day Celebration, Single-Use Plastics Ban, and Solar Power
- Privilege of the Floor

This short, 15-minute presentation covers recent issues of interest and decisions by township supervisors. After the presentation, I will open up the meeting to Q&A and comments.

After the meeting I will distribute this presentation, including notes, to all attendees and everyone who registered even though they may not have been able to attend.



2023 Road Repaving Program

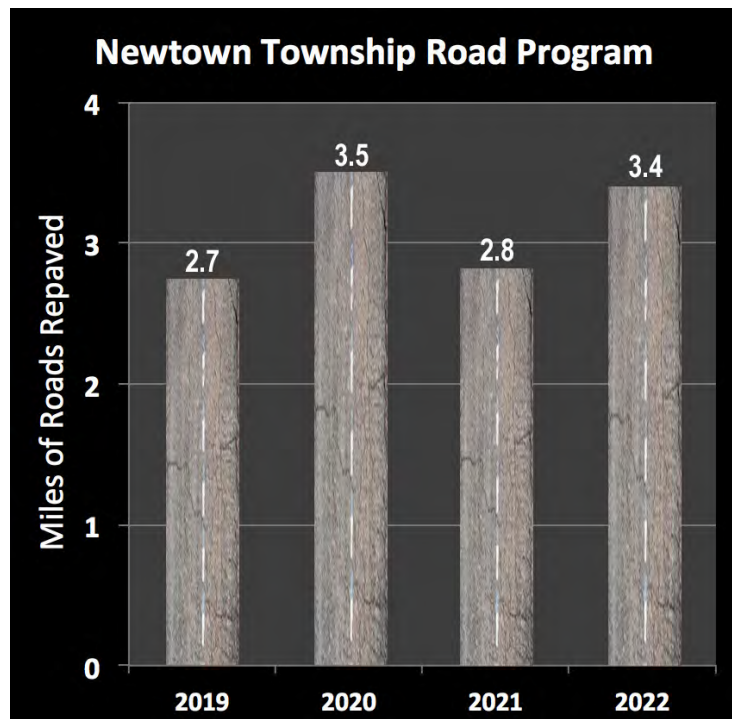
- BOS approved advertising bids at February 8, 2023, meeting
- Base Bid and Alternate Bids (see next slides for locations of roads)
 - The bidder offers to perform the work described in the Bidding Documents as the “Base,” to which work may be added for sums stated in “Alternate Bids.”
- Total cost estimate for Base & Alternative Bids is **\$1,342,308** for 4.5 miles of roads
- \$997,000 available:
 - \$530,000 from PA Liquid Fuels Program
 - \$300,000 from the township’s General Fund
 - \$167,000 from the American Rescue Program Act (ARPA)


Obviously, the available funding is not enough to cover the expected total needed to pave all the roads in the BASE and ALTERNATIVE bid list of roads,

For the past 4 years (2019-2022), on average, only 3.1 miles of roads have been repaved per year (see chart). This is not nearly enough to get ahead.

*There are approximately 80 miles of township roads. Repaving should be done every 20 years, which means at least 4 miles of roads are expected to need repaving each year JUST TO KEEP UP with current conditions!

To get ahead, more than 4 miles of roads per year must be repaved.





2023 Road Repaving Program

Base Bid – Locations
2.32 miles

Estimated Cost: **\$703,514.00** [\$305,876 per mile!]

1. L. Dolington Road, from Frost Lane to Silver Lake Road
2. Redwood Lane, from North Lane to Sequoia Drive [Newtown Grant]
3. Ebony Court, from Sequoia Drive to End [Newtown Grant]
4. Tamarack Court, from Sequoia Drive to End [Newtown Grant]
5. Sequoia Drive, from North Lane to North Lane [Newtown Grant]
6. Canterbury Court, from Union Street to Mill Pond Road


How the roads for repaving are determined is a mystery to me. Obviously, Lower Dolington Road is going to need repair after the trail work is complete.

I could suggest many other roads that I think are in need of repaving such as Wexley Drive in the Country Bend development, which is where I live and drive every day. See the video I made back in August 2022: <https://youtu.be/zlne5ljSlKY>; obviously conditions have gotten worse since then.

Doylestown Township did an engineering study in 2018 to document the condition of each road maintained by the township. IMHO, Newtown should do a similar study.

Micah Lewis – the Township Manager told me: “[Public Works Director Joseph Schiavoni] previously worked for CKS engineers [the company that did the Doylestown study] and ... did the inspections for the Township's paving plan each year, so the Township is saving money for studies & inspections by having him on staff.”

I plan to do a drive by of each road in the list to see with my own eyes the condition they are in.



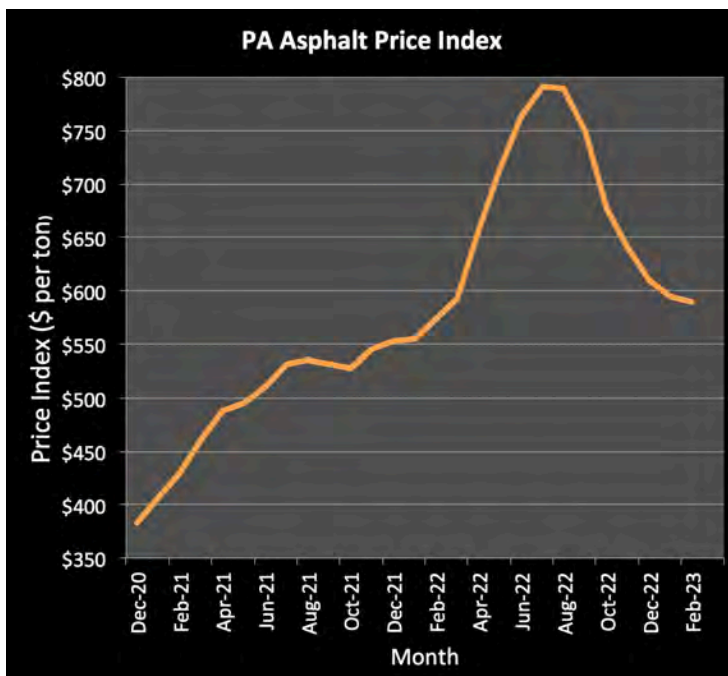
2023 Road Repaving Program

Alternate Bids – Locations
2.18 miles
Estimated Cost: **\$638,794.00** [\$293,025 per mile!]

1. Amy Circle, from Eagle Road to End
2. Coachwood Court, from Cypress Place to End
3. Eagle Road, from 211 Eagle Road to 2 Blayze Court
4. Lafayette Street, from S. Lincoln Street to End
5. Monterey Place, from Cypress Place to End
6. Mulberry Place, from Cypress Place to End
7. North Drive, from Society Place West Entrance to Sassafras Court [Newtown Grant]
8. Valley Court, from Bucks Meadow Lane to End
9. Rosefield Drive, from Stoopville Road to Atkinson Lane
10. Amaryllis Lane, from Jonquil Drive to Jonquil Drive
11. Union Street, from Mill Pond Road to High Street

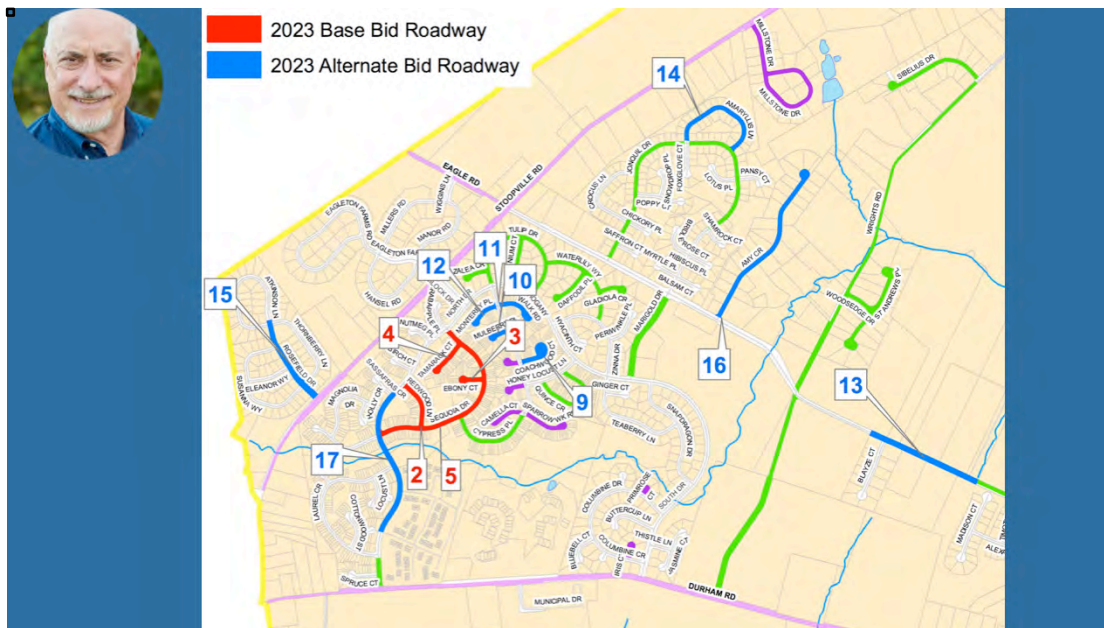
TOTAL Cost, Base + Alternate = **\$1,342,308** for 4.5 miles of roads. This works out to be \$298K per mile of road.

In contrast, the Supervisors authorized the award of the 2022 road program to Harris Blacktopping in an amount not to exceed \$811,794.50. This was enough to pave 3.4 miles of roads at \$238,762 per mile. Thus, the paving costs increased 20%. However, note that some roads are wider (e.g., Lower Dolington Rd), which contributes to the increased cost.



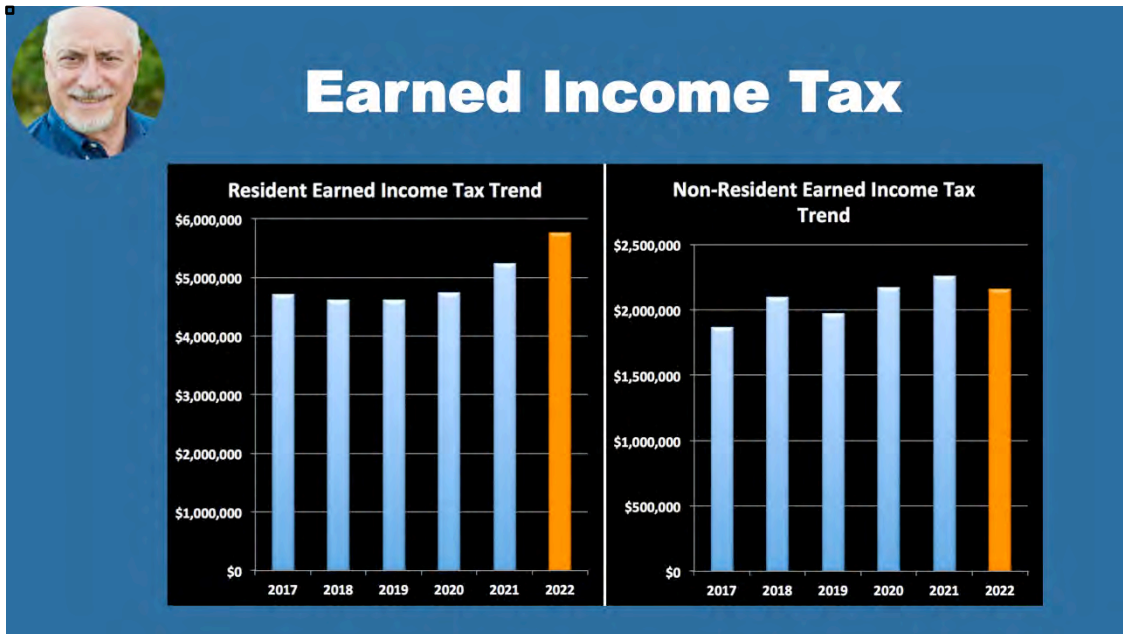
Asphalt Price Index
Trend for PennDOT
Districts 3,4,5,6, &
8 (Bucks County is
in District 6).

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This section of the 2023 Road Paving Map shows most of the roads in the Base and Alternative Bids. Quite a bit of the Base Bid work is in the Newtown Grant development.

Note: The current 2023 Road Paving Map shows Union Street as part of the Base Bid (not shown in this section of the map). However, it is actually listed in the Alternate Bids. I assume, therefore, that the map needs to be updated.



I attended the January 26, 2023, Bucks County Tax Collection Committee (TCC) meeting where KEYSTONE collections group gave an update on Earned Income Tax collected in 2022.

Earned Income Tax – or EIT for short – is a tax for general revenue purposes in the amount of 1% imposed on earned income including salaries, wages, commissions, bonuses, tips and other compensation received by residents of Newtown Township and by nonresidents for work or services performed in Newtown. It is estimated that EIT of both types represents 70% of Newtown’s total tax revenue.

Note that 0.5% of Resident EIT goes to the township and 0.5% goes to Council Rock School District. The full 1% of Non-resident EIT goes to the township.


Newtown Township collected \$5.76 million in resident EIT in 2022 versus \$5.24 million in 2021. Thus, the township saw nearly a **10% increase** in resident EIT in 2022 over 2021! Meanwhile, non-resident EIT **decreased by 4.7%** in 2022 compared to 2021.

Falls Township and Langhorne Borough began collecting EIT in 2023. As a result of which, Newtown will not be able to collect EIT from residents of these municipalities who work in Newtown. It is estimated that the township will lose over \$170,000 in EIT in 2023 due to this.



Speed Limits Reduced

What's Next?



- New 25 MPH speed limits are now in effect for portion of Newtown-Yardley Rd and ALL of Sycamore St
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons will be installed at crosswalks (Tara Blvd & Silo Dr)
- Speed limits will be “electronically” enforced on these roads

As you may already know, the speed limit was reduced to 25 MPH on North AND South Sycamore Street and on Newtown-Yardley Road between Lower Dolington Rd and the Borough.

With regard to pedestrian-controlled flashing beacons, it may take several months to get these installed at the North Sycamore St/Silo Drive and Newtown-Yardley Rd/Tara Blvd locations.

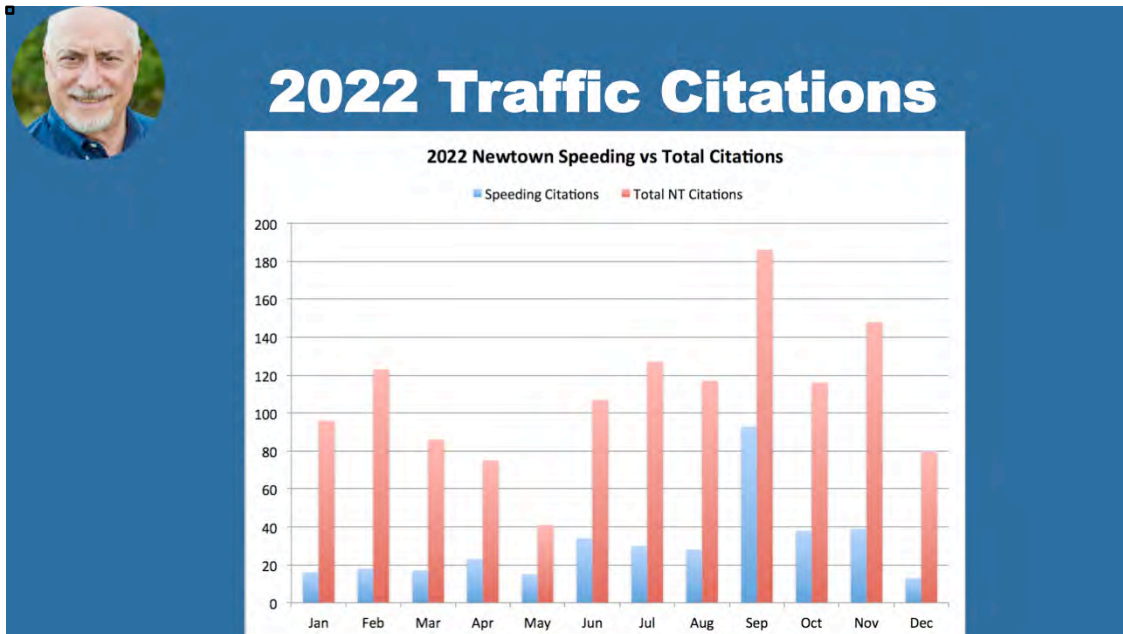
I spoke to Newtown Township Police Department (NTPD) Chief John Hearn about enforcement of the speed limit on Sycamore Street and Newtown-Yardley Road. Pennsylvania is the **ONLY** state where municipal police cannot use radar speed enforcement. According to Pennsylvania law, municipal police are limited to using stopwatches or electronic devices and two reference points to monitor vehicle speed. "Reference points" refer to “speed lines” in the road separated by a known distance. The Newtown Public Works Department has recently painted such speed lines near South Sycamore St and Winchester Ln and at Newtown-Yardley Rd and Newtown Commons West. Chief Hearn reminded me that to issue a ticket, the recorded speed must be more than 10 miles over the limit.



Just a note regarding those “Yield to Pedestrians in Crosswalk” signs at many intersections along Sycamore Street and other roads. I received an email from a resident who claimed that “you can’t have pedestrian right of way signs at intersections where both roads are controlled by either stop signs or traffic lights*.” He believed these signs “confuse both pedestrians and motorists.” WHAT DO YOU THINK?

*According to Safe Routes to School Online Guide: “In-street crosswalk signs must be installed at uncontrolled pedestrian crossings to make the crosswalk more visible and increase driver yielding. They are more likely to be effective on two-lane, low-speed streets than on multi-lane, high-speed streets, and are prohibited by the 2009 MUTCD at signalized intersections. They can be easily damaged and need to be reset or replaced when damaged.” [LINK:

http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/engineering/marked_crosswalks.cfm]



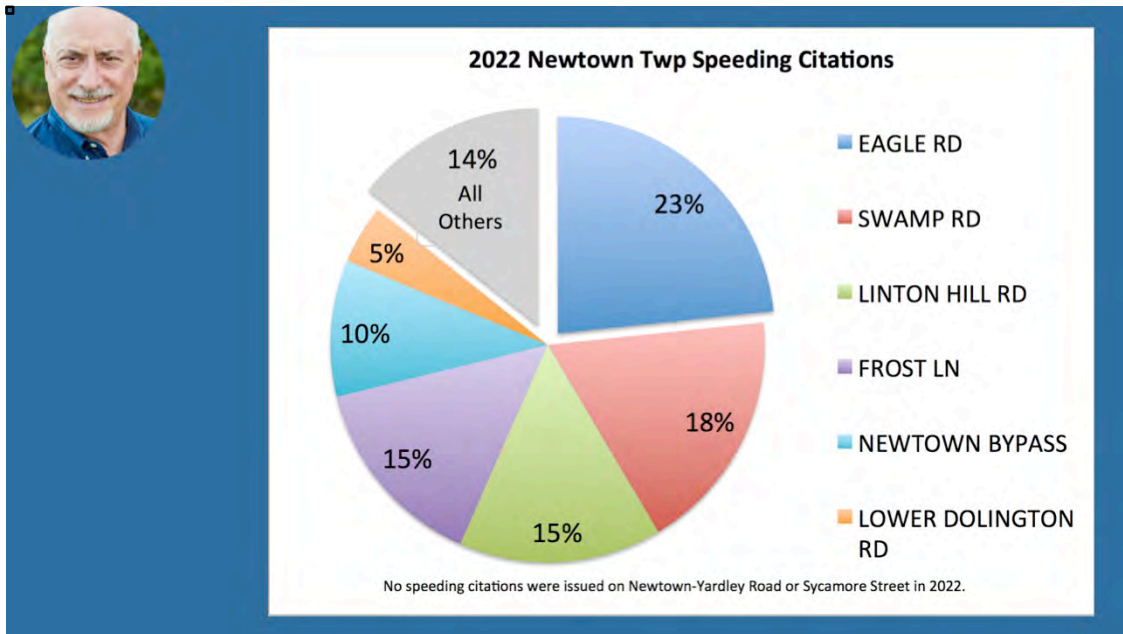
To get a better idea of speeding enforcement by the Newtown Township's Police Department (NTPD), I analyzed the Department's traffic citations issued in 2022.

Traffic Citations include speeding, moving a vehicle unsafely, operating a vehicle without a valid license, driving an unregistered vehicle, failure to stop at a stop sign, etc. The NTPD reports these citations on a monthly basis for Newtown Township AND Wrightstown. This chart focuses on Newtown Township data and compares total monthly traffic citations versus monthly speeding citations. A total of 1302 traffic citations were issued in 2022. 28% of the total – 364 – were speeding citations.

Note that NTPD joined Pennsylvania State Police and other municipal agencies in conducting targeted aggressive-driving enforcement waves from July 5th through August 21st and October 24th through November 13th in 2022 (<https://sco.lt/5ESNKi>).



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I dug a little deeper into the 2022 speeding citation data to see where citations were most often issued. I was surprised to see that Eagle Road was the site of a significant number of speeding citations. The data I have access to doesn't specify the EXACT location where tickets were issued, so I could not verify if any were issued on South Eagle Road within the Newtown Shopping Center.

Two roads are conspicuously missing: Newtown-Yardley Road and Sycamore Street. This is surprising given all the comments from residents – as well as certain BOS members – regarding speeding on these roads.



Shopping Center Traffic Study



- Brixmor's Traffic Consultants (Langan) prepared a Traffic Study
- “Significant” queuing delays were found: Are You Surprised?
- Township Engineer is “currently preparing formal recommendations on mitigation,” but not regarding queuing delays

According to the township engineer's 25 Jan 2022 review of the traffic study [LINK: <https://bit.ly/BrixmorTISreview25Jan2022>] , several intersections in the shopping center are experiencing significant delays, but we didn't a traffic study to know that! The study, however, quantifies the wait times. RVE's review stated that Brixmor should “ consider mitigation factors to modify distribution within the site to improve the LOS [Level of Service; basically wait times] for certain movements.”

Brixmor's traffic consultants responded that the township approved a previous traffic study done before construction started with the understanding that there were instances, specifically during the Saturday midday peak time periods, that vehicles would experience some additional delay and queuing at the internal intersections along S Eagle Road. The Brixmor consultants contend that no practical improvements can be made to mitigate this problem.

On October 13, 2022, the township traffic engineers met with Brixmor's traffic consultants to “review mitigation options, which included extending turn lanes and adding additional signage.” To date nothing further has been done and I'm not sure these “mitigate options” will solve the queuing delays at the intersections along S Eagle Road.

Parking is another [long] story!, which you can find here: “Parking & Traffic in the Village at Newtown”; <https://johnmacknewtown.info/blog/?viewDetailed=201906061327>

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At the February 23, 2023, Newtown Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) meeting, members discussed plans for celebrating Earth Day, which is Saturday, April 22, 2023. The Council hopes to have videos and speakers at the Newtown Theatre, probably sometime before Earth Day.

Council members also discussed its draft ordinance for a *mandatory ban* of single-use plastics, which includes bags, straws, utensils, cups, and styrofoam containers. Newtown already passed a resolution calling for a *voluntary* ban of single-use plastics. According to a post on Facebook: "[The Council] anticipates following up the voluntary elimination by businesses with a mandatory ordinance to be presented to the Supervisors in 2023."

Some townships have already implemented such bans and promoted the use of paper products. EAC cites Solebury Township's 2022-003 Ordinance as a model for Newtown to follow. [LINK: https://bit.ly/Solebury_Plastics_Ban] Also, Doylestown Borough, which only includes single -use plastic bags, 2 six month extensions for existing inventory, no [paper] bag fee because the businesses objected to it."; LINK: <https://sco.lt/5PULIA>

The EAC continues to solicit opinions of local businesses about their support for such a ban and plans to have a public forum for businesses to learn more and get their questions



Interesting fact:
The first Earth Day
was celebrated in
1970. I was at the
NYC event that
day!



During the discussion of Solar Power at the Newtown Environmental Advisory Council's February 13, 2023, meeting it was mentioned that there is a new solar array powering Tyler State Park. The array is near the entrance to the park at Swamp Rd and the Bypass/Durham Rd. This photo was taken within the Park facing the entrance at the Bypass. According to EAC member Mark Haber, "The array [will] supply about 90% of the energy needed to run the park. It [will] provide power to the administration building, maintenance building, sewage lift station, two lighted bathrooms, plus all the other lights in the park." [Read "Big Solar Array Erected at #NewtownPA Side of Tyler State Park"; <https://sco.lt/4wx7Ds>]

One commenter on Facebook commented that "We see it multiple times a day from the bypass. Hopefully they will plant some bushes or trees to block the view. Guess they didn't get/or need to get township approval to construct this?" No, this is a state park, not a township park. The land around the array does need some plantings and I hope it includes trees behind the array to block its view from the Bypass.

On July 14, 2021, EAC members, Supervisor Elen Snyder, and I visited West Rockhill's municipal solar array [see photo insert; LINK: <https://sco.lt/5RM5su>]. On Facebook, someone commented "EXCITING! I hope you can import that idea into Newtown." LINK: <https://bit.ly/FBsolarpost>

In fact, the EAC has recommended that the new version of the Newtown Area Comprehensive Plan include a new item in Strategies and Actions: "Study the feasibility of installing renewable energy sources - including solar and geothermal - at community facilities." LINK: https://bit.ly/EAC_CompPlan_Recommendations