

Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum Mayors Memo!



The Souderton Wastewater Treatment Plant; It is by far the service that our residents use the most, and think about the least. *And that's a good thing!* If you *aren't* thinking about the Wastewater Treatment Plant every time you flush your toilet, turn on your sink, or take a shower, that means it is doing its job. But the waste you put down the pipes in your home does not just magically disappear. You may not think about it, but every drop of water that you use in your home makes its way to the Souderton Wastewater Treatment Plant, and is serviced, cleaned, analyzed, and re-circulated by our dedicated Borough crew!

The Wastewater Treatment Facility, built in 1989, is actually located right outside of our Borough on Cowpath Road. It serves all of Souderton Borough, plus the Elroy section of Franconia Township. The Plant is far from glamorous, but it is incredibly necessary. In this Memo, I'll describe some things that you'd probably rather not think about, but that your tax dollars and sewer bills are paying for each & every day. Feel free to stop reading now, and just know that your taxes are going to good use. If you are interested in the process, carry on...but maybe not while trying to enjoy your lunch...

Whatever you flush down the toilet disappears out of your home, and makes its way through an intricate series of pipes that run underground throughout our Borough. They make their way to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, where they first meet the Mechanical Bar Screen. This machine removes all the "solids" from the water; toilet paper, rags, hair, and other things I won't mention...but use your imagination. Once solids are removed, the raw sewage moves through another channel where a Grit Screw removes any rocks, grit, and small debris from the liquid. It then moves to two enormous clarifier tanks, where the water is purified using air circulation, chlorine, and naturally-occurring microbials. In these tanks, clean water floats to the top, while remaining sludge sinks to the bottom. The mechanisms of the Extended Aeration Tanks filter out the sludge, which goes through a further purifying step before being discharged into a dumpster and removed to a landfill. The purified clean water, now crystal clear, is injected with sulfur dioxide to remove the chlorine used for disinfection, and then makes its way out through a flow meter, and into the neighboring Skippack Creek. The water then goes through the entire water cycle, and is ultimately used again by consumers. The system is impressive and fascinating!

This process is happening 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Souderton Borough Wastewater Treatment Plant is designed to handle two million gallons a day. Wastewater is heavily regulated by the Department of Environmental Protection. Daily sampling is lab-tested to ensure that what we are putting back into the ecosystem is potable and safe for humans and the natural environment.

Our Wastewater Treatment Plant is old. It was built in 1989. The industry standard for a Treatment Plant is about 20 years, yet 35 years later many of the mechanisms in our plant are original. Many pieces of our equipment are considered



Wastewater going through the treatment process. It looks worse than it smells, I promise!



The Belt Filter Press: one of our original apparatus amazingly still in daily operation.

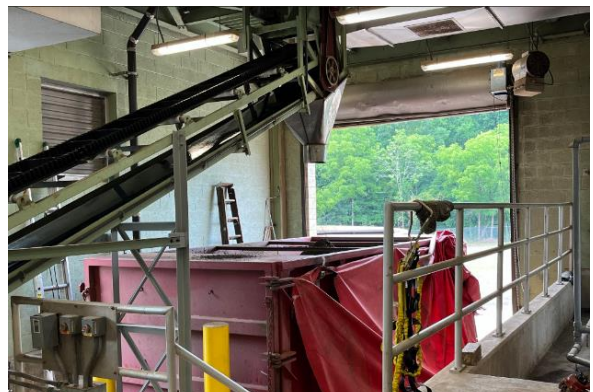
dinosaurs of the industry, with wastewater insiders amazed that they are still in daily operation. The only way this all works is because of the longevity, dedication, and brilliance of our Wastewater Treatment crew. Sal Desimone diligently served the Plant for 40 years, and retired last year as our Chief Operator. In his place we have Tyler McCarthy, who has worked at the Plant for 16 years. Domenic Desimone and Braxton Hubner also work at the Plant and together, the small-but-mighty crew manage the five buildings, two wastewater tanks, electrical substation, several acres of land on-site, plus three pump stations throughout Souderton. They are on-call every holiday and weekend. If something goes wrong at the plant, it needs to be addressed immediately to avoid catastrophe. Wastewater never stops flowing. If a piece of equipment were

to fail, and un-treated water were to make it into the Skippack Creek, our Plant would shut down and your modern quality of life would cease to exist. If you ask members of Borough Council what keeps them up at night, this is it! Further, Pennsylvania DEP is getting ever stricter with their water quality standards. While we can all agree that this is a good thing for our overall health & well-being, it puts tremendous pressure on small municipalities to upgrade their systems; upgrades that can easily cost millions & millions of dollars.

When we raised taxes this year, one primary reason was to increase the reserves in our “rainy day fund”. Souderton Borough currently has about one million dollars in our Sewer Treatment Fund. If one element of the aged Plant were to fail, or state regulations were to surpass the abilities of our current operations, those funds would evaporate overnight. This is why you hear local and national discussion of privatizing water treatment facilities. Souderton Borough has certainly been approached by private firms looking to purchase the rights to our wastewater. But every expert in the field will tell you that is bad for the consumer in the long run. So we make it work!

The Wastewater Treatment Facility is likely out of site and out of mind for 99% of our residents. Most Souderton residents will never see the Plant, nor do they want to. But please know that it is not only is it a huge cost to Souderton Borough, but also a critical element to the happiness and well-being of our residents, and the value of our properties. Tyler, Domenic, and Braxton are very valued members of our staff.

Maybe next time you use the toilet, you’ll think for a moment about Souderton Borough. Just please don’t flush this Mayors Memo!



Remaining solid waste being deposited into the dumpster for removal.

It’s Block Party season! Did you know that Souderton Borough can help facilitate closing your street or alley for a Block Party? Get together with your neighbors in the safety of a closed street. Contact the Souderton Police for more information at 215-723-6500.