



2023 - BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

TO: Residents of Ben Avon Heights

This is the 60th consecutive year that your Borough has prepared an annual report.

2023 BEN AVON HEIGHTS BOROUGH OFFICIALS

Name	Position	Term
Scott Dismukes	Mayor	12/31/25
Jason Brown	President of Council	12/31/25
Steve Stiller	Vice President of Council	12/31/23
Joseph Dawley	Councilman	12/31/25
Patrick Lope	Councilman	12/31/23
Jacquelyn Neunder	Councilwoman	12/31/23
Greg Mihalko	Councilman	12/31/23
John Radcliffe	Councilman	12/31/23
Michelle Dawley	Judge of Elections	12/31/25
Kim Gourley	Real Estate Tax Collector	12/31/25
Jessica DiNuzzo	Secretary	Appointed
Keystone Collections	Wage Tax Collector	Appointed
John T. Vogel	Solicitor	Appointed

2023 COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

Finance	Brown, Stiller, Dismukes
Emergency Services	Dismukes
Streets and Utilities	Dawley, Stiller, Mihalko
Health & Sanitation	Stiller, Dismukes
Green Spaces	Radcliffe, Neunder
Insurance	Neunder, Lope
Digital Communications	Brown, Stiller
Allegheny North Tax Collection Committee	Brown, Stiller

In 2023, most Council Committees featured more than one Council member to encourage collaboration and provide coverage to the areas. Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. at either Shannopin Country Club (in the months of April, May, June, July, August, September and October) or the Avalon Volunteer Fire Department (in the months of January, February, March, November, and December.) Council encourages all Residents to attend the Council Meetings.

Our Borough maintains a web site that contains links to Borough information, a list of Borough officials, meeting agendas/minutes, and community events. The website address is www.benavonheightsborough.com.

2023 BOROUGH COMMITTEES

Borough Council wishes to recognize and thank the following residents and individuals who volunteered their time in 2023 to work for the Borough in the following capacities:

Planning Commission	Al Cuteri - Chair	2020-2023
	Michael Weir	2020-2023
	Justin Griffith	2022-2025
Avonworth Community Park Board Authority	Damian Liska	
Avonworth Community Park Board	MaryBeth Bolam	
	Terri Brightman	
	Jennifer Fink	
	Hobie Webster	
Zoning Officer	Tom Price	
Zoning Hearing Board	David Raves, Chair	2022-2024
	Michael Rovitto	2022-2024
	Clayton Morris	2023-2025
	Jason Brown	
Borough Website Administrator	Michelle Dawley	
BAH Community Club Chairperson	Jen Dickson	
Community Club Treasurer	Sgt. Adam Beck	
Coordinator Emergency Management	Scott Dismukes	
Deputy Coordinator Emergency Management	Kim Gourley	
Ben Avon Heights Sustainability Committee		

Special Thanks

- Jessica Opalko & Lee Hebert - Community Picnic and Sleepover in the Park
- Travis & Janel Everly - Halloween Parade at the Park
- Susan Dismukes - Borough's Holiday Pole Decoration and the elves who decorate the poles
- Bill & Jen Dickson - Borough Park Tree Decoration
- Bert & Jen Fary - Easter Egg Hunt in the Park
- Mike & Viktorija Rivitto, and Anissa Zappala - Santa in the park
- Jessica Opalko - Baby Dinner Coordination

This message certainly intends to include all the others who made this past year's events possible. We are sorry if we missed anyone.

Community Affairs

We welcomed the following new neighbors to the Ben Avon Heights Community in 2023:

- Beth & Cam Burba
- Benjamin Dermont & Colleen Schiller
- Dylan & Kali Auerbeck
- David, Richard & Sue Hayes

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

Ben Avon Heights Borough is in very good financial health. In 2023, Ben Avon Heights was awarded two grants from the state to improve the quality of its sewer system (\$149,000 and \$257,054). These were a major win in continuing to improve infrastructure in the borough and will be applied to the sewer system in 2024-25.

We utilize a variety of different mandated funds and accounts for: General Business, Reserve Fund, Sewage Fund, Planning Commission, Sinking Fund, RAD, and Liquid Fuels. All total, at the end of 2023 the Borough had a balance of \$1,267,588 in all of these accounts. This is an increase from \$1,013,153 last year.

General Funds	\$353,555
Liquid Fuels	\$19,412
Budgetary Reserve (RAD)	\$72,810
Planning Commission	\$23,579
Sinking Fund	\$22
Borough Reserve Fund	\$398,833
Borough Sewage Fund	\$399,376
	\$1,267,588

The **General Funds** account is used for paying all Borough expenditures. Money is transferred into this account during the year from the other accounts to pay for covered expenses for those account purposes.

The **Liquid Fuels** account is used to construct and repair roads and bridges and pay for related expenses. This funding comes from the state Department of Transportation (PennDOT) via the state's oil franchise tax. This money is transferred into the General Account to pay for road maintenance at the end of each year.

The **Budgetary Reserve (RAD)** account is used for investing in libraries, parks and trails, arts and cultural organizations, regional attractions, sports and civic facilities, and public transit. This funding comes from The Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD).

The **Planning Commission** account was set up in prior years by the Council to fund the Joint Municipality Planning Program and its associated costs such as legal fees, consultant fees, and other related costs.

The **Sinking Fund** is required by the state for any municipality that has outstanding bonds or notes.

The **Borough Sewage Fund** is used to pay for the Borough's Sewage Costs including any construction costs required by the state related to the Consent Decree associated with The Clean Water Act. This fund is populated by sewage fees collected from Borough Residents by the Sewage Collection Agency.

The **Borough Reserve Fund** is a fund set up to pay for any unexpected costs incurred by the Borough. These costs include, but are not limited to, infrastructure costs, legal costs, and emergency management costs.

For the fiscal (and calendar) year 2023, the Borough had Revenues exceeding expenses by \$222,190.

2023 Revenues	\$716,472
2023 Expenses	\$494,282
Net Profit (Loss)	\$222,190

Of this Net Profit, we allocated \$33,000 to the Roadway Improvement Fund, \$36,336.81 to future Consent Decree work, and the rest (\$152,853) is allocated to the Reserve Fund.

Revenues

The principal sources of revenue for the operation of the Borough are the real estate tax, at the rate of 7.95 mills, and the earned income tax of ½ of 1 percent. Other revenues may be derived from the real estate deed transfer tax and from miscellaneous sources such as fines, interest, permits, and grants. We also make transfers into and out of the General Fund from the other financial accounts to pay for their specified expenses.

Real Estate Taxes	\$343,366
Earned Income Taxes	\$153,718
Liquid Fuels	\$14,457
Interest	\$789
Other Income	\$51,566
RAD	16,612
Sewage	\$135,965
Total Revenues	\$716,472

Ben Avon Heights Assessed Real Estate Valuation

2014	\$38,373,400
2015	\$38,889,300
2016	\$38,889,300
2017	\$39,092,700
2018	\$39,375,500
2019	\$40,065,900
2020	\$40,685,100
2021	\$40,875,000
2022	\$42,990,200
2023	\$43,030,500

<https://apps.alleghenycounty.us/website/MuniProfile.asp?muni=9>

Expenditures

Principal sources of expenses are for general government, emergency services, health and sanitation, infrastructure, and green space.

General Government	\$177,288
Emergency Protection	\$71,803
Health & Sanitation	\$172,187
Municipal Infrastructure	\$13,309
Greenspace	\$24,704
Loan Payments	\$22,497
Other Expenses	\$12,494
Total Expenses	\$494,282

General Government expenses include insurance, salaries of employees (Borough secretary and Crossing guards), administrative services (e.g., engineering, legal, auditing, planning, tax collection, etc.), advertising and printing, office supplies and other general expenses.

Emergency Protection expenses include payments for Police and Fire Protection.

Health and Sanitation expenses include payments for sewer connections to Ben Avon Borough and Avalon Borough, weekly garbage and rubbish collection, sewer maintenance, as well as compliance with the Consent Order concerning the Clean Water Act.

Municipal Infrastructure expenses include resurfacing, repair and maintenance of streets, street lighting, snow removal, signs, salt, supplies and equipment costs.

Greenspace expenses for Greenspace/Borough Park include maintenance of the tennis court and playground equipment, shrubs, trees, and park grounds. Also includes leaf collection. Expenses for the Borough's pro-rata share of Avonworth Community Park.

Debt Service

The Borough currently has one loan which will end in 2026. As of December 31, 2023 the principal amount outstanding was \$53,630.

Contracts

The Borough has contracts with the following services:

Police:	Ohio Township Police Department
Fire:	Avalon Volunteer Fire Company
Legal:	Tucker Arensberg P.C.
Engineering:	Lennon, Smith, Souleret Engineering, Inc.
Real Estate Tax Collection:	Jordan Tax Services
Sewage Collection:	Jordan Tax Services
Wage Tax Collection:	Keystone Collections Group
Park Maintenance:	A&N Landscaping Inc.
Leaf Removal:	A&N Landscaping Inc.
Snow Removal:	Avalon Borough
Road Maintenance:	Avalon Borough
PA One Call:	Avalon Borough
Refuse & Recycling:	Valley Waste Services
Building Inspector:	Building Inspection Underwriters of PA Inc.
Auditors:	Hosack, Specht, Muetzel, & Wood LLP
Legal Advertising:	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Banking:	Northwest Savings Bank

EMERGENCY SERVICES

PHONE NUMBERS – 24 HOUR SERVICE

EMERGENCY: 911

NON - EMERGENCY: 412-259-8304

Police

We operate under a joint municipal agreement for Ohio Township police services which was signed with the Township and covers the period January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2025.

The Ohio Township Police Secretary is our main contact during the day at (412) 259-8304 for routine information. Emergencies, of course, should be reported directly to 911 now operated by Allegheny County at 400 North Lexington located in North Point Breeze. We work with the Ohio Township Police Department, Sgt Adam Beck as our Borough's Emergency Management Coordinator. Scott Dismukes is deputy coordinator.

All residents are urged to keep house doors and cars locked. Please continue to list your homes with the police when you are going to be out of town or away on vacation for several days or longer. House numbers need to be prominently displayed and lighting is helpful.

Fire

Our Borough Fire protection is provided by the Avalon Borough Volunteer Fire Department through a joint municipal agreement with Avalon Borough. Remember to call 911 to reach police and fire dispatchers as well as ambulance service. The Avalon Volunteer Fire Department contract expires in 2026.

Crossing Guards

Our school crossing guards are Jennie-Lynn Knox at Oxford and New Brighton intersection on Monday and Jim Hamm on Tuesdays and Nadine Dupechain Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Jim Hamm and Jennie-Lynn

share the responsibilities at the park bus stop. The Borough is still seeking part-time, and substitute crossing guards. Please contact the Borough if interested.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Insurance

The Borough maintains Commercial Insurance and a Workers Compensation policy to protect the Borough, staff, park and Council members. We worked with HHM Insurors to provide the Commercial Insurance through Selective. The policy period was 01/17/23 to 01/17/24 and included Property, Crime Fidelity, Inland Marine, General Liability, Abuse, Public Official and Automobile coverage. We worked with The McGowan Companies to maintain the Workers Compensation & Employers Liability policy through Encova and Summit Point Insurance Company. The policy began on 10/17/22 and was effective until 10/17/23, then extended to 01/18/24.

Streets, Lights and Water

Avalon Borough's Public Works Crew patched potholes in the Heights throughout the year, re-lines the streets and crosswalks, and maintains the grates of catch basins. Please notify the Borough if there are any issues. Also contact the Borough if a streetlight by your property is out or blinking. This will aid in getting the unit changed in a timely manner. Note, Duquesne Light charges us for each light whether it is lit or not.

Roadway Improvement

The Roadway Improvement committee ensures the maintenance and safety of our streets, curbs, and intersections. Work completed in the borough in 2023 includes:

- As a result of feedback from the community, an emphasis was placed in improving safety at intersections by enforcing ordinances regarding sightlines (Ordinance #125 - Prohibiting Hedges, Signs or Similar Obstructions over Three Feet High. All ordinances are available on the Borough's website).
- For the betterment of intersection safety, an electronic speed sign program was piloted on Perrysville Ave leading to the park bus stop. Given positive feedback on the effectiveness of the pilot, Council has budgeted electronic speed signs for the three major ingress/egress points of the borough in 2024.
- A Pavement Inspection and Restoration master plan/schedule was drafted in 2023 that plans the maintenance of all Ben Avon Heights roads through 2039. By drafting a long-term plan, Council aims to be able to appropriately fund, maintain, and replace roadway infrastructure over the next 15 years.
- Partnered with PennDot Duquesne Light to remove the remains of a dangerous tree that had fallen on Ben Avon Heights Road. Because of the size and location of the tree, it was a heavily coordinated effort that required several agencies to be involved and multiple road closures over a four-week span.
- Several grants were applied for Canterbury Road curbs and ADA access which is on the roadmap for reconstruction.

Health & Sanitation

The Health and Sanitation committee is responsible for the sanitary sewer lines and stormwater systems, as well as garbage pickup and recycling in the borough. Items of note in 2023 include:

- In 2023, Ben Avon Heights was rewarded two state grants to improve the quality of our sewer system. These \$149,000 and \$257,000 grants will be bid out and awarded in 2024-25 to further reduce groundwater infiltration into our sanitary system, fix manholes and access, and fund repair projects to restore the system's aging infrastructure.
- Ben Avon Heights was one of the first municipalities to complete Phase II of the Allegheny County Health Department's Consent Decree in 2023. The purpose of the 2004 Consent Decree judicial order is to minimize the amount of sanitary sewer overflow into our local streams and rivers that occurs during wet weather events. All boroughs must comply with each Phase by lowering overrun or demonstrating improvement by 2025 or be subject to fines and penalty.

- Ben Avon Heights borough was categorized as "light blue" or "low infiltration" in relation to other boroughs due to an ongoing maintenance program that measures the water infiltration of our sewer lines and remediates them on a rotating street-by-street basis.
- The Borough met Phase II requirements by passing a new ordinance that requires lateral connecting sewer lines be inspected via CCTV camera at the time of a property sale/closing.
- The grants awarded in 2023 and the work that will be done as a result, will better position the borough for future Consent Decree phases after 2025.
- In 2023, ALCOSAN passed another 7% increase per thousand gallons of water treated per household (based on water meter consumption) to pay for Consent Decree related capital improvements. The Borough, however, has effectively managed its sewer fund and expenses and therefore did not increase the Borough Rate, holding flat at \$3.00 per tGal.
- Tri-State Pipe continues to clean the storm water system yearly in November, after all leaves have fallen. A clean, well-functioning storm water system will help preserve our infrastructure and lower the effects of heavy rainfall on properties in the borough.

Recreation and Greenspace

Our neighborhood park is an important gathering place for all of our residents and their friends. The "Dickson Little Red Library" offers a wide variety of books shared by many walking by the park. There is rarely a day that goes by where there aren't neighbors and friends playing on the playgrounds, basketball court, baseball field or tennis/pickleball court.

Events held at the park were the Easter parade and egg hunt, September Community picnic and sleepover, the Halloween parade and activities. Thanks to the Avalon Volunteer Fire Department, our young ones are greeted annually by Santa who arrives via Fire Truck.

In 2023, Ben Avon Heights Borough Council continued to invest in the park by:

- Began steps to work on a comprehensive plan for the park and green spaces.
- An online survey was sent to residents for an opportunity to voice their feelings on the care of the park as the comprehensive plan is developed.
- Consulted with the talented Landscape Architect, Heather O'Brien, to develop a plan for plantings at the park.
- Applied for a DCNR Grant to help with an accessible parking spot to hopefully further the ability to receive future grants, but we were denied.
- Continued Online Reservation system for the tennis/pickleball court.
- Removed and trimmed trees in the park

In 2023, Council also contracted with A&N Lawn Service to provide park maintenance including grass cutting, and hedge trimming in the park as well as leaf removal in the park and throughout the Borough roads.

We appreciate all of your positive comments on the Borough's Park and green spaces.

On a special note, Mr. John Radcliffe has completed his time on the Borough Council and as a valuable member of the Green Spaces Committee. Mr. Radcliffe has spent countless hours caring for the park over many years of service, devoting his time on many tasks—from attending to bee and wasp nests and repairing peeling paint on fence posts, to meeting with contractors, and raising and lowering the park flag. The borough would like to thank Mr. Radcliffe on behalf of Council and residents for his contributions to our green spaces that will be enjoyed by families for years to come. His dedication to our Borough will certainly be missed.

Digital Communications

The Digital Communication Committee is responsible for creating the infrastructure and tools to effectively communicate with the Borough Residents electronically.

In 2023, the borough developed a Digital Welcome packet for new residents containing materials such as Borough history, contacts, events, and more. If you are a new resident that did not receive, or a current resident that would like a copy, please reach out to the Borough email.

As Residents like to consume the information via different channels, the Borough maintains a multi-channel communications infrastructure comprising email, a website, and social media.

- The Borough Website (www.benavonheightsborough.com) contains general Borough, Council, and the Community information, history, news, and events. It is your one-stop-shop for all things in the Borough
- Email: The Borough Secretary distributes relevant news and information to Residents via email.
- Twitter @BAHBorough - email distributions are tweeted as well as community news; this feed is also presented on the Borough Website
- Facebook (@BAHBorough) - typically related to Borough Happenings / Community events
- Instagram @BAHBorough - - typically related to Community events

In 2022, the Borough posted Ordinances from the past 10+ years. In 2023, we are no longer constrained on disk usage on the website and posted all past Ordinances, making the titles searchable. We are looking into posting Resolutions as well and making them searchable.

Generally speaking, the digital communications for the Borough is performing as desired. Residents are using all the channels of communication to receive Borough Information.