

On The Mark

Staff News

Peter A. Terry, P.E., PTOE, PMP, has been named the Chair of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee effective May 2010. One of Pete's first activities as Chair was to present testimony at the State House of Representatives Transportation Funding Hearing held at DeSales University on May 20, 2010. Pete testified that the Chamber supports reasonable user fees with the condition that PennDOT puts into place reforms to ensure efficiencies in their review, design, and construction procedures.



Peter A. Terry, P.E., PTOE, PMP, has accepted an invitation to join the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) Expert Task Group as part of a \$1.5M research project concerning the inclusion of reliability measures in the Highway Capacity Manual. The volunteer group will write the request for proposals for the project and then monitor and guide the research activities through completion in 2013. The SHRP 2 program is a research effort of the National Academy of Science Foundation's Transportation Research Board.

Camelot for Children Splashpad



As professionals we have a responsibility to impart our services for the betterment of the community. Camelot for Children is a community organization that provides support to cancer patients and their families by offering shelter, activities, and special functions that help smooth out the treatment process.

In June of 2008, *Benchmark* was contacted by the Board of Directors for Camelot for Children to provide pro-bono services to survey and design an area for a proposed Splashpad water park to be used by children on warm summer days. *Benchmark* was pleased to help with the site development process by providing the topographical survey, site design, communication with equipment providers, City of Allentown plan reviewers, and coordination with the excavation contractor.

The water park provided some unique challenges that we took pride in overcoming to ensure that the finished product met the expectations of the Client. The



project was completed in the fall of 2009. We are sure that the residents of Camelot for Children are enjoying the Splashpad water park this summer. *Benchmark* is pleased that we could provide services in the interest of the general public and those in need of a little extra care.

For further information on this project or other charitable activities please contact **Bruce F. Gustin, P.L.S.** by phone or at bruce.gustin@bencivil.com or contact **Bernard Telatovich, P.E.**, by phone or at bernie.telatovich@bencivil.com.

So You Want to Put Up a Fence?

Putting up a fence appears to be one of the easier “do-it-yourself” projects that a home-owner may undertake. However, the simple task can become very complicated if the correct procedures are not in place. The problems that can arise are vast, but the most problematic issues remain as to whether the fence is permissible and if the constructed fence is on the home-owner’s property. Only a licensed professional land surveyor (P.L.S.) can exactly locate your property lines.

Occasionally, the homeowner contracts with a fence company. In many cases a homeowner may attempt to install the fence themselves. Typically, when the property owner is attempting to build the fence, an often required call is not made to the Pennsylvania One Call System (811) for purposes of having the location of all utilities identified. Not only could this result in damage to utilities, but could also result in physical harm to the installer of the fence.

An equally important call would include a call to a licensed surveyor to identify the location of the property lines. Many property owners do not make this call as they take the position, “I know where my property lines are.” On many occasions, the failure to determine the exact property lines result in fences being illegally installed or fences being installed on a neighboring property. The original, simple task of constructing a fence

PennDOT Requires HOP Applicants to Obtain Neighbor’s Approval

PennDOT Strike-off letter 470-09-02 requires that HOP applicants take action to get permits for any existing driveways within their project’s limits of work, and often gain releases from those neighbors. Previously, notifying adjoining property owners was sufficient when improvements were within the public right-of-way. You can imagine the challenge applicants now have if they don’t get along with their neighbors or if they are competitors. *Benchmark* has been working with PennDOT and attempting to get them to accept indemnification from the applicant in cases where neighbors do not want to cooperate, or increasingly for properties that are in foreclosure or other financial distress. Please contact **Pete Terry, P.E., PTOE, PMP** at pete.terry@bencivil.com to discuss how this may effect your project whether you are a private developer or a public entity.

could result in tearing out the extensive work and performing the project a second or third time. In some cases, there is potential for costly litigation.

Benchmark has worked with many of the competent and reputable fence contractors (and informed property owners) in making sure the proper steps are taken to avoid injury and avoid disputes that can result in a costly trespass if the fence is not properly located.

If you have any questions, please contact **Joe Gruver, P.L.S.** at joe.gruver@bencivil.com.



The Cost of a Boundary Survey

One of the first questions asked when a property owner is seeking to identify the location of their lot corners is, “How much does it cost?” The quick answer is, “It depends.” The time to perform a boundary retracement survey can vary based on the unique features of the property. Here at *Benchmark* Civil Engineering Services we realize that while many property owners may be comparing prices to other firms, more importantly, they are not aware of the time involved to properly perform a retracement survey of their property. And, it goes without saying, “the more time it takes, the more it will cost.”

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires a licensed surveyor to identify the location of the property lines. The licensed Professional Land Surveyors at *Benchmark* have prepared an outline of typical requirements necessary to complete a boundary retracement survey for a property.

- 1) Gather information about the site (e.g. address, size of lot, age of subdivision, tax map reference, research deeds and recorded plans in the courthouse, etc.)
- 2) Visit the site to search for existing property corners and any pertinent information of the lot and adjoining lots.
- 3) If all corners are found and appear to conform to the recorded deed, further survey may not be necessary if the property owner is satisfied with the findings. This, however, does not qualify as a boundary retracement survey.
- 4) If there appear to be any discrepancies, or if corners are missing, then research of the deeds in the immediate area will be needed. The deed boundary description of the lot and adjoining lots are plotted on the computer.
- 5) Perform a field survey to locate (or re-establish) pertinent property corners and compare them to the plottings of the recorded deeds and plans.



- 6) Resolve the property boundary and return to the site to set any of the missing property corners.

Any or all of these steps may be necessary for any given property boundary survey. The time involved in this averages 8 to 12 hours and can range from \$800 to \$1000 for a typical 60' x 120' lot. Many variables such as vegetation, lot shape, lot age, and number of corners can add to the time needed for the survey, thus adding to the expense.

For further information on boundary retracement surveys please contact **Bruce F. Gustin, P.L.S.** at bruce.gustin@bencivil.com or **Joe Gruver, P.L.S.** at joe.gruver@bencivil.com

Reduce Crashes on Corners

If your area has more than its share of run off the road crashes on a horizontal curve there are a number of low cost solutions.

Adding, widening, or improving shoulders provides room for recovery if a vehicle loses control. A difference in color, texture, or sound can aid a driver in realizing the vehicle has left the travel lane.

A vertical drop off of 3 inches at the edge of shoulder can cause a driver to overcorrect and wind up going the wrong way or crossing the road. Applying a 45 angle wedge at the edge of the shoulder can aid a driver in recovering safely when returning to the road while still in motion.



If the pavement is tested and found to not have enough skid resistance (it is too slippery) a surface treatment can improve stopping distance and ability for tires to hold through the corner. Pavements can be grooved, a new overlay of pavement with higher friction can be applied, an open

graded asphalt can help remove water from the road, or a high-friction epoxy treatment such as Tyregrip® can be applied. The FHWA has more information on these concepts on their website at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

Transportation Funding, the Economy, and Investing in Our Future

As Americans we have benefitted from the strong economic prosperity we enjoyed for many decades in part because of the investments we made in the 1960's and 1970's. We created a system which gave us incredible personal mobility and economic opportunity. Unfortunately we have not kept investing in these systems and the economy has grown to rely more and more on our ability to find a less expensive way to produce products and use our knowledge skills. It is time to go back to a common vision which we can all rally around to move America forward. It is time to make the hard decisions to collect user fees at levels that can sustain our infrastructure and we need to keep investigating alternatives to enhance our transportation choices. The efficiency of mass transit is obvious but the way to collect enough fees to pay for the operation, maintenance, and expansion of these services is constantly confronted with a political system which inhibits the generation of sufficient funds to pay for these services. We also have a system where we do not seem to be able gain the kind of production efficiencies that our private businesses thrive on. These are tough issues to balance, but it is time to at least start discussing the options and forming a vision and action plan for our transportation future.

Continuing Education Update

The world is constantly changing. To ensure that Engineers, Surveyors, and Geologists keep up with the latest technology, best practices, and regulations the Pennsylvania legislature has added continuing education to the professional registration law. As part of license renewal every two years twenty-four (24) professional development hours are required. *Benchmark* has encouraged continuing education since its beginning, and is pleased to meet or exceed the requirements.

To read the new law see: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS 0 145376 828091 0 0 18/Practice%20Act%20CE%20Provisions.pdf>