

Township of Cheltenham

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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July 7, 2022

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

Cheltenham Township, the diverse, progressive, historic first suburb of Philadelphia, **needs your help** to provide Cheltenham residents with the facilities and services they need and deserve. Our residents—many from generational Cheltenham families—are passionate about their neighborhoods, community programming, historic preservation, and a sustainable future. We hear our residents' concerns and hopes, but are only able to do so much with the budget we have.

Cheltenham residents already face a high tax burden, as Montgomery County has one of the highest median property taxes in the state, and of its 67 municipalities, Cheltenham has the highest total millage rate (64.9005). In recent years, the Township's Board of Commissioners and staff have worked diligently to find creative ways to finance the growing costs of providing high-quality municipal services and maintaining our facilities without raising the real estate tax and placing undue burden on our residents. Even so, Cheltenham officials have had to raise its Earned Income Tax (2020) and institute a Stormwater Fee (2021) to help cover increasing costs. But even these measures are not enough.

The reality is that every one of our 16 municipal facilities, including our pools, libraries, and community centers, is functionally obsolete. These facilities, most of which are not purpose-built, have an average age of 117. Continued operations jeopardize the health and safety of staff and the public due to poor air quality, structural concerns, and bare minimum ADA accessibility. One of our ambulance bays is compromised by a failing floor support beam. We are unable to provide an elevator to commonly-visited second floor offices in our Administration building. Our community centers, first closed for the pandemic, have not reopened due to substantial mold growth and cost-prohibitive boiler system replacements. [The photos in these presentations speak for themselves.](#)

With our current facilities, we are not able to provide the recreational, social, and cultural programs and services that our residents, particularly our youth and seniors, need and deserve. We are excited to begin a space needs assessment to evaluate our options and plan for the future of Cheltenham's facilities, through which we can provide services that will contribute to happy, healthy, and productive lives for our residents. **Your assistance by way of Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding, for which Cheltenham has submitted multiple requests, would offer the aid we need to truly rectify and improve our existing situation.**

While Cheltenham Township is very appreciative of the \$1.9M in state recovery monies we received in 2021, these funds served to help cover budget shortfalls incurred during the pandemic. We are striving to maximize resources and implement practices to revive this beautiful, green, diverse, historic suburb and help realize its highest potential. Cheltenham staff and Commissioners know the decisions we make today will impact Cheltenham for years to come, and we are asking you to make a decision with us.

As you are nearing the end of your term, I ask you to consider the legacy you could leave in Cheltenham. Your help to fund facilities that your Cheltenham constituents truly deserve—facilities that will lead us into a more sustainable future—**will be remembered and appreciated for generations.** I would appreciate the opportunity to talk more about our vision for Cheltenham's facilities as you consider allocation of the remaining RACP funds to this valuable endeavor.

Sincerely,

Robert Zienkowski, Township Manager