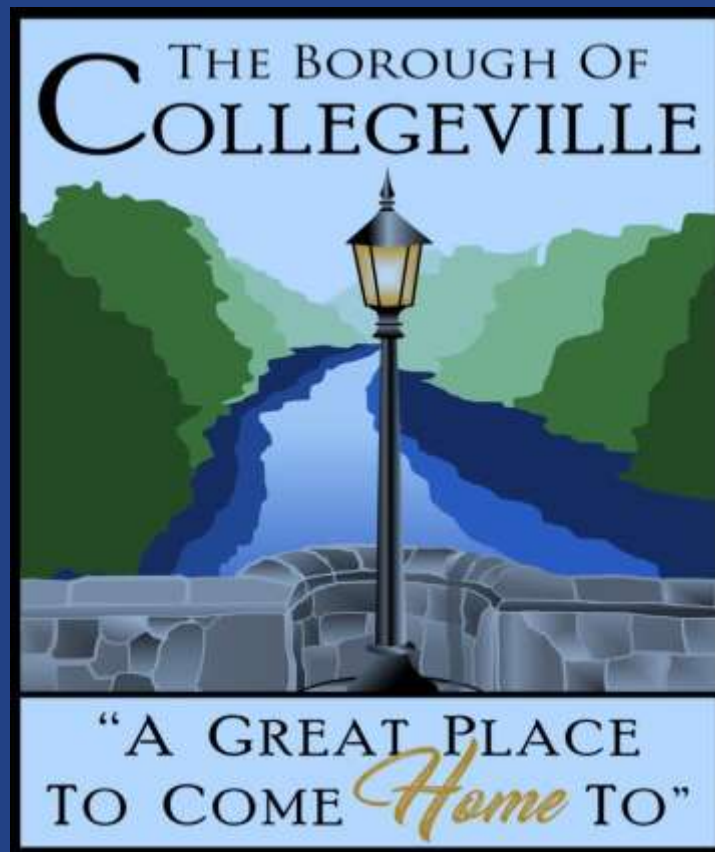


STATE OF  
THE  
BOROUGH  
REPORT



MAYOR AID SAND WRIGHT-RIGGINS

OCTOBER 6, 2021

## STATE OF THE BOROUGH REPORT

Mayor Aidsand. F. “Ace” Wright-Riggins

October 6, 2021



I am pleased to present to the residents, businesses owners, and academic community of Collegeville, what I hope will become an enduring tradition: **“The Mayor’s Biennial State of the Borough Report”**. As mayor, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides the borough's chief executive the privilege of identifying such strengths, opportunities, and challenges at a time of his or her discretion.

To my knowledge, no such report has ever been formally presented in the history of our 125-year-old borough. While I have provided generally monthly updates for the last 3 ½ years about weekly actions and activities I have taken as the mayor, representing and advocating for this community in various settings, I had not undertaken a full-blown **State of the Borough Report**. It is high time to change that! A Mayor’s State of the Borough Report is consistent with this administration’s 46-month record of transparency and accountability,

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of what makes Collegeville such a wonderful place to come home to and to identify opportunities and challenges for our borough in the days ahead.

This year, we commemorate the 125th anniversary of Collegeville as an incorporated entity. We are still in the middle of a devastating pandemic. Hurricane Ida has disrupted businesses and the lives of residents like no other natural disaster in our recent history. There are still lots of moving parts in Collegeville, Montgomery County, and the Commonwealth in the days ahead. Now is the time for such a report.

This report is intended to especially benefit the municipal administration of 2022-2023, whoever is sworn in as a Council Member or Mayor of Collegeville on January 4, 2022. These public servants will need to know what has been accomplished and **what real work still needs to be done in the days ahead**. Hence, this report is a non-partisan and non-political report.

While titled, “**The Mayor’s State of the Borough Report**”, I cannot take but a thimble full of credit for it. As Mayor, I see my role as that of a Drum Major, standing out in front of a band of highly competent instrumentalists, helping them to march in step and in rhythm with each other while acknowledging and affirming each person’s giftedness and skill set. More than anything, a mayor is the representative of the people, a voice of the people... men and women; young and old; red and blue and purple; blue collar, white collar, and people with no collar at all. People who seek to work together so that Collegeville is always known as a great place to come home to.

So, other than asking Borough employees, volunteer staff and Council contributors to keep to the theme, “**Collegeville: A Great Place to Come Home to**” as the backdrop to their reflections, and asking them to be as forthright as they can be regarding strengths, opportunities, challenges, and barriers facing Collegeville Borough... I have not added to nor deleted their assessments of what’s right with Collegeville and what they believe Collegeville need to address. Other than some copy editing I have not sugar coated what they share in this report. As my grandma used to say, “It is what it is and it ain’t what it ain’t!”

Therefore, I wish to especially thank our administrative staff for their contributions to this report. Borough Manager, Tamara Twardowski, Police Chief Bart Bucher and Collegeville Fire Company President Craig Penuel have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Each of their reports identify what makes Collegeville so special. Yet, each of their report’s also site sobering issues that this Council and this community must address in the very near future. I am the mayor, but I am not anyone’s boss. I requested an inspiring yet proscriptive report and they each delivered. I am deeply appreciative of them and for their contributions to this report.

This report is also truly the result of the efforts of our Collegeville Borough Council. They are amazing and extraordinary human beings. Prior to my coming into office almost four years ago, it was evident to me that the majority of then Council Members had little to do other than showing up for a two-hour Council meeting on the first Wednesday night of the month. That has radically changed. Council members are now leading and staffing active committees, giving many hours each month toward Collegeville being a safe, vibrant, diverse and sustainable community.

Council Members are working hand in hand with agencies in and around our borough and county. Council members are acting as seconded staff in many ways, getting out newsletters, cleaning up our parks, redeveloping websites, interviewing neighbors, helping flood victims, advising business owners, reclaiming accountability and oversight for important constituent services. I applaud the Council. I applaud them when I agree with decisions they make. I applaud them when I would have decided or acted differently. Each one of them is a public servant. Each and every one of them wears their role as a loose garment. There are no big “I’s” and “little yous” among them. Collegeville Borough is one of a handful of municipalities in Montgomery County that has chosen not to compensate its elected officials for their service. Yet, these women and men give their all, in service to our community. I salute them all! Our borough is a small one, but it has done some really big things. This report chronicles some amazing accomplishments over the last few years. To name but a few in this introduction:

- The completion of a state of the arts building for the Colleegeville Fire Company, complete with a meeting rooms space for the community as well as an exercise room so that first responders can maintain physical fitness without having to pay out of their own pocket to join a gym.
- The completion of Schellhase Commons at Ursinus College, housing a bookstore and coffee shop that are open to the public.
- The development of new housing units throughout the borough for young families and empty nesters, simultaneously addressing our need for more affordable new homes, allowing older person to age in place and increase our tax base.
- Dramatic improvement in Borough Communications, with a new website, a new newsletter.
- Improvement to Community Park including increased security at jointly owned and operated Waterworks Park.
- Improvements to some of our streets, making the safer for residents and pedestrians.
- The naming of a Human Relations Commission that will begin educating and empowering our community regarding diversity, equity and inclusion without any increases to borough budgets or expenses
- The expression of a caring and compassionate Community Policing process that addresses the challenges of those who are addicted to opioids and addresses an historically unjust bail system

These are but a few of the accomplishments named in this report.

But there are challenges as well for this small borough:

- Our infrastructure is aging. Building, roads, sewer systems will need to be replaced.
- For decades, there has been inadequate planning by the Council and administrative managers. Strategic Planning by the Council in collaboration with the Borough Manager has begun, but we are playing catch-up. We must both address the day to day cost of doing business as a borough while looking towards how we address major anticipated capital expenditures in the future.
- We will lose some incredibly good staff people over the next few years. We will need to identify and recruit competent and accomplished successors.
- A Council culture of collaboration and cooperation must be maintained. We must never revert to the old days of us and them; or red and blue; or my way or the highway. For us, it must always be how do we solve the problem. We must do our best from seeing each other as “the problem:

These are but a few of the challenges and opportunities presented in the report.

I look forward to discussing this report with you in the days ahead. Even more, I look forward to our team of professional, our council and our mayor using this report as a springboard for constructive action in the months and years ahead. Thank you all for helping make Colleegeville Borough a Great Place to Come Home to!

## **REPORT OUTLINE**

- Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, Mayor Page 2
- Tamara Twardowski, Borough Manager Page 6
- Bart Bucher, Chief of Police Page 9
- Catherine Kernen, Business Development Page 15
- Craig Penuel, President of Fire Company Page 18
- Craig Farr, Streets and Public Safety Page 21
- Shannon Spencer, Communications Page 23
- Valarie Beckius, Regional Planning Page 25
- Gary Hoffmann and Cathy Kernen, Personnel Page 27
- Kathy Costello, Parks Committee Page 28
- Heather Lobban-Viravong, Ursinus College Page 31

**Tamara Twardowski  
Borough Manager**



Collegetown Borough has many assets that make it a great place to call home. The area has historical significance dating back to 1700's and is home to many beautiful, historical buildings. The residents who call the Borough home are caring and diverse. The Borough itself is led by a caring, compassionate Council, who value financial responsibility, sustainability, diversity and equality, transparency and open government and economic redevelopment. The Borough administrative staff is committed to carrying out the vision of Council and the Borough is fortunate to have a caring, loyal Police Department with many long-time members, some of whom live within the community itself.

While Collegetown is already a great place to come home to, there are challenges that the Borough will face over the next 5 years that it is important to recognize these so we can plan accordingly. Three main areas of concern are infrastructure, personnel, and finances. A fourth area, of more immediate concern, is the flooding that happens in the Borough, specifically along the Perkiomen. While this area has dealt with flooding for decades, the last few years have showed record-breaking storms back-to-back in 2020 and 2021. Many of the residents have been severely impacted and two homes have been completely destroyed. The Borough will be working with FEMA and the residents to see if we are eligible to apply for hazard mitigation grants, which would grant funding to purchase the properties from the owners and turn them into open space.

The Borough's infrastructure needs include Borough Hall, multiple culverts, and an aging storm sewer system. Borough Hall is nearly 30 years old, and the building itself has been outgrown. While current needs include more space for employees, storing files, and holding comfortable,

socially distanced public meetings and events, the facility itself has maintenance needs. The roof and the HVAC systems are reaching the end of life stage and replacements need to be considered in future budgets. There are three older culverts on Eighth, Fifth, and Sixth Avenue, and two of which will need to be replaced in the next five years, with the third potentially needing replacement in the next decade. Many of the residential developments in Collegeville are between 25-35 years old and many of the storm inlets and stormwater facilities are beginning to show their age and will need to be replaced or upgraded.

Borough Council is committed to employing staff who move the Borough's vision forward. Over the next few years, the Borough will see the retirements of the Treasurer and multiple members of the police department, including the Chief. It will be a crucial when recruiting employees to ensure that the selected candidates are excited and willing to be part of the team. People that are constantly striving to ensure the values of equality, transparency, sustainability fiscal responsibility and planning are considered and adhered to. Additionally, current civil unrest and protests against law enforcement agencies nationwide has been disheartening to the many police officers who are truly good people and to the communities they serve. Collegeville Borough has been able to maintain good relations with the community and while law enforcement candidates are at an all-time low, we believe this relationship will assist us with recruiting good candidates.

Over the next few years, the Borough will be working on long range budgeting and planning. In the past, there was not a focus on capital planning and budgeting, and many of infrastructure concerns discussed have not been planned for or budgeted. The Borough currently runs a tight budget and while balanced, there is little net revenue left to put towards capital expenses. In addition to expenses due to aging infrastructure, the Borough is continually faced with regulations from the state and federal governments such as our Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. Under this permit, the Borough is required to reduce pollutions by improving current storm water facilities or doing new projects such as stream bank restoration. These MS4 projects, along with the culverts, inlets, and either repairs or renovations to Borough Hall, in excess of a million dollars, will need to be budgeted. Current administration is reviewing expenses, seeking proposals services, and reducing expenses where possible. However, with the large capital improvements that will need to be financed over the next 5 years, the fiscal health of the Borough is one that needs to be a priority.

While the Borough faces many challenges, it also has exciting opportunities. The Borough is home to Ursinus College and a relationship has been cultivated over the last few years which has led to a partnership which allows the residents of the Borough to have access to the arts, music, and entertainment provided on campus. The new Schellhase Commons houses a bookstore and coffee shop that are open to the public. Additionally, the college has provided both financial support and volunteer hours for projects throughout the Borough. Most recently, the college has paid for expanding the backstop at the community ballfield and the students have assisted with park cleanups and painting the Scout cabin. These resources are invaluable to the community

and we look forward to finding other ways we can collaborate with the College to benefit residents and students alike.

While Ursinus owns multiple properties in the 400 block of Main Street currently used as student housing, their goal is to eventually move students to campus, leaving the 400 block properties open for redevelopment. Redevelopment would bring new businesses to the Borough, create additional tax revenues with the hope that this will allow more opportunities for our residents to dine and shop locally. The current vision includes a mix of rehabbing historically and architecturally significant properties such as was done at the Commons, along with the removal and replacement of other buildings to allow 3-4 story buildings with retail and restaurant on the first floor and residential units being built on the top floors. Additionally, the Borough and Ursinus would like to create a welcoming town square area at Clammer Hall, where there could be gathering spaces for the community on the outside lawn.

To aid in the redevelopment and to try to address the deficiencies with the Borough Hall building, a 6.5 million dollar grant that would partially assist in renovation and enlargement of Borough Hall. If awarded, this grant would be an enormous opportunity for the Borough to provide better services to the community at reduced taxpayer expense. The Borough will continue to try to look for grant opportunities for not just redevelopment, but also parks and recreation, hazard mitigation, and other infrastructure.

The Borough has worked hard over the last few years to develop communication avenues and strategies to enhance transparency and to make it as easy as possible for residents to access information. This presents other opportunities to continue to reach out to the community and ask for their involvement in decision-making, policy development, and for community assistance. We continue to reach out to residents through Facebook, the website, a monthly newsletter, our park sign, and targeted mailings to try to get input from the residents. The Borough would like to pursue adding a digital sign in the next few years that would allow even greater transmission of information.

Improving Collegetown's parks and open space, while challenging, is also a great opportunity. With feedback from residents through the park committee, the Borough is focused on choosing improvements and making policies that meet the needs of our residents. We have also utilized grant opportunities to provide funding for some of these projects so that there is minimal expenses to the taxpayers. The Borough will continue to look for grant opportunities to both improve the local parks in an effort to maximize the tax dollars used to support the parks.

While facing some challenges, the Borough has the assets to overcome. The Council, community and staff are comprised of talented, compassionate, and dedicated individuals who are committed to making Collegetown the best it can be. Over the last year, I have been impressed with that commitment and I am excited and grateful to be a part of it. I look forward to working with Council and the community to put these challenges behind us and keep Collegetown a great place to come home to.



## COLLEGEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

### Chief Bart Bucher



The Collegeville Borough Police Department is comprised of eight full-time Police Officers who strive to perform police services in a highly professional and ethical manner, in partnership with the community we serve. The mission of the Collegeville Borough Police Department is to promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality services to members of the community in a courteous manner, while diligently working to resolve quality of life issues.

Our commitment is for Collegeville Borough to remain one of the safest communities in which to live and work in Montgomery County. In addition to our Police Department working 24 hours a day/7 days a week, we have Officers that are part of County-wide initiatives and task forces. These include:

1. Montgomery County SWAT- West Region
2. Montgomery County Major Incident Response Team
3. Valley Forge Area DUI Task Force
4. Valley Forge Area Aggressive Driving Enforcement Team

Our Officers have a great working relationship with the Holy Cross Regional Catholic School (Grades K-8) and regularly walk through the school and interact with students, staff and teachers.

Ursinus College is a big part of Collegeville Borough. Our Police Department has worked hard over the years to form a strong relationship with the Student Affairs Office and Campus Safety. Evident of that relationship is the fact that our Chief of Police was invited to be part of the interview process for the past two searches for Campus Safety Director.

### **Positives in Police Work**

Over the past several years there have been few positives in the Law Enforcement profession. Everyone has witnessed the numerous examples of police wrongdoing all over the news and social media including the murder of George Floyd. The days and weeks afterwards brought civil unrest and chaos throughout the country. Chief Bucher is proud of the way Police Departments in Montgomery County responded and proud of how the leadership in our borough responded.

The Montgomery County Police Chiefs Association responded with a strong statement that was shared with the media and disseminated to every municipality and police officer in the county:

*The Police Chiefs' Association of Montgomery County would like to express our heartfelt sympathies to the family of Mr. George Floyd. Just like each of you, we witnessed the video of Mr. Floyd's death and were appalled by what we saw. Police brutality, callousness, and failure to render aid are unacceptable in Montgomery County Law Enforcement. As an organization, we are committed to providing our members with the guidance to help establish rigorous officer selection processes, on-going use of force and de-escalation training, state and/or international accreditation, strict professional standards and citizens' complaint processes. This guidance is provided to help all of our departments to achieve the highest level of professionalism.*

*While some may look at this video and believe that nothing has changed in policing, much has changed in Montgomery County. Over the past several years our police departments have gone to great lengths to engage with the communities we serve. These engagements are not merely public relations events, but meaningful and productive dialog with community members, community leaders, clergy and groups dealing with different forms of racial injustice. Many of our Chiefs are board members in these groups and work diligently to reduce inequality in any form in our county. In February of this year, our Executive Board met with the leaders of the Montgomery County Chapters of the NAACP to continue to improve the relationships between the police and the communities we serve. We have also taken a strong stand against inappropriate conduct committed by officers and have made the sanctity of human life a guiding principle in our agencies.*

*As an association we join with you in your disgust of what you saw in that video, but we ask you to not let this incident destroy the progress that we have made here in Montgomery County. We ask you to keep working with us to keep injustice and violence from our county. As we all mourn the loss of Mr. Floyd, let us come together and continue to communicate so that we can keep fighting against racial injustice and make Montgomery County safe for all persons. The police officers in Montgomery County take an oath to serve and protect all of our citizens and to never discriminate based on a person's race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Our officers have continuously shown that they are compassionate and caring individuals who are willing to sacrifice their safety for their fellow citizens*

Collegeville Borough leaders responded with "A Collegeville Area Memorial for George Floyd" held in the Collegeville Community Park. This gave everyone in the Borough - residents, council members, police, Ursinus College leaders, and county and state politicians a chance to come together to express their sorrow and disappointment while also expressing their commitment to help bring equality to our community in a non-violent and civil manner.

Following this event, a Black Lives Matter demonstration was held in Collegeville Borough along the Perkiomen Bridge. Approximately 200 people were in attendance and these demonstrations continued every Saturday for the next four weeks. Officers from the Collegeville

Borough Police Department were present at each demonstration and were able to peacefully communicate with everyone in attendance to ensure that they had a chance voice their concerns over social injustice.

Over the past year calls for police reform, social justice and improvements to our criminal justice system have swept across our country, our Commonwealth, and our region. The Police Chiefs' Association of Montgomery County, representing Chiefs from all Montgomery County police departments, carefully listened to and discussed these impassioned calls for change.

As a result of these conversations, the Police Chiefs' Association of Montgomery County has collectively identified the following action items that will have a positive impact on policing. More importantly, these initiatives will help to improve the trust and confidence of the communities we serve.

1. Make polygraph examinations mandatory during the pre-hire background investigation for each law enforcement candidate.
2. Establish a statewide periodic Mental Fitness for Duty requirement for police officers. This initiative would help both troubled officers and the people they serve. Establish grant funding for this initiative.
3. Authorize funding and grants for the purchase and maintenance of body camera systems and other non-lethal police equipment.
4. Prohibit the release of "mug shot" booking photos to the media unless the arrestee is determined to be a threat to the safety of the community or if the release is pertinent to an ongoing investigation. Determine specific guidelines when and when not to release.
5. Reform the Act 111 Arbitration System; return authority to civil service or local agency adjudication processes. Establish state standards and policies to uniformly discipline and terminate officers.
6. A law enforcement review board, if established to investigate police misconduct, should include law enforcement professionals that have knowledge of police procedures.
7. Provide a fifty percent reimbursement to an agency for each officer they put through the Police Academy (Act 120) and provide supplemental funding for enhanced Act 180 training.
8. Require and create a grant system to support a more integrated approach of social services for our mental health system. This integrated approach with county and state services should require response capabilities when needed and significant follow-through with the patient/victim.

9. Enact statewide standardized baseline policy requirements and training as it relates to:
  - Crisis Intervention
  - Use of Force
  - Bias Based Policing
  - Implicit Bias
10. Revise traffic citation forms to include the race of the driver to aid with the documentation of traffic investigations.
11. Add incentives for agencies who commit to the PA Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (PLEAC).
12. Encourage partnerships with colleges and universities for scholarship opportunities for law enforcement officers. Consideration for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to provide college tuition for full time officers to obtain their undergraduate degree.
13. Require all law enforcement agencies to fully disclose personnel information to other law enforcement agencies on employees who are terminated, resign in lieu of termination, retire in lieu of termination or otherwise be separated in lieu of termination or those that fail to make probation.

The Montgomery County Chiefs will continue to work with legislators and hopefully they can effect meaningful change that will benefit the policing profession and the citizens they all serve.

### **New Initiatives**

#### **Opioid Epidemic**

Law Enforcement in Montgomery County has worked tirelessly over the past 15 years to establish programs that will curtail the number of residents in our area that develop an addiction to opioids. The Collegeville Borough Police Department Officers are a part of these ongoing efforts.

In 2013, the Montgomery County District Attorney along with the Montgomery County Police Chief Association established the Prescription Drug Disposal Program. The Collegeville Borough Police Department has been active in the Program since its inception.

In 2017, the Collegeville Borough Police Department acquired a MedReturn Drug Collection box that is located in the lobby of Borough Hall. This helps our community properly dispose of unused or unwanted prescription drugs. Items accepted are prescription and over the counter medications.

In 2017, the Collegeville Borough Police Department started carrying Naloxone (also known as Narcan). Naloxone is either an injection or nasal spray that can be used in an emergency situation to reverse the life threatening effects of an overdose.

In June of 2021, Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele partnered with Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Montgomery County Police Chiefs Association and the Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol to announce the new Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative (LETI) Program to help those suffering from Substance Abuse Disorder. The Collegeville Borough Police Department was one of the first to sign on to be part of this county-wide treatment program.

The LETI Program seeks to reduce criminal behavior and improve public safety by connecting those with substance use disorders to treatment and other community resources.

The goal of the LETI Program is to:

1. Reduce deaths, overdoses, and crime associated with substance use disorders by getting people into appropriate treatment.
2. Reduce stigma associated with substance use disorder.
3. Strengthen police-community relationships by providing more productive ways for law enforcement to engage and assist those with substance abuse disorders and encouraging those with a substance use disorder to seek this new help from police.
4. Train law enforcement officers in how to help individuals with a substance use disorder.
5. Connect those with substance use disorder to organizations ready, willing, and able to help them.

## **Bail Reform**

Another important new initiative in Montgomery County is the Bail Reform Program developed by the Montgomery County Pre-Trial Services Unit. The new program started in July 2021 with updated Preliminary Arraignment Procedures and the Collegeville Borough Police Department is one of the few departments that are currently part of the program.

The creation of the Pretrial Services Unit, which aims to determine the release and incarceration status of victims based on a more holistic set of standards, including risk factors. Under the old system, incarceration was based on financial conditions and disproportionately punished those who could not afford to post bail.

The Unit will be charged with gathering and reporting information on individual cases so that judges are more fully informed in the early stages of a criminal case process. The hope is to eliminate "unnecessary detention" before trial. The Unit will interview defendants, perform drug and alcohol testing and treatment, and will have further options including electronic monitoring

at its disposal. An Assistant District Attorney and Public Defender or Private Attorney will also be part of the process.

### **Challenges Facing the Collegeville Borough Police Department**

There are many challenges facing the Collegeville Borough Police Department over the next several years. Two of the biggest are:

#### **Recruitment/Hiring**

The last several years have been difficult for Law Enforcement across the country. Widespread civil unrest and protests against Law Enforcement agencies, and the divide that has opened between police officers and the communities they serve, as well as COVID concerns, have led to a record number of officers opting for early retirement, as well as reductions in people applying for vacant positions. We are fortunate that the Collegeville Borough Police Department has been able to maintain its officers during these trying times.

In the next three years the Collegeville Borough Police Department will be losing three veteran officers to retirement. This will create openings for others who are considering a career in law enforcement. With interest in working as a police officer at an all-time low, we will have to explore ways to recruit candidates to apply to Collegeville Borough. Over the past three years Collegeville Borough has participated in the Montgomery County Consortium of Communities testing process for police officers. By partnering with other municipalities throughout the county, the Borough can reach a broader and more diverse group of candidates.

#### **Technology**

The rate of technological change in recent years has been fast and this is certainly true in the Law Enforcement profession. Technology is changing the way police departments operate. A big challenge facing our department will be to keep up with all of the changes. It is essential for law enforcement to stay current with ongoing technological developments and have a working knowledge of what this technology can do for the department. More importantly, the Borough must be skilled in acquiring technology through a variety of funding sources. This includes applying for grants and sharing technology with other departments.

Our police department has faced many challenges and adversities over the past four years. Through it all, our Officers have realized that they work in a great Borough and have the support of the community that they serve and protect.

## THE BOROUGH'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Council Member Catherine Kernen, Chair



The Borough Business Development Committee (BDC) of roughly 22 residents, Council members, the mayor, members of the Borough's Planning Commission, our representative from the Montgomery County Planning Commission, Ursinus College representatives and residents was formed in January 2018, to work to attract more restaurants and unique retail to our Business Districts. We also have been working closely with Ursinus College on creating a "College Town" for both residents and students by rezoning both sides of the 400 block of Main Street to "Main Street Commercial." This rezoning and the follow up work will extend our Main Street an additional block, from Fourth to Fifth Avenues.

The BDC members are working to:

- Create new zoning that will allow mixed-use commercial and residential and student housing specifically at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main St. This zoning will allow buildings up to four stories containing restaurants and retail on their first floor, and market rate apartment or student housing above.
- To help facilitate the development of this corner, the borough has applied for a multi-million-dollar state redevelopment grant to renovate and enlarge borough hall. This would provide much-needed larger meeting rooms, sufficient space for our police department, and amenities for residents such as co-working spaces.
- Develop a master plan for the 400 block of Main Street, which would encourage more retail and restaurants while still allowing for residential use. The two sides of the street are currently zoned differently, precluding restaurants, retail and services on the borough hall side of the street. We are recommending a zoning overlay so the entire block can be zoned the same.

- Revise the zoning of the Main Street Commercial District. This revised zoning, along with the Master Plan, will recommend the addition of road verges (more green space between Main St. and the sidewalk,) traffic calming measures to slow the cars and trucks, wider sidewalks and street trees. It will also pose requirements to even out the building setbacks.
- Work on shared parking agreements with owners of existing parking lots, along with ensuring that developers include adequate parking in their plans.
- Create a welcoming Collegeville “town center” at Clammer Hall. We are hoping to develop the building as a boutique hotel or Air B&B with a restaurant on the first floor. The outside area will be a gathering place for residents and students. Our vision for the space would include benches, a water feature, green space with trees, and possibly a destination food court concept.

### **Challenges, opportunities, and barriers in this area of focus as we look to the future**

This summer the Ursinus College president resigned. Although the College and their Board of Trustees remain committed to working with the Borough to create a “College Town” on our Main Street, major decisions may be postponed until the new president is appointed.

The borough has applied for a \$6.5M RACP grant. We should find out in November whether we will receive any money from the state.

We are starting work on Community Engagement to find out what our building owners, business owners, and residents want for our Main Street. If we find that the majority want something different than what we envision, we will need to course-correct.

### **The following information addresses some of the successes of this Council in the past year. We:**

**Are engaged in long-term budget planning.** Previous Councils had no savings plan to set aside money in anticipation for upcoming capital expenditures. Our largest upcoming expenditures are the replacement of two culverts on Clahor and Eighth Ave. We also just published the borough’s first mid-year report to residents.

**Have been very actively seeking grants.** In March we applied for a \$6.5M state grant to renovate and update borough hall. The new plans provide bigger community and multi-purpose meeting spaces and possibly co-working spaces for residents looking for a quiet space while working from home.



**Have reached out more than any other Council in the past to our residents.** Before the W.B. Homes townhome development was approved on W. Third Ave., we held a number of public sessions, including with the developer. This summer we have held a number of meetings with residents concerned about speeding on Park Ave. In September, we will be holding meetings with residents to get their views on our plans to revitalize our Main Street.

**Are working to improve the borough's parks, and to create a new Creekside Park.** At Community Park, we have fenced the playground area and are keeping all the playground equipment in good repair. Next we will be installing new fencing at the ballfield to keep foul balls out of neighbor's yards, and replacing the rusted and bent fencing. Work will start on the Creekside Park and boat launch at W. First Ave. in 2022.

**Are taking action concerning the speeding problem on residential streets.** This fall, we are installing our first roadway traffic device, four speed pillows on Park Ave. to slow the traffic.



## COLLEGEVILLE FIRE COMPANY – STATE OF THE BOROUGH SE

### CRAIG PENUEL



- **Achievements and Accomplishments since 2017**

- Establishment of Dedicated Funding from Collegeville Borough for the fire company in the form of a 1 mill Fire Tax in 2017 (implementation began in 2018)
- Construction of a new fire station which began in 2018 and it was occupied on Sunday March 3, 2019. Final construction cost and associated costs (furnishings, extra fit out costs, etc.) is approximately \$2.8 million to date with approximately \$900,000.00 of the cost being covered by Fire Company funding and \$150,000.00 in grant money. Our yearly mortgage is approximately \$132,000.00



- In January of 2021 we took a huge step with firefighter health and wellness with establishing a gym in the firehouse for the membership. The gym is well equipped to enhance the physical fitness of our firefighters. The gym allows members to work out at the fire station and it keeps members at the firehouse and available for emergency responses. We are also hoping that this assists us with retaining and recruiting new members. The outfitting of the gym cost \$28,827.79 and is included in the figure above for the building cost. The company saved approximately \$5,000.00 by having a treadmill donated and by purchasing a used elliptical machine.



- All major apparatus purchases were delayed until the completion of the new fire station. Beginning in 2020, the company felt comfortable enough with our financial standing to begin replacing our apparatus. The initial goal was to begin the process of replacing our 1993 Rescue Truck and our 1998 Squad (engine with auto rescue capabilities). It was decided that both trucks would be replaced with a brand new rescue engine (downsizing the fleet by one large piece of apparatus). Also on the replacement process was to replace both rescue boats and to add a brand new duty officer vehicle. It was decided to start with replacing one of the boats first as this would be a much shorter process than the rescue engine. The goal is that both boats (a 1976 aluminum boat and a used Zodiac inflatable) would be replaced with two identical boats for ease of operation and training.
  - In the summer of 2021 we placed into service a brand new 14 foot AB Inflatable Rigid Hull Shallow Water Aluminum Rescue Boat equipped with a 30 horsepower Mercury Outboard Motor. The cost of the boat, trailer, and motor was \$22,538.84. The purchase was made possible by the annual Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Office of the State Fire Commissioner Fire Company and Emergency Medical Service Grant (2019-2020) which covered approximately 66% of the cost of the purchase price with the remainder of the cost being covered by the sale of the old boat and fire company funds. This replaced the used Zodiac inflatable boat.



- In September of 2021, the company placed into service a 2021 Chevy Tahoe duty officer vehicle. It is the first ever brand new duty vehicle purchased by the company. This vehicle will allow the chief officers of the company (currently being rotated between the four chief officers every two weeks) to respond directly to the scene of an incident in a company owned vehicle and to have needed equipment with them upon their arrival (including an AED and basic medical supplies). It will also act as a mobile command post for fire company incidents. The cost of the vehicle is approximately \$65,000.00 (purchase, lettering, lighting, computer, command box in the rear of the Tahoe).



- Rescue 34 was sold in August of 2021 to Cuerpo de Bomberos de Talca in the country of Chile. The rescue began its journey to Chile on September 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Our fundraising continues to provide much needed funding to the company. We continue to rent the hall, equipment rental (tables, chairs, and tents), main street car show, 5k hero run, and our bucket brigade street drive held at the Colledgeville Marketplace Shopping Center.
- **Current and Future Challenges and Barriers as well as Opportunities**
  - Recruitment and Retention of membership is our biggest challenge at current and for the expected future.
    - Cost of living in the borough is as high as it has ever been (home ownership and monthly rent). Makes it very difficult to retain younger members (they cannot afford to live here once they move out of their parents' home). Rental increases are making it more difficult for members to stay in their current rentals (working more hours to cover costs, less time to volunteer).
    - We currently have zero members that work in the borough that are allowed to leave for emergency calls during business hours (our lone member who was allowed to leave work saw his employer moving out of the borough).
    - The need for younger membership. As each year passes, the average age of our membership continues to increase.
    - Membership to help fundraise. Non-firefighting members help to take the pressure off of the members that run fire calls.
  - The need for supplemental paid staffing during the daytime hours needs to be discussed and planned. This should be in a two-to-four-year plan.
  - The second boat is in the process of being replaced with the majority of the cost being covered by the annual Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Office of the State Fire Commissioner Fire Company and Emergency Medical Service Grant (2020-2021), The rescue engine committee is currently working on specifications of the new truck. The committee hopes to have a truck ready to present to the company for approval to order in 2022.

## COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH STREETS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND LIGHTS COMMITTEE

**Craig Farr, Chair**



### **Retrospective:**

The Streets, Public Safety and Lights Committee was formed in 2020 to work more closely with Collegeville residents to understand their concerns and take appropriate actions to mitigate traffic and public safety concerns. Previously there was not a formal Streets Committee and the Public Safety Committee met infrequently with no set schedule. The Committee membership is aligned with public safety objectives with **membership including the Borough Chief of Police, the President and Vice President of the Borough Fire Company, three Borough Council members and the Mayor of Collegeville.** Having the Borough public safety officials has greatly enhanced the communication and cooperation between them and the Borough Council.

The Streets, Public Safety and Lights Committee has provided a forum for in depth discussions by encouraging residents to bring their concerns to this committee where discussion time is not limited and all who care to speak are given an opportunity. This format has allowed the committee to evaluate the residents' comments and advise the Borough Council of recommended actions.

- **Reviewed Borough traffic concerns by:**
  - Hearing traffic concerns from any concerned residents throughout the past two years
  - Discussing effective remedies for traffic calming while always considering cost effective approaches
    - Installed “speed pillows” on Park Ave. as an evaluation of that solution for lowering the vehicle speeds in on streets of concern
  - Requesting an evaluation of our proposed solutions from PennDOT and the Montgomery County Planning Department

- Initiated dialog with PennDOT to address resident concerns for traffic control and perceived speeding at the intersection of Route 29 (2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.) and Freeland Drive
- **Street maintenance**
  - Considering alternatives to road maintenance processes by considering whether we can do “seal and chip” to rejuvenate an asphalt pavement by spreading small aggregate stones over a sprayed-on asphalt emulsion overlays on some streets rather than always removing and replacing the asphalt
  - Maximizing the financial benefits of utilizing the money received from the Liquid Fuels tax
  - Planning for the future by budgeting for repairs of nearly 100 storm drains
- **Public Safety Ordinances**
  - Updated an ordinance that regulated “burn barrel” activities to ban open burning of trash, yard waste and other debris
  - Reorganized the commercial fire inspection program to reach a reasonable pace to complete the initial inspections
  - Began discussions of rental property inspections with a goal of implementing a thorough and effective ordinance by the end of 2021

### **Future Considerations**

- Budgeting for known long term projects such as culverts under streets where the creek runs through Collegeville and the nearly 100 storm sewer drains that need to be repair.
- Many of our Borough sidewalks are unsafe from significant erosion and we need to formulate a program to encourage residents to make the necessary repairs.
- After our trial of speed bumps on Park Ave. we will evaluate solutions for traffic calming on E 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Clahor Ave.

- Salt application to streets during winter storms is an essential service for our residents and the committee should study alternatives such as brine or other solutions as a more environmentally desirable alternative.

## **COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

### **Council Member Shannon Spencer**



#### **Retrospective:**

The communications committee has worked to bring news and information to Borough residents and visitors, and to fulfill Council's commitment to transparency. The committee has played a vital role in transmitting news and information about Borough Council's activities and messaging about the Borough to our constituents. By providing this information, our goal has been to let people know what a great community this is and how they can get involved. Along the way, the committee has had many accomplishments:

- **Overhauled the Borough website to include:**
  - regular updates on upcoming events, news items, and meetings
  - a more user-friendly interface with the entire website
  - a more up-to-date appearance for the website
  - information about all public aspects of life in Collegeville
- **Created a newsletter that is free and publicly available and which provides monthly information to anyone who signs up regarding:**
  - relevant monthly information
  - upcoming events, including voting information, Borough events that are open to the public, road work schedules etc.

- news items that have happened in the past month, for example, information about updates to the parks, changes to or new ordinances, and new hires in Borough Hall
- Borough Council meetings (all votes are reported in the newsletter)
- our volunteer fire company, along with information on how to get involved
- and much more
- **Worked with the Rotary Club to run a contest to create a new motto and logo for the Borough of Collegeville.**
  - This successful contest produced the motto: “*Collegeville: a Great Place to Come Home To*” as well as two logos for use across a variety of platforms.
- **Produced a number of official statements regarding Borough Business on an as-needed basis.**

### **Going forward**

Over the coming years, we will need to continue to maintain and update these vital avenues of Borough communications. We are very fortunate to have employees who have risen to the challenge of working on Borough communication, but we will need leadership in this arena going forward as we will be losing our committee chair at the end of her term in 2021.

This area of Council business is critically important because we have no newspaper that relays information to our residents, so we are the only source of news about some aspects of the Borough. The committee would benefit from more community involvement as well.



## CENTRAL PERKIOMEN VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

### Council Member Valarie Beckius



The Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission, CPVRPC, is a voluntary regional planning organization consisting of the Boroughs of Collegeville, Schwenksville, and Trappe, as well as the Townships of Lower Fredrick, Perkiomen, and Upper Perkiomen. Goals of the CPVRPC include reviewing general consistency between municipal policies and the Montgomery County Regional Comprehensive Plan, along with reviewing land development of significance and impact to the Central Perkiomen Valley Region including subdivisions and zoning.

#### **Accomplishments of the CPVRPC:**

- Working cooperatively to promote common goals, identify continuity, share ideas, and develop projects which aid or promote best practices in regional development
- Reviewed several municipal Comprehensive Plans from the region to assess consistency
- Discussed proposed, and current land development throughout the region, considering their impacts and consistency
- Determined status of consistency for numerous proposed zoning ordinances within the region
- Developed a web map of the regional Perkiomen Trail, including paper brochures and postcards
  - Web map includes points of interest with corresponding information, such as physical address, website address, photos, and details of the feature
- Currently, in the process of developing a Stewardship Guidebook for Private Property Owners
- Presentations given to CPVRPC:
  - 2019 Montgomery County Planning Commission Annual Report
  - Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan
  - 2020 Montgomery County Planning Commission Annual Report

- Multi-Regional Greenway and Stewardship Study
- Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program
- 2020 CPVRPC Annual Summary
- Guest Speaker Land Developer from THP Properties

## **HOW THE CPVRPC PLAYED A PART TO ENSURE COLLEGEVILLE IS A GREAT PLACE TO COME HOME TO:**

- Examined land development for consistency  
COLLEGEVILLE:
  - Freeland Square
    - Received a letter stating general consistency to the Borough’s vision for residential design, the county’s comprehensive plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, and the Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Plan
  
- Assessed zoning ordinance for consistency  
COLLEGEVILLE:
  - Main Street Commercial Residential District (MSCR)
    - Received a letter stating general consistency of the goals in the county’s comprehensive plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision, and the Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Plan
  
- Considered the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program applicants from participating members  
COLLEGEVILLE:
  - First Avenue Park
    - Boat Ramp
  - In conjunction with the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, Schwenksville, Montgomery County Parks, Trails and Historic Sites, Marlborough, Upper Salford, Lower Fredrick, Skippack, and Lower Providence
    - Implementation of water trail signage system.

### **CPVRPC Looking to the Future:**

- Completion of Stewardship Guidebook for Private Property Owners

- Development and completion of projects which aid or promote best practices in regional development
- Facing Challenges of Growth in the Region which encompass areas such as:
  - Land Development, Housing and Business
  - Zoning Ordinance Changes and Code Revisions
  - Revitalization and Transportation
  - Open Space, Stormwater/Floodplain Management, Trails, Parks, and Bikeways

## **THE BOROUGH PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**Council Member Gary Hoffmann and Council President Catherine Kernen**



### **Retrospective:**

The Borough Personnel Committee is responsible for all of the human resources work of the Borough. This includes, but is not limited to, updating the personnel policies of the borough, hiring new administrative personnel, providing annual reviews, and recommending to Council appropriate individuals to serve on borough boards, commissions and committees within the legally-designated time limit. The Personnel Committee also leads in the negotiating of borough union contracts. We have:

- Conducted a regional search, interviewed candidates and hired Tamara Twardowski as Colleagueville’s new borough manager in November 2020. Our new manager is highly respected by her administration, Council and police officers for her extensive knowledge, experience, and “can do” attitude. She also has strengths in finance and grant writing.
- Worked with the Mayor to recruit members and form the Borough’s first ever “Human Relations Committee” in 2021. This committee works to establish an official policy of non-discrimination in the borough in all matters involving employment, housing and individual rights of our residents and our businesses’ employees.

- Recruited a number of interested and qualified members for consideration by the Council for positions on the Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board over the last four years.
- Have actively demonstrated our support for our police by ensuring that their salaries and benefits are competitive in all aspects with the other Montgomery County police forces. The Personnel Committee and Council listened to the officers' very valid concerns and worked with them to provide a contract that we all were happy with. The police stated that for the first time in memory, the negotiation process for their new four-year contract was amicable and respectful on all sides. Our new borough manager also was able to recommend replacement of their health plan with one with better benefits. Additionally, the new plan saves taxpayers an additional \$10,000 annually.

**Challenges, Opportunities, and Barriers in this area of focus as we look to the future**

As mentioned in other areas of this report, three of our police officers will be retiring in the next several years, and we look forward to working with our Police Department in hiring replacements. Our Treasurer will also be retiring next year, and we will work with our manager on what to do about that position. We also need to update our borough's Personnel Manual. Our solicitor has offered his help and we hope to complete that in 2022. We do not anticipate any major challenges or barriers to our work in coming years.

**PARKS COMMITTEE**

**Council Member Kathy Costello, Chair**



**Retrospective:**

The Parks Committee has accomplished the following in the past 2 years

In Collegeville Community Park

- 7 shade trees have been planted around the playground and along W 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave by the baseball field.
- A fence was installed along the W 4<sup>th</sup> Ave side of the playground to prevent children from running into the street.
- Partnered with Young Lungs at Play to make both Community Park and Hunsberger Woods smoke free zones.
- We had a Scout earn his Eagle Scout Badge by building a Gaga Pit in the park.
- We recruited volunteers to help with cleanup in our Community Park, Water Works Park and Hunsberger Woods the past 2 years. We cleaned the Pavilions and playground equipment. St Eleanor's baseball team cleaned the bleachers and dugouts at the ballpark. In Hunsberger Woods students from Ursinus and resident volunteers cleaned up trash and cleared the trails by removing branches and fallen trees.
- We held 2 Concerts in the Park this Summer- Trout Fishing in America and The Smooth Edge Band.
- We have new fencing being installed in October in front of the bleaches and dugouts to prevent injury from broken and rusted fencing. Ursinus College (Steve Gehringer) is paying for the Backstop to be replaced and extended to prevent foul balls from hitting resident's cars and houses along W 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

### **Challenges:**

Our biggest challenge is putting together a comprehensive plan for our Collegeville Community Park that will allow us to apply for grants so that we able to do the necessary repairs and hoped for improvements to the playground and basketball court.

Some of the repairs and improvements we are looking at include:

- Resurface the basketball and hockey court – estimate 35k
- Add steps on the playground side of the memorial.
- Install a rubber surface in the playground to make it safer and more accessible.
- Add shade structures around the playground equipment.

In addition to paying for the backstop Steve Gehringer and crew from Ursinus College repaired and painted the Scout Cabin on Clammer and helped to recruit the students for the cleanups

We have been working on finding a use for the cabin now that the scouts are not using it. The Warren Lodge has agreed to allow parking in their lot as long as it does not interfere with their meetings and events.

## URSINUS COLLEGE AND COLLEGEVILLE BOROUGH ENGAGEMENT

### **Heather Lobban-Viravong** **Vice President, Ursinus College**



#### **Summary List of Strengths**

- Establishing greater connections to the Perkiomen Valley School District
- Collaborating on grants that enhance the surrounding community
- Partnering on conversations regarding the revitalization of Main Street/downtown Collegeville
- Increased transparency and information sharing
- Providing community access to a variety of events, activities, and resources on campus
- Promoting volunteerism in the community by faculty, staff, and students in particular

#### **Summary List of Opportunities**

- Increased student engagement in conversations about town-gown relations
- Further tightening the connection between borough residents and the college (occasions for borough residents to benefit from a relationship with the college abound. Over the next year, presuming health of campus and the continued restoration of some pre-pandemic policies, residents are welcome to use the picturesque campus for walking and jogging, dine at Café 2020, and to shop at the campus Barnes and Noble store. Collegeville neighbors will also be invited to attend more events on campus and can enjoy, free of charge, eight different exhibitions at the Philip and Muriel Berman Museum of Art, throughout the year. The ongoing development of the Ursinus in the Community webpage will provide exposure for borough businesses and organizations. In addition, it will serve as a resource for residents who wish to engage with the college in many ways.)
- Opportunity to develop Collegeville into an even more vibrant town, and to make it a destination for prospective students and employees of the college, as well as for residents in surrounding communities
- A coordinated redevelopment plan and ongoing upkeep conversations, offer a chance for expanded resources and unified efforts to capitalize on outside opportunities for grants, positive public relations, and strategic growth
- More open dialogues between borough residents and the college

## **NARRATIVE**

The relationship between Ursinus College and the Borough has remained strong throughout the past year. There has been heightened transparency on both sides, and an even greater commitment to partnering in ways that are to the mutual benefit of the larger community. The college's commitment to being good neighbors is best represented by the recent construction and opening of the Schellhase Commons, which sits close to the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Main Street. This structure, which houses a café and a bookstore, among other things, was built to serve not only the campus, but the surrounding community as well, as evidenced by its location and its outward facing architecture. While the pandemic has minimized the level to which Borough residents can utilize the space, the expectation is that visits to the Commons will increase after we get through the pandemic. Given its presence in our community, it is very gratifying to also share that the Schellhase Commons was recently nominated for the 2021 Montgomery Award from the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and the Montgomery County Planning Commission Board, which recognize the superior quality, planning, and design of structures that enhance Montgomery County.

The borough and the college have jointly worked to put together the borough's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) grant proposal, which was submitted in early 2021. Similarly, in early 2021, the College worked with Representative Webster's office to bring vaccines to the Collegeville community by way of providing a COVID-19 vaccination opportunity for at risk faculty and staff. Representative Webster's office also worked with Ursinus to gather student volunteers to assist Skippack Pharmacy in their fight against COVID.

Ursinus has been the recipient of a number of local awards, reflecting our work with the surrounding community and our willingness to serve as a resource to the community. In 2020, Ursinus was awarded the Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce Large Business of the Year award.

Because its students, and many of its staff and faculty, call Collegeville home, the college does not see itself as operating on an island but considers itself part of the neighborhood. It is no surprise, then, that the college has shown a commitment to supporting the borough's efforts to revitalize its downtown, specifically the 400 block of Main Street. Over the past year, the college has teamed up with borough officials to engage developers in conversations about revitalization efforts that would continue to make Collegeville "A Great Place to Come Home to." The ideas that have been generated thus far will surely be shared and tested with the community, but the coming together of the borough and college on this front speaks to our desire to work collaboratively and in concert with each other.

The college's contributions to the community includes the high level of volunteerism among faculty, staff, and especially students. 65% of Ursinus students were involved in some type of community service and 20 of them contributed to the college's ongoing partnerships with nonprofit

or community organizations. The college's commitment to partnering with the Perkiomen Valley School District is evidenced by the creation of the Middle School Mentoring Program, which was established a year ago. In the past year, 30 Ursinus students built relationships with 40+ PV middle schoolers, engaging them in conversations about such vocation, and college education, among other things. A few enterprising students established a new community service club called Virtue (Virtual Ursinus Service), which asked interested students to make cards for well-deserving healthcare workers and veterans. They also set up a virtual camp for Kids Need More, a non-profit organization that is centered on young people with cancer and other critical illnesses.

The college's contributions to the community also extends to its continued commitment to hosting the popular, "Movies on the Lawn." The recent "Movies on the Lawn" series attracted 500 moviegoers and visitors to the campus. In addition, residents can continue to patronize the Berman Museum, as well as attend lectures, theater, dance, and music events/productions.

On June 6, 2020, the college joined the borough in a program entitled "To Breathe Again: A Collegeville and Vicinity Memorial for George Floyd." They have also engaged the local Collegeville Rotary Club, and Borough Council leadership by providing updates on happenings at the college, as well as sharing the measure they undertook to safely re-open the campus to students in August 2020. In April of 2021, the college's Institute for Inclusion and Equity provided a student speaker for the Montgomery County AAPI "Break the Silence: Vigil for Victims of AAPI Discrimination."

In 2022, the college has launched a webpage devoted to highlighting the ways the college connects with the community. This webpage will serve as a great resource to campus and community members as the college continues to build the content for this page.