



# *Borough of Chambersburg*

*A full service municipality in Franklin County  
celebrating over 65 years of consumer owned natural gas service  
over 120 years of community electric and a  
regional wastewater, water, and municipal solid waste utility*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### CHAMBERSBURG APPROVES PROPOSAL TO DRAFT SIDEWALK PLAN

Chambersburg – Faced with the prospect of the upcoming completion of the Borough’s long-awaited Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Plan, Town Council, on Monday, January 23, approved a staff proposal to draft a Borough-wide “holistic” sidewalk implementation strategy. A large group of citizens attended a Curb and Sidewalk Policy Compliance Committee meeting on Thursday, January 19, and some of that group returned on January 23, to insure that Town Council would work in this new direction.

According to Borough Manager, Jeffrey Stonehill, “Phil Wolgemuth, Assistant to the Borough Manager, and Samuel Wisner, of the Borough Solicitor’s staff, worked through 2016 to develop a new sidewalk implementation strategy that would change the way the Borough of Chambersburg decides where sidewalks get installed.”

The proposal, which received Council’s support, will eventually change the system. Instead of deciding on a case by case (block by block) basis, the Borough will decide where to build sidewalks by a Borough-wide adopted sidewalk plan. The plan would depict each street frontage for each tax parcel (each lot) on an official sidewalk plan map, where either the sidewalk network already exists or is recommended by Council to be extended; based upon when certain events or conditions occur.

The key change is that sidewalk plan/map could exempt areas where Council feels there is no public interest in compelling citizens to install sidewalks. The current policy, adopted in 2003-2004, does not allow exceptions to the installation of sidewalks. A number of triggers, most commonly the paving of streets, automatically begin the process of compelling the installation or repair of sidewalks.

According to Phil Wolgemuth, who manages the Borough’s Land Use and Community Development Department, “there is no Borough-wide plan or map identifying areas where Council has determined the preservation or extension of the sidewalk network is in the best interest of the community. Now, sidewalks are implemented almost everywhere. Planning is the best way to make these determinations.”

The plan and map, which might take over a year to develop, would depict each and every tax parcel in the Borough and identify whether sidewalks are required (whether currently installed or otherwise) on a particular tax parcel, parcels with sidewalks would be required to maintain them (per the plan), or parcels without sidewalks would be identified for future sidewalk installation or not (per the plan). The map would be a part of the tax parcel map system in the Borough’s computerized mapping software. The plan and map would be established by local law, similar to the Official Map, with future Subdivision and Land Development Plans automatically acting as an amendment to the map. As is required for any adjudication (such as zoning or building codes) an independent appeals board appointed by Council, preferably the Curb and Sidewalk Policy Compliance Committee, would be needed to consider appeals from property owners who believe their parcel should not be required to install sidewalks (i.e. the map should be changed) once the map is established by Council. A means of appeal must be provided after the plan and map is established by Council, staff feels it is legitimate to delegate this authority to a separate board.

According to Attorney Samuel Wisner, “the borough-wide plan/map resolves some of the controversial questions now, once and for all by taking a holistic or community-wide pedestrian network approach to sidewalk planning; not that the sidewalks are required everywhere approach was wrong.”

There will still be some debate as the plan/map is drawn and adopted. There will be public meetings about the plan/map and it will appear somehow on the Borough website before adoption. The plan cannot be drafted until the Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Plan is approved by Council. That document will likely recommend this strategy and is anticipated in the summer of 2017. In response to this new approach, Town Council also decided to not issue any new sidewalk installation notices this year, although notices from previous years are still in force and effect. In addition, notices to repair existing sidewalks might still be issued.

Finally, Stonehill added that “staff is confident this is a better approach than the current block-by-block approach being utilized. While it is not likely we will avoid the big debates regarding certain streets, as long as the decisions together make a consistent plan for the town, we think by 2018, there will be a new logic and a revised policy to decide where sidewalks should or should not go.”

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Chambersburg is a unique community. Chambersburg supplies more services than any other municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In addition to typical town functions, Chambersburg is Pennsylvania’s only municipality supplying electric & gas. Chambersburg is 1 of 35 Boroughs to operate a municipal non-profit electric utility. Chambersburg is the largest municipal electric utility in the State, twice as large as the second largest, Ephrata, Lancaster County; and, the only one to operate generation stations. Chambersburg is 1 of 2 municipalities in PA to operate a natural gas utility. The other is Philadelphia, which does not operate an electric utility. Nationally, Chambersburg is 1 of 2,000 communities to have its own electric system and 1 of 800 communities to have a natural gas system but 1 of only about 50 to operate both. Chambersburg manages a regional water system, a regional sanitary sewer system (not through an independent Authority), and a new storm sewer utility; one of the first storm sewer utilities to form under the new Federal mandate to regulate stormwater. Chambersburg currently has 20,360 residents (2012). [www.chambersburgpa.gov](http://www.chambersburgpa.gov)