

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY COMMITTEE
11 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**By: Ben Thomas, Jr.
Mayor, Borough of Greencastle, Franklin County, Pennsylvania
Manager, Cumberland Township, Adams County, Pennsylvania**

Welcome Senators, House of Representatives, other municipal officials, and citizens from the Franklin County and Greencastle-Antrim community. I am honored to testify as Mayor of Greencastle located just two miles south of us and as Manager of Cumberland Township, Adams County. Greencastle is a mere 1.6 square mile Borough with a population of 4,000. We are primarily a bedroom community with no economic growth in our boundaries. Greencastle is experiencing additional community service needs with very limited tax growth. Cumberland Township is also primarily a bedroom community with a population of 6,300 geographically located around the Borough of Gettysburg and serves as the host municipality for the Gettysburg National Military Park with a large percentage of tax-exempt buildings and land. Cumberland Township hosts 3 to 4 million tourists annually. We also receive expanded calls for services with limited tax income growth. Our waste-water treatment plants are state of the art and working well.

Imagine how MS/4 and the Chesapeake Bay Agreement has and will impact these two financially challenged communities. This is the largest unfunded mandate ever to financially burden us. Greencastle has already initiated MS/4 fees. The first billing alone extracted nearly \$300,000 from the pockets of our citizens, businesses, churches, and School District that has inflated our costs of living and expenses of running a business or non-profit entity.

I've said it publicly...I'm fine with the original intent of MS/4 legislation. We have and will continue to do street sweeping for sediment reduction (much of our street sweeping is on PennDot owned and maintained highways); Public Education and Outreach programs promoting BMPs' (best management practice); Inspect and enforce Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination; Post-Construction Run-off Control; and Pollution Prevention / Good Housekeeping. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency offers excellent models for compliance which we are actively involved with. We all desire responsible environmental stewardship.

Pollutant Reduction Plans (PRPs') must be sensible that WORK! **Not just a model.** I encourage this Committee, our House members, Governor Tom Wolf, Pa. DEP, and Pa. Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding to consider giving us yet another COMMON SENSE TOOL as a spin off to recently approved legislation (SB 634) by the prime sponsor, Senator Yaw, providing additional financial and technical assistance to farmers who implement best management practices on their land. I have read that 85% of the Chesapeake Bay's nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment comes from agriculture.

So...here's how it really works! Greencastle and Cumberland Township would individually hire an engineering firm to draw up plans for "stream restoration." A stream that may already be naturally working! We hire a law firm to follow bidding and expensive legal notice requirements that would be advertised with prevailing wage rates inflating the project by 25% to 35%. The project would be let and completed that may have limited quantifiable results while citizens, businesses, non-profits (playgrounds and recreational areas), churches, and school districts that paid the fee or tax just spent upwards to 40% of non-recoverable professional fees and prevailing wage rates.

Let's use these fees collected from our community to create an agricultural / land-owners trading program (similar to nutrient trading credits and ag preservation funding) where municipalities would provide best management practice funds to directly support responsible land-owners in our Greencastle-Antrim and Cumberland Township outfall stream communities. Every dollar would support our communities with common sense projects that would be done by private property owners who will not be paying engineering, legal, and prevailing wage rates. Each County Soil Conservation Service and Penn State University could offer BMP technical assistance which is what they do already. Participating municipalities would receive credits from our Chesapeake Bay requirements. We can plant trees in our communities using volunteers and School District environmental classes (which we've done in the past). Otherwise, our communities will be flushing an estimated 40% of our collected fees and taxes that will not be used to support our local efforts and the Chesapeake Bay. Our 1.6 square mile Borough of Greencastle hypothetically could contribute \$150,000 annually toward this local trading credit program where every dollar is used responsibly in our home (host) municipalities.

The trade-out is this. Greencastle, Antrim Township, Cumberland Township, and hundreds of other Pennsylvania municipalities would reap the benefits of spending for projects that make sense while significantly reducing our need to stack fees or taxes on communities. We would not need a significant staff to monitor this program which means we would remove proposed staffing, benefits, and legacy costs.

To members of Greencastle Borough Council...I would like to see a significant reduction of our current stormwater fee rate by removing the expenses otherwise mandated in the Borough and Township Codes by using fee funds to benefit the Chesapeake Bay initiative with trading credits while we continue the inexpensive common sense efforts already in place.

Let's all roll up our sleeves and get to work on sensible, affordable pollutant reduction plans that again best suit our own communities and the Chesapeake Bay. I am pleased to assist in any way I can.

Respectfully submitted,

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