

How the Township Code happened

Prior to 1897, there was no uniformity among townships. Some townships had two supervisors, while others had as many as six, they all, however, were one-year terms. During 1897, the State adopted the special legislations that changed the title of "Overseers" or "Trustees" of the township to Road Supervisors and created a minimum of three supervisory positions. The State also appropriated \$1,000,000 to a road tax. Apparently, this act never went into effect, because in 1905, the act once again provided for three supervisors, abolished the work tax and repealed all inconsistent laws.

In 1909, the office of township Secretary and/or Treasurer were created. In 1913, the title of Road Supervisor was changed to Township Supervisor and provided for six-year terms. This act was the forerunner for the current township code. The act also provided for a uniform system of accounting for all townships, and required that certain forms and reports were provided by the Department of Highways to Townships, including minute books, account books, voucher forms and treasurer's bond forms. Supervisors were permitted to work on the roads with their compensation being set by the Board of Auditors. Only non-working supervisors could receive meeting pay ranging from \$1.00 to \$4.00.

In 1917, the legislature enacted the first township code. The scope of the supervisor's authority was expanded to streetlights, fire hydrants, water towers, sewer, eminent domain, sidewalks and public buildings. The township code was rewritten and amended again in 1919.

By 1923, townships were maintaining 79,220 miles of local roads. Governor Pinchot signed legislation that took several thousand miles of local roads and put them under State control. This was known as the "Get the Farmer Out of the Mud Campaign". During the 1930's there was an effort to have the State take over all roads within the Commonwealth. This was violently opposed by the State Association, and of course, never happened. Ironically, starting in the 1980's, townships are now reclaiming roads that they had originally given back to the State 60 years ago.

The next major update of the township code was in 1933. That version, as amended in 1947, and by individual acts of the legislature, is the current code in use today.