

**Please visit Austintown Township Website at [www.austintowntwp.com](http://www.austintowntwp.com)**

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PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
YOUNGSTOWN, OH  
PERMIT NO. 214

Trustees meetings are on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00 P.M. at Township Hall at 82 Ohltown Road and on the 4th Monday of each month at noon at the Austintown Senior Center at 102 Westchester Drive.



**Aerial View of Penn National Site**

**Township Hall**  
82 Ohltown Road  
Austintown, Ohio 44515  
Phone: 330-792-8139  
Fax: 330-793-9919  
Hours:  
Monday-Friday 8 A.M. to 4 P.M.  
Voice mail also available  
Website:  
[www.austintowntwp.com](http://www.austintowntwp.com)  
Austintown Phone Numbers:  
Emergency: .....911  
Trustees:.....330-792-8139  
Police: Non-Emergency  
330-799-9721  
Fire-Business: .....330-799-8502  
Road:.....330-792-2602  
Park Pavilion Rentals .....  
330-792-8584  
Park Department ...330-793-0718  
Zoning .....330-799-3241  
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# Austintown Township

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## Hollywood Gaming at Mahoning Valley Race Course



On May 30, 2013 Penn National Gaming broke ground on its \$125 million thoroughbred horseracing and video lottery facility here in Austintown. The future Hollywood Gaming at Mahoning Valley Race Course was born. Upon its opening (anticipated Summer 2014) it will be home to up to 1,500 video lottery terminals, thoroughbred racing and approximately 1,000 direct and indirect jobs.

As of October 10, 2013 visitors to the site will see steel out of the ground and the outline of the mile long thoroughbred track. Steel construction and topping off is expected by mid-November of this year, which will allow Penn to begin closing in the building to keep with the current construction timeline.

To date, over \$12 million has been awarded to local construction-related businesses, which is roughly 49% of the total construction work put out to bid so far. Construction is nearly 20% complete and the project has employed over 250 trades people to date. Those interested in learning about construction opportunities are encouraged to contact the construction management firm, Turner Construction, at (216) 522-1180.

Residents wanting to keep up with the latest on the project's progress are encouraged to follow it on the Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/  
HollywoodMahoningValley](http://www.facebook.com/HollywoodMahoningValley)  
[http://www.facebook.com/  
HollywoodMahoningValley](http://www.facebook.com/HollywoodMahoningValley).

Those interested in doing business with Hollywood are encouraged to register their business at [www.pngaming.com/vendors](http://www.pngaming.com/vendors)

And, to be the first to learn of Hollywood's hiring opportunities, sign up for email alerts at: [www.pngaming.com/careers](http://www.pngaming.com/careers)

Information related to jobs and hiring events for Hollywood will be available starting Spring 2014.



Trustee  
Rick A. Stauffer



Trustee  
Lisa Oles



Trustee  
James Davis



Fiscal Officer  
Laura Wolfe



**AUSTINTOWN**  
TOWNSHIP PARKS

## Township Park Splash Pad and Bark Park



New to Austintown Park this year is our Splash Pad (sometimes referred to as a Spray pool) which was dedicated on May 22nd 2013. The 25' x 41' splash pad has 6 above ground units that spray water and 12 in ground nozzles that spray water straight up. The splash pad is open from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend, seven days a week from noon-7:00pm. The water is set to a timer that shuts the water off every 5 minutes. To activate the water a visitor simply has to place their hand on top of the orange pole in the south-east corner of the pad and the sensor will turn the water back on thereby conserving water usage. Rules are posted on sign outside of pad and are strictly enforced by Park Staff. There is no lifeguard at the splash pad because there is NO standing water. Children must be accompanied by an adult 18 or older to use the splash pad.

***AUSTINTOWN PARK IS GROWING,  
COME BE A PART OF THE FUN WITH  
YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND ENJOY!!!!***

Also new to the park this year is a half-acre fenced in area Dog Park. Proudly named by the Board of Trustees as the Austintown Bark Park, this park has 6 pieces of agility equipment to help train your dog, with several more pieces to be added in the future. Half of the area is left open to let your dog run, play catch, or just relax in nature. Future endeavors also include adding a pavilion and a drinking fountain for dogs and owners alike. The ribbon cutting/grand opening for this dog park was held on Saturday September 21st. There is NO fee for using this dog park and anyone, resident or not, are welcome to use the park. Rules are in place all around the fencing area. The most important rules are all dogs must be current on shots, you must have voice control of your dog at all times, no dogs in heat and you must clean up after your dog (bags are provided in several different locations around the dog park). Finally, the use of the dog park is at the owner's risk. That is, the dog owner is responsible for anything your dog may do to another dog or person inside the dog park.



## Change to Homestead Exemption

Each qualifying homeowner is entitled to an exemption of up to \$25,000 of the market value of their homestead, which means \$8,750 of the taxable value (\$25,000 times 35 percent) is exempt from property taxes, if the property is the homeowner's primary residence. The homestead exemption is available to Ohio homeowners who are at least 65 years of age, permanently and totally disabled, and homeowners who are at least 59 years of age and are the surviving spouse of a deceased homeowner who qualified for the exemption.

**The following information is from the Ohio Department of Taxation website**

### 1. What is changing?

In 1970, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment permitting a homestead exemption that reduced property tax for lower income senior citizens. In 2007 the General Assembly expanded the program to include all senior citizens, regardless of their income. Now, the state of Ohio is returning to the originally approved system of applying means/income testing to determine eligibility for the homestead exemption. Seniors who are currently eligible for the

program will continue to receive the homestead exemption. Seniors who newly apply for the exemption for tax year 2014 and subsequent years will only be eligible if their household income is less than \$30,000.

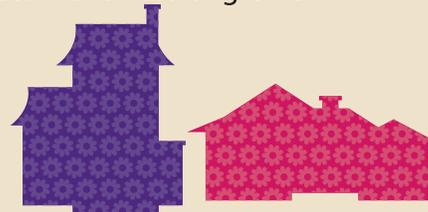
2. Why was \$30,000 selected as the threshold instead of \$50,000 or some other amount?

The prior threshold (pre-2007) was updated for inflation and that resulted in a \$30,000 threshold. The 2012 poverty threshold for a household of two people 65 years and over with no children under 18 years of age was \$13,878 per person, for a total of \$27,756.

### 3. The income threshold was removed just a few years ago. Why bring it back?

The original purpose for Homestead Exemption was to help low-income seniors stay in their homes. The 2007 change to include all seniors by setting the threshold at zero strayed from that objective. This returns the program to its original purpose.

Allowing senior citizens of all incomes into the Homestead Exemption program has caused the cost of the program to increase dramatically. The program cost \$70 million in 2006 when the income qualification was still in place. That cost escalated to \$410 million in 2012, and is projected to be \$533 million in 2018. The state budget cannot sustain this kind of growth.



## Cutback to Township Leaf Collection Program

The termination of a \$13,000 grant from the Mahoning County Green Team, that funded the township's Leaf Collection program for the past 4 years, has caused the township to cancel its curb collection program this Fall.

## TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS

Election Day is Tuesday November 5. Throughout the State all townships, including Austintown, will elect two (2) Trustees for four year terms. Austintown will also elect a Fiscal Officer to the term ending March 31, 2016. In the last township election in November 2011, 12,818 Austintown voters went to the polls according to the Ohio secretary of State's website.

## Find your Polling Location

To find the Mahoning County Board of Elections website simply do a search of "Mahoning Elections". On their website click on the link "voter.mahoningcountyoh.gov". Next, look for link "Check My Voter Registration" and that link will take you to a site where you enter your last name and then your first name. When you submit your name your address will appear along with the Polling location for that address.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

### *The People Make the Difference*

#### *Thank You for Your Support*

A year ago the Fire Department asked the Residents of Austintown to support the replacement of 3 fire levies. Thanks to you, we were able to keep our 4 fire stations open and keep our (2) 24 hour staffed fire trucks on the road. We want the Residents of Austintown to know how much we appreciate their continued support.

Thank you.

My Dad always taught me that if you surround yourself with good people you will always be successful. In my first year as Fire Chief I have found out how true this is. I would like to thank our Firefighters for their dedication to our Community and to our Department. This group of men and women have gone over and above to make the Fire Department as successful as it is today. They are constantly dedicating their time to attend civic and department functions without compensation. I would put the Department's work ethic up against anyone's. I think it is important for the Residents of Austintown to know how dedicated our men and women are to this Community. They do it for the love of Austintown and our Fire Department. Thank you to all of them.

Andy Frost, Fire Chief

## ***Austintown Fire Department Make-Up***

### **Equipment and Staffing:**

- Station #1** 384 N. Niles-Canfield Rd.  
Equipment: (1) Engine – 2008, (1) 102' Aerial - 1994, (1) Reserve Engine – 1994  
(1) Jeep Grass Fire Truck – 1966  
Staffing: Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Inspector,  
(2) Administrative Assistants, Part-Time Maintenance Person,  
(3 to 4) Firefighters on duty
- Station #2** 4102 Mahoning Ave.  
Equipment: (1) Engine – 2009, (1) Heavy Rescue/Command Post – 1987  
Staffing: (3) Firefighters on duty
- Station #3** 2650 S. Raccoon Rd.  
Equipment: (1) 79' Aerial – 2011, (1) Engine – 1986  
Staffing: (15) Respond from home Part-Time Fighters
- Station #4** 1650 S. Turner Rd.  
Equipment: (1) 55' Aerial – 1994, (1) Engine – 1987  
(1) Jeep Grass Fire Truck – 1964  
Staffing: (15) Respond from home Part-Time Fighters

## **AUSTINTOWN SENIOR CENTER** *continued from page 3*



We have bingo and exercise every day. During the month we have an extensive menu of services including: bridge, line dancing, Tai-Chi, Pizza parties with movie, wood carving, yoga, crochet, trips to area events and attractions, religious and current events discussion groups, painting class, wine making, drums alive and zumba, computer classes, jewelry making, cooking class, and many more. Any member can suggest a class or activity and we will do our best to obtain the resources needed to make it happen.

Just this year a number of our members won awards for their painting, photography and wine making entries at the Canfield Fair.

The activities are only a part of the services we offer; also offered are blood pressure checks, a social worker, senior fraud counsel, a very active veteran's program and speakers on various subjects of interest to seniors.

These services are free for Austintown residents 60 and older and \$36 per year for non-residents except for occasional class material costs and a \$5.00 fee for most road trips.

## A Message from the Fiscal Officer

My name is Laura Wolfe and I am the Fiscal Officer here in Austintown Township. I have worked in this position for almost two years and I wanted to share some things about the Township's Finances with the residents. First of all, thank you to everyone who supported the Police and Fire Levy replacement levies last year.

With the passing of these levies, the Township has maintained the services to which the residents are accustomed. We are able to maintain our full-time staffing levels. The Township has hired, promoted and retired numerous employees throughout the last two years. Austintown has reinstated its paving program. The Zoning Department has worked effectively to obtain grants to demolish unsafe homes in the Township. The Park Department was very busy this year. We opened a Splash Pad and Dog Park this summer. We purchased park property with a Clean Ohio Grant. The Park Department hosted the Concerts in the Park, the 4th of July Festivities and fireworks and numerous other community events. The Senior Center is continually adding new members and improving services. We are also looking forward to the completion of the Racino next year. The Township's economy should improve with the growth of new businesses and services around the Racino. We are working to continue to grow Austintown at a slow and steady pace. I want you to know that your levy monies are put to use in the most effective and efficient manner. I have maintained a balanced budget, even though the State of Ohio continues to cut local government funding. (*See "Cuts in State Funding" article*). The Board of Trustees, Department Heads, Administrator and I are continually reviewing the Township's Budget and making the necessary adjustments so that Austintown can remain the **BEST community in the area**.

## CUTS IN STATE FUNDING:

Cuts to the Local Government Fund (LGF), loss of tax replacements promised when the state eliminated taxes on public utilities and commercial and industrial tangible personal property in the past decade and final elimination of the estate tax on the heirs of Ohio's wealthiest estates leave local government facing a loss of \$720 million in fiscal years (FY) 2014-15 compared to FY 2012-13, reports Policy Matters Ohio. "Local governments will see \$1.5 billion less in tax revenues and state aid compared with FY 2010-11," said Wendy Patton, Senior Project Director at Policy Matters Ohio and the report author. The entire report can be found at [www.policymattersohio.org](http://www.policymattersohio.org).

Austintown's share of this reduction in tax revenues consists of its General Fund receiving \$513,062 in LGF in 2010 compared to 2012 when Austintown received \$357,066, a 30% reduction; Between the same years the township has had a 33% reduction in tangible personal property tax revenue and the personal property tax replacement revenue; and From 2010 through 2012 Austintown received an average of \$526,000 in Estate Tax.

As a result of these state funding cuts by 2014 the township's General Fund will have approximately \$700,000 less in Estate Tax revenue, tangible property and tangible property replacement tax revenues and LGF revenue when compared to 2011. To recoup this \$700,000 the voters would have to approve a new 1.15 General Fund levy. This loss of General Fund revenue may impact Road resurfacing, and the availability of local matching funds necessary to obtain road improvement and storm water alleviation grants.

### Dr. Thomas Fok

Dr. Thomas Fok died August 24, 2013. Dr. Fok and his engineering firm, Thomas Fok and Associates, designed 34 Road and Storm Water Alleviation projects for the township since the early 1990's. It was Dr. Fok and his firm that the township hired after the 100 year storm of July 31, 1992 to begin designing storm water alleviation projects. Almost 6 million dollars of grants and matching funds later the township's successful flood alleviation projects, under Dr. Fok's engineering design leadership, have saved thousands of our residents from the misery and property damage caused by in house flooding. RIP

## AUSTINTOWN POLICE

The Austintown Police Department would like to remind all residents of the **OVER THE COUNTER DRUG TAKE BACK PROGRAM**. Located in the lobby of the police department is a white secured receptacle that allows residents to drop off unused/expired or unwanted prescription medication 24 hours seven day a week.

This past June the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network reported that heroin abuse continues to rise in Ohio, increasing among young white females. Most Medical Examiners in each of Ohio's counties have seen large increases in heroin overdose related deaths. Many people who use heroin reported using prescription opioids (painkillers) first which seemingly led to heroin. That's one reason why it's important to keep your medication in a locked container or dispose of it at the police department. We as parents are the first and last line of defense to stop our children from using drugs. Below is a list of behavioral symptoms that may indicate your child is using drugs.

**Mood Swings** - Virtually all mood-altering drugs produce mood swings from euphoria to

**Depression.** A user may be passive and withdrawn one minute ...and angry or hostile the next.

**Personality Changes-** A normally energetic and outgoing young person becomes chronically depressed and uncommunicative.

**Defensiveness** - Blaming others or claiming to be persecuted or victimized.

**Overly Emotional** - Inappropriately happy, depressed, hostile or angry.

**Overly Self-Centered** - Always has to have own way and will do anything to have it.

**Tendency to Manipulate** - Making excuses for failure. Finding ways to have other people handle their problems and bear the consequences of their actions or behavior.

**Strained Communication** - Unwillingness or inability to discuss important issues or concerns.

**Withdrawal from Family Activities** – Refusing to eat at family meals, participate in celebrations or holidays or makes any adjustments to family life.

**School Problems** – Excessive tardiness, absences, drop in grades, failure to turn in assignments and take tests.

**Lack of Self-Discipline** – Inability to follow rules, complete household chores or school assignments, keep appointments or commitments.

**Change in Dress and Friends** – Wears clothes, jewelry and hair styles imitating drug culture standards. Spends time with suspicious friends who refuse to meet parents or talk to them.

The Austintown Police Department has many resources and works with many different agencies to help you as a parent. If you have any questions or issues about drug abuse please feel free to contact us.



## AUSTINTOWN SENIOR CENTER

The Austintown Senior Center continues to grow and serve the mature residents of Austintown and surrounding areas. We have grown from a few people in 2010 to a membership that is over 1,000 with an average daily participation of 60 people. During any month as many as 200 different people take advantage of the services and programs offered.

Many have no idea what a senior center is or does. A senior center is a place in a community where seniors gather for socialization, education, mutual support and activities that provide mental and physical exercise, as well as offering an alternative to a destructive solitary lifestyle. These resources and activities assist many senior citizens to remain a vital part of their communities. Compared with their peers, senior center participants have higher levels of health, social interaction and life satisfaction. The participation in senior center programs is proven to manage or delay the onset of chronic disease and seniors experience measurable improvements in physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental and economic well-being. These improvements result in a senior populace that requires less community resources such as health care, social programs and a family's resources thus returning the community's investment in the senior center many times over.

*What happens at the Austintown Senior Center? (continued page 6)*

## COPS Grant

The Austintown Police department was recently awarded a \$250,000 grant payable over three years from the U.S. Department of Justice to hire more officers as announced by the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. The Police department is planning on using the money for two School Resource Officers. The grants awarded to Austintown were part of the Community Oriented Policing program, or COPS grants.

Only eight other departments in Northern Ohio were awarded COPS grants for new officers- Akron, Canton, Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County Housing Authority, Lima, Mansfield, Warren and Toledo. Austintown was one of only three departments in Ohio, with Warren and Lima the others, to receive funding for School Resource Officers.

## Pinecrest Avenue Storm Sewer Improvement

Fall should see the beginning of the township's most recent storm water alleviation project. The Pinecrest Avenue Storm Sewer Improvement project consists of the replacement of an outlet pipe and the installation of 9 catch basins, 2 manholes and 1,215 feet of storm pipe from 15 to 36 inches in diameter. Of the total \$184,000 cost, 84% will be paid by an Issue I grant from the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC). The purpose of the project is to alleviate storm water from infiltrating the Sanitary sewer and thereby causing sanitary backup into the homes in the area. This project continues the township's policy since 1992 of seeking grants for projects that will alleviate in-house flooding.

Upon completion of the Pinecrest Avenue Storm Sewer Improvement project the township will have increased its spending on Storm Alleviation projects and Road Improvement projects to approximately \$6.1 million since 1992. The majority of this money came from grants from the state Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC). Other funding sources were Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Township General Fund and Road Fund and private funds.

## ZONING: DEMOLITION GRANT

Austintown Township was awarded \$54,828.00 in unmatched funding and \$35,000.00 in matched funding as participants in the Ohio Attorney General's "Moving Ohio Forward" grant program designed to remove neighborhood blight. The funding was provided after a March 12, 2012 settlement between Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and five of the nation's largest mortgage servicers over foreclosure abuses, fraud and unfair and deceptive mortgage practices.

The Austintown Township Trustees have successfully completed 11 neighborhood demolitions with an additional housing demolition undertaken by the property owner. The zoning office is currently preparing twelve more demolitions which should exhaust the total grant of \$89,828.00. The dwellings that have been declared public nuisances by the Trustees under Ohio Revised Code 505.86 were first declared "unfit for human habitation" by the Mahoning County Board of Health or declared insecure, unsafe and structurally defective by the Austintown Township Fire Inspector.

The largest of the home demolitions undertaken thus far was an approximate 30,000 sq. ft. dwelling located at 332 North Benton Avenue. The home was originally constructed as a 1,600 sq. ft. ranch. In 2006 a zoning permit was issued for a three story addition that was framed in but never completed. Deterioration due to weather and neglect led to the home meeting the criteria for demolition and it was recently razed after being condemned. Other home demolitions this year have occurred on New Road, Third Street, Ohltown Road, Nassau Court, South Meridian Road, Lou Ida Boulevard, West Rockwell Road, South Four Mile Run Road, Abbot Avenue and Idlewood Avenue.

