During the past two years, Jefferson Township has sought and obtained two grants that will enable the reconstruction of two critical road projects.

Work is underway on the Shull Road Safety Improvement Project. The work involves the replacement of a culvert and widening and repaving of the road across the culvert and stream between Kamesway and Sleeping Meadow Drives near Morse Road. The road, site of a fatal accident years ago, crosses the stream on a sharp curve. The narrow road and visibility makes it difficult for motorists driving north to see the crossing in adequate time to deal with oncoming traffic. Frequently, the township has had to replace the guard rail when motorists have struck it. The project in its entirety is being funded through $496,499 in Local Transportation Improvement Funds through an agreement with the Ohio Public Works Commission.

The Clotts Road Improvement Project will replace a failing 40-foot long culvert that was installed in 1912 in a steep valley east of Gahanna Middle School East. The project will involve replacing the culvert and crumbling headwalls, replacing road pavement and guard rails and installing a new multi-purpose path alongside the road.

The path will connect the pathway at the driveway to Gahanna Middle School East to an existing pedestrian path or sidewalk along Riva Ridge Boulevard to the north. The pathway will help to build future connectivity along Clotts Road and provide a safe crossing for students to navigate the valley and stream. The project is being funded with $238,606 in Local Transportation Improvement Funds and is scheduled to occur in 2013.
Grant to fund shelter and allow township to open park in Blacklick

Jefferson Township is proceeding with plans to open a new park in Blacklick by the summer of 2013. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources awarded the township a grant of $38,324 through the NatureWorks program to fund construction of a shelter house, picnic areas, an access driveway and parking.

The park land was acquired in 2005 through a Clean Ohio grant from the Natural Resource Assistance Council. The grant also funded acquisition of adjacent property and conservation easements from other landowners in the vicinity of Wengert Road between Waggoner and Reynoldsburg-New Albany roads. However, the township was unable to open the 78 acres for public use because of lack of available funds to develop facilities, and the existing shelter house was deemed unsafe.

The township’s goal was to one day provide an additional community park that would eventually connect the west side of Blacklick Creek through a trail system to Licking Heights West Elementary School.

The park, formerly known as Plumbers Park, is located north of Jefferson Cemetery between the road and Blacklick Creek and was acquired from the Associated Plumbing and Hydronics Contractors, which had used the 14-acre parcel as a private park. However, the park had not been used in a number of years and had fallen into disrepair. The local 25-percent match will be met through in-kind donations. With the exception of labor from existing staff, residents will see little, if any, local taxes spent for the development of the park. In turn, the township will be able to open the property to area residents and non-residents alike by the summer of 2013. The township will be taking paid reservations for the shelter house to help offset maintenance costs. Other areas of the park will be open daily to all. The name of the new park will be announced at the opening in 2013.

Jefferson Township has applied for a second NatureWorks grant for the third phase of development, which calls for a restroom facility and electric services. Announcement of funding awards is expected this fall.

Residents interested in volunteering assistance with the project may contact Rob Platte, Parks Coordinator, at 614-855-4260, extension 104.

FEMA Grant to fund radio equipment and compressor to fill firefighter air tanks

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has awarded a grant of $216,700 to the township.

The Fire Department will use the grant to purchase a new Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) filling station. The existing SCBA filling equipment has been in service for more than 25 years and has been reconditioned and repaired many times.

The grant also will replace the Department’s outdated radios which are nearing decertification. The FCC has mandated a move to different frequency radios in 2013 to free up additional bandwidth for emergency responders.

“This new equipment will be state of the art and will allow us to continue to provide the best possible response to emergency situations now and into the future,” said Crystal Dickerson, fire chief.

The total project cost will be $216,700, with a federal share of 95 percent of the cost. Jefferson Township will contribute the remaining 5 percent, totaling $10,835.

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Jefferson Township has undertaken a series of initiatives that, in the words of former Ohio governor and U.S. senator George Voinovich, are designed to help staff work smarter, not harder, and do more with less. Among those initiatives:

- **Zoning and Roads**— the township recently became a member of the Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS). This program notifies the township when requests are made to mark underground utilities. This will enable the township to ensure that work in the rights of way is conducted properly and indirectly ensure adherence to zoning regulations.

- **Service**—The Service Department on April 1 switched from an eight-hour work day, five days a week, to 10-hour days four days a week. This has enabled the township to take advantage of the longer daylight hours to complete more projects in a day. The net effect should result in fewer days of road closings and less time closing job sites and re-opening them the next day. The Service Department is closed on Fridays except in the winter and weeks that include a holiday.

- **Grants**—The township recently obtained four grants totaling almost a million dollars that will result in better and safer roads and culverts, a new park, and up-to-date fire equipment.

- **Re-engineering Services**—During the past two years, Jefferson Township has taken several steps to improve the fiscal climate and service operations with respect to the township roads. The budget was redesigned to reduce multiple accounts, streamline purchasing, and make it easier to manage the operating budget which is spread across four separate funds. The policy for removing snow and ice was revised to handle major storms, while focusing coverage for minor snow fall to major arterials, curves and hills and other areas particularly prone to ice buildups. By leaving two full-time positions unfilled and taking advantage of a mild winter to stockpile salt, the township will be able to use savings from the vacancies, reduced salt purchases, low overtime and fuel costs, to begin crack-sealing township roads.

For the first time in several years, the township is participating in the Franklin County Engineer’s summer preventive maintenance program to secure competitively bid contracts to crack-seal Bent Maple Court, Keltonhurst Drive, and Almond Park Drive.

Jefferson Township has volunteer opportunities available for residents who would like to volunteer their time helping out in the office or outdoors. Activities might include, for example, filing in various township offices, conducting research or planning, educational outreach, or assisting with basic maintenance work in the township parks. The time might involve a couple of hours a week, or several hours on a project for a limited time period. For more information, contact the township office at 614-855-4260.

**FEMA Grant continued from page 2**

The primary goal of the AFG is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and non-affiliated emergency medical service organizations.

Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and first responders obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training and other resources necessary to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.
Gas Tax disproportionately benefits townships with few roads

Jefferson Township recently completed a study of gasoline taxes. The study found that townships with the fewest miles of road receive more state excise taxes and highway funds to maintain those roads, than those with the most miles of roads.

For example, Jefferson Township receives a combined $107,329.77 in gasoline excise taxes and state and local government highway funds from the state. Jefferson maintains 46 miles of township road. The revenue comes to about $2,335 per mile of road.

Of the 17 townships in Franklin County, only Prairie Township has more miles, 56, and receives less excise taxes and highway taxes per mile of road. In contrast, Washington Township, with 2 miles of road, averages $45,165 per mile of road in distributions, and Brown Township, with 4 miles of road, averages $23,256.

Ballot Issues in Jefferson Township

On November 6, voters in Jefferson Township will decide a variety of ballot issues, and races for president and vice president; congressional, state legislative, and county races; judges and Supreme Court justices, and the state board of education.

Township ballot issues include a 2-mill renewal levy for fire and emergency medical services, and a 1.5-mill additional levy for the general construction, reconstruction, resurfacing, and repair of streets, roads and bridges in the Jefferson Township Road District.

Both levies are for five years. The road levy would generate $600,176 a year to maintain, repair, and rebuild crumbling roads and institute preventative maintenance work on the township’s 46 miles of road. The fire levy would generate $900,773 per year, which is less than the expiring levy had generated.

According to the Franklin County Board of Elections, other issues include:

- State Issue 1—on whether to hold a convention to revise, alter, or amend the Ohio Constitution.
- State Issue 2—on whether to create a state-funded commission to draw legislative and congressional district boundaries.
- Local Issue 56—A replacement and increase totaling 1.3 mills to support senior citizen services of the Franklin county Office on Aging.

Some township residents also will decide:

- An additional 8.9-mill levy for 10 years for the emergency requirements of the Licking Heights Local School District.
- A liquor option in Jefferson Precinct A.
- Four charter amendments in the City of Reynoldsburg.

October 9 is the deadline to register to vote. Absentee ballots must be ready by September 22 for armed forces and overseas citizens, and by October 2 for other absentee voters. More information is available from the Franklin County Board of Elections at 614-525-3100 or www.vote.franklincountyohio.gov
Township Employee Profile

Crystal Dickerson, Fire Chief

Interest in the fire service came early to Crystal Dickerson, who grew up in Jefferson Township and lived there until 1992. “The township raised and educated me,” she said. “Giving back to this township is what I wanted to do.” This fall, Dickerson will have completed 30 years of public service, all with the township, the last three years as chief of the fire department.

Dickerson joined the township as a volunteer firefighter in 1982 and participated in the transition of the department from volunteer to professional as more and more people build homes in the township. She became a full-time dispatcher in 1984. When she accepted the position of full-time firefighter in 1986, there were few women in full-time positions in the fire service. Today, she is one of only a handful of women in Ohio serving as fire chief.

In between, she was promoted to lieutenant in 1992, captain in 1999, and assistant chief two years later.

Born in 1959, as the fourth child of George and Georgia Dickerson, Crystal and husband, Mitch Erskine, have four children and six grandchildren. Her interests include throwing pottery, photography, gardening, whittling, painting and writing. She has an associate’s degree in fire science management from Hocking College.

In her three years as chief, Dickerson has overseen completion of a management and services study by the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association and the hiring of three battalion chiefs and three full-time firefighters to better enable the department to respond to emergencies.

The changes were in response to a doubling of township population and a significant increase in fire and EMS runs.

From Mike Rowan, chair of the township board of trustees, “Crystal is a great asset to the Township. Her knowledge of fire science and her leadership skills have allowed our fire department to provide outstanding safety services to our residents.”

Full-time firefighters Cory Back (kneeling) and Adam Schlosser explain to an eager audience about all of the fire gear that firefighters wear to be protected from fire.

The fire department is now on Facebook!
“Like” us at www.facebook.com/jeffersontownshipfire.
There’s more to fire prevention than just having 2 WAYS OUT.

Use these tips to PLAN YOUR ESCAPE and stay fire safe!

- **SOUND THE ALARM** Ask your grown-up to check to be sure there are smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside each bedroom and outside each sleeping area.

- **PLAN YOUR ESCAPE** Make a map of your home and write the emergency number, 9-1-1 on it. Mark a door and a window that can be used to get out of every room.

- Choose an outside meeting place in front of your home where everyone can meet. Draw a picture of your outside meeting place on your escape plan.

- Keep your escape plan on the refrigerator and remind your grown-ups to have everyone practice whenever anyone in your home celebrates a birthday.

- **KNOW WHEN TO GO** If you see smoke in your house, or hear a the loud “beep-beep-beep” of a smoke alarm, get outside and stay outside. Go to your outside meeting place.

- **KNOW WHO TO CALL** Call the emergency number, 9-1-1, from a cell phone after going to your outside meeting place, or from a neighbor’s house.