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July 8, 2022

Latest News

Definition of Rural and Urban Municipalities Updated

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania revised their [definitions to identify rural and urban counties, school districts, and municipalities](#) in Pennsylvania following the 2020 Census results. In May 2022, the Center's Board of Directors approved the following updated definition of rural/urban municipalities:

Municipal Definition - A municipality is rural when the number of people per square mile in the municipality is fewer than 291 or the municipality is in a rural county and has fewer than 2,500 residents. Other municipalities are considered urban.

Out of 2,560 municipalities, this definition categorizes 1,649 municipalities (64%) as rural and 911 municipalities (36%) as urban.

This is a change from the previous definition following the 2010 Census which defined a municipality as rural when the municipality's population density is less than 284 persons per square mile, or the total population is less than 2,500, unless more than 50 percent of the population lives in an urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. This previous definition categorized 1,592 (62%) municipalities as rural and 970 (38%) as urban.

Realty Transfer Tax: 2021 Common Level Ratio

The State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) established the 2021 Common Level Ratio (CLR) of assessed value to current market value for each county in the Commonwealth. Per the requirements set forth in the Community and Economic

Development Enhancement Act, STEB has published the [Certified 2021 Common Level Ratios](#) and the [CLR Factors](#) in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Today in History

On July 8, 1776, a 2,000-pound copper-and-tin bell now known as the “Liberty Bell” rang out from the tower of the Pennsylvania State House (now Independence Hall) in Philadelphia, summoning citizens to the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. Four days earlier, the historic document had been adopted by delegates to the Continental Congress, but the bell did not ring to announce the issuing of the document until the Declaration of Independence returned from the printer on July 8.

Legislation & Policy



Finally, Pennsylvania Appears Close to a 2022-2023 Budget

At seven days after the Pennsylvania Constitutional deadline for passing a budget, the General Assembly and Gov. Tom Wolf may have reached consensus as [SB 1100](#), the budget bill for 2022-2023. The bill was amended in the House and passed 180 to 20. The bill is now before the Senate for concurrence on House amendments.

In a budget year when state coffers are overflowing, the budget does not include any new or increased taxes. Both chambers will return to session today in an attempt to finalize the budget. Watch the session live [here](#).

In addition to funding state government for the new fiscal year, the \$46 billion budget would allocate the state’s American Rescue Funds to numerous programs, including \$135 million for local law enforcement support, \$320 million to the Commonwealth Finance Agency for water and sewer projects, and \$220 million to the Clean Streams Fund in DEP. It appears that several new grant programs will be created and about \$2 billion will be set aside in the Rainy Day fund.

In addition, the House amended and passed [HB 1421](#), the Fiscal Code bill, by a vote of 185 to 15. The Fiscal Code spells out how many of the allocations will be

spent, including the creation of grant programs. PSATS staff is digging through the newly amended bill and should the Senate approve the bills, provide details on the new programs. This bill now goes back to the Senate for concurrence on House amendments.

Gov. Tom Wolf signed the following new acts yesterday:

[Act 34 of 2022](#) (HB 1780) amends the Storage Tank and Spill Prevention Act to extend the sunset dates for the program from June 30, 2022 to December 31, 2027.

[Act 37 of 2022](#) (HB 1952) will identify and fund legacy infrastructure projects in each county to celebrate the United States Semiquincentennial, America250PA.

[Act 41 of 2022](#) (SB 477) more clearly defines which types of improvements to real property require notice to the assessment office and increase the property valuation. The act consolidates and standardizes municipal code provisions that deal with boundary change but not mergers or consolidations. The act allows municipalities to adjust a municipal boundary or settle a dispute over an unclear boundary by agreement.

[Act 42 of 2022](#) (SB 563) amends the Fire and Panic Act to update the fire safety requirements for family child-care homes.

[Act 44 of 2022](#) (SB 849) amends the Veterans Preference Act to require service members to complete their term of service with "other than a dishonorable discharge."

[Act 45 of 2022](#) (SB 861) authorizes Pennsylvania to join the EMS Compact and make it easier for EMS personnel to move across state boundaries in performing their duties.

The Senate passed the following bills yesterday:

[SB 382](#) would change the transportation public-private partnership (P3) approval process and prohibit the approval of projects involving mandatory fees. The bill now goes to the governor.

[SB 1093](#) would amend the Outdoor Advertising Control Act to allow energy efficient lighting to be installed on these facilities if no structural changes would be required. SB 1093 now goes to the governor.

[HB 773](#) would increase penalties for certain DUI offenses and require consecutive sentencing for certain repeat offenders. The bill now goes to the governor.

The House passed the following bills yesterday:

[SB 1171](#) would exempt government-owned vehicles and vehicles of local government contractors that are providing material for road construction or maintenance from bonding requirements on commonwealth-owned highways. The bill would address a PSATS resolution.

[HB 430](#) would amend the Local Tax Collection Law to allow taxpayers who fail to receive a tax notice during their first year of occupancy to receive a waiver of

penalties and additional costs from the tax collector, after being shown proof of the property transfer. The bill now goes to the governor.

[HB 581](#) would create a process for local governments to exempt blighted properties that are significantly improved or new construction in deteriorated areas from property taxes. The bill now goes to the governor.

[HB 940](#) would establish penalties for intentionally injuring or torturing a police animal. Emergency response providers would be authorized to provide medical care and transportation for a police animal injured in the course of duty and give providers civil immunity for damages for rendering aid. The bill would also require the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission to establish police canine training and certification standards and review and update these standards every two years. The bill now goes to the governor.

[HB 1615](#) would allow limited winery license holders in all counties except Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to use amplified sound as long as it does not exceed 75 decibels beyond the property line. Amplified sound would only be permitted from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 am to midnight on Friday and Saturday. The bill now goes to the governor.

[HB 2644](#) would allocate federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds to the Orphan Well Plugging Fund and require the state Department of Environmental Protection to provide grants for oil and gas well plugging. The bill now goes to the governor.

Learn

PSATS educational events will be listed as follows: Mondays – All webinars; Tuesdays – Administrative; Wednesdays – Planning/Zoning; Thursdays – Public Works; Fridays – Public Safety.



Emergency Management Fall Exercise Forum

This class provides an interactive opportunity to engage in tabletop exercises taught by knowledgeable professionals that reflect real-world experiences and situations.

[9/15/22 – West \(Westmoreland Co.\)](#)

[9/29/22 – PSATS \(Cumberland Co.\)](#)

[10/13/22 – East \(Montgomery Co.\)](#)

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