

An Open Letter to Residents of Penn Wynne and Wynnewood

I'm Rick Churchill, your Democratic candidate for Commissioner here in Penn Wynne and Wynnewood. Our ward has shown in the past that it can achieve great things when people come together, and I know we'll do the same on Election Day this November 3rd.

I've had the pleasure of meeting many of you while campaigning over the past few months, but for those who don't know me, just a few words of introduction.

I have lived in Penn Wynne for over 17 years. My wife and kids grew up in Penn Wynne and graduated from Lower Merion High School. I teach history in the Philadelphia School District.

I have been a community activist for more than 30 years, first in Washington, D.C. where I used to live, and after moving here, working with the local Democratic Party to help elect people like Connie Williams, Daylin Leach and Tim Briggs to office.

I'm running for Township Commissioner because I'm very concerned about the future of our neighborhood and our township. There is a feeling among some Republicans on the Board that we need to cut costs by cutting vital services in our Township. They say this is especially important given the current recession. I say that nothing could be further from the truth.

I've gone door to door meeting with our neighbors this spring, summer and fall, and the biggest concerns are taxes and our budget. No one likes paying taxes, but everyone I talk to wants our police and fire departments fully funded. They want our libraries upgraded, our roads maintained, our parks and green spaces preserved. They understand that those services make Lower Merion, Penn Wynne and Wynnewood special places to live, and that they are critical to maintaining our property values.

Let me give you three neighborhood examples of why it's critical to maintain our high level of service:

1. In August, the Beth Hamedrosh synagogue at the corner of Haverford and Manoa Roads was vandalized, with windows broken at a cost of thousands of dollars. Now is not the time to reduce our police force.
2. Our public works department is working short-handed and it shows. Recently, 75 people living around the Wynnewood Valley Park signed a petition asking for necessary repairs and maintenance of our park. We haven't mowed some of our park areas. We haven't replaced our broken playground equipment. And last month, a suspicious character was seen hanging around the park before being escorted away by the police. A neighbor of mine put it best when she said, "A seedy park attracts seedy people." Yet some Republican Commissioners claim that we're irresponsible for wanting to keep our parks enjoyable and safe. I'll tell you what's irresponsible: putting discredited Republican fiscal ideology ahead of the safety of our community.
3. Lastly, but certainly not least, is the serious challenge we still face with storm water management and flooding. Four years ago, we had what's known as a 100-year storm. That's a storm so intense it's likely to happen only once in 100 years. As many of you remember, that storm caused significant flooding and damage. In response, the Township spent over \$2 million for storm water management improvements on Allendale, Manoa and Haverford Avenue. Last month, we had another 100-year storm, with five inches of rain falling within one hour. (For some reason, Mother Nature did not get the memo that she was to wait at least 96 years before giving us so much rain.)

Did our \$2-million improvement program work? To some extent it did, but unfortunately, not on the east side of Penn Wynne Park, where dozens of homes were flooded.

The point is this: Now is not the time to cut funding for improving and maintaining our infrastructure. Some Republicans want to freeze this kind of expenditure until our economy improves. Our experience last month reminds us that disasters don't wait and we neither should we.

Finally, no discussion of the health and safety of our community would be complete without an update on Lankenau Hospital. First, I am happy to report that the hospital has reduced its campus expansion plans. Lankenau engineers are working with our township engineers to address water management issues, and as your Commissioner, I pledge to block any expansion that does not effectively deal with storm water run-off.

Second, we have been successful in forcing Lankenau to take the Manoa Road access plan off the table. They have reached an agreement with the residents of Greenhill Lane to use a road there for emergency access, and they will be expanding their existing entrance on Lancaster Road to allow for easier access. Nevertheless, as long as I'm commissioner, the Minoa Road access will remain off the table and I will work to ensure that any future expansion does not negatively impact our neighborhood.

We are very fortunate people, lucky to be able to live in this beautiful little corner of world. I am running to make sure that our neighborhood and township stay that way. With your help, it will. Again, thank you for coming and for your continued support.