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# OUR TOWN IN 1952



*A Report to the Citizens of Narberth*

# Foreword

Here is your annual Borough Report.

In this booklet are summarized some of the principal items of Borough business for 1952, a discussion of an important community problem, and a brief section on Borough finances. A new pictorial element—the use of several pictures—is intended to make the story of Borough services and facilities more graphic.

This is the third consecutive year that your Borough has issued an annual report. Last year's report, "Borough Business—1951" received the highest award in a state-wide competition under the auspices of the Institute of Local Government at Pennsylvania State College. While we would be happy to win another award with this report on 1952, it is published primarily because we believe that we owe it to you, the citizens of the Borough, to tell you what's going on and why.

If this report adds to your information and understanding of things which help make Narberth a desirable residential community where a continuing effort is made to practice good community housekeeping, it will have served its purpose.

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

NARBERTH  
PENNSYLVANIA

# An Important Zoning Problem

Your borough has a peculiar problem facing it—that of obsolescence of private dwellings, or how to keep putting our best foot forward as homes grow old.

This is a zoning matter. Construction in Narberth is well controlled by ordinances covering zoning. We have six different main districts, known as R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5 and Commercial, which it might be timely to describe briefly. The map on the next page shows their various locations.

Generally speaking, "Commercial" is limited to existing business locations, plus some extra frontage on Montgomery Avenue for possible future stores.

In R-1 the building rules contain the highest requirements. Lots must have at least 7500 square feet, and the building may not exceed 30 per cent of the lot area. Single houses only are permitted.

R-2 is far more prevalent in Narberth. Lots must be at least 4500 square feet and the building cannot cover more than 35 per cent of the lot area. Side yards and front yards can be 5 feet smaller than in R-1. Both single and semi-detached houses are permitted, but no "flats" or apartments.

R-3 permits smaller lots—2500 sq. ft. minimum. Two and three-family houses are permitted. Yards may be somewhat smaller than in R-2.

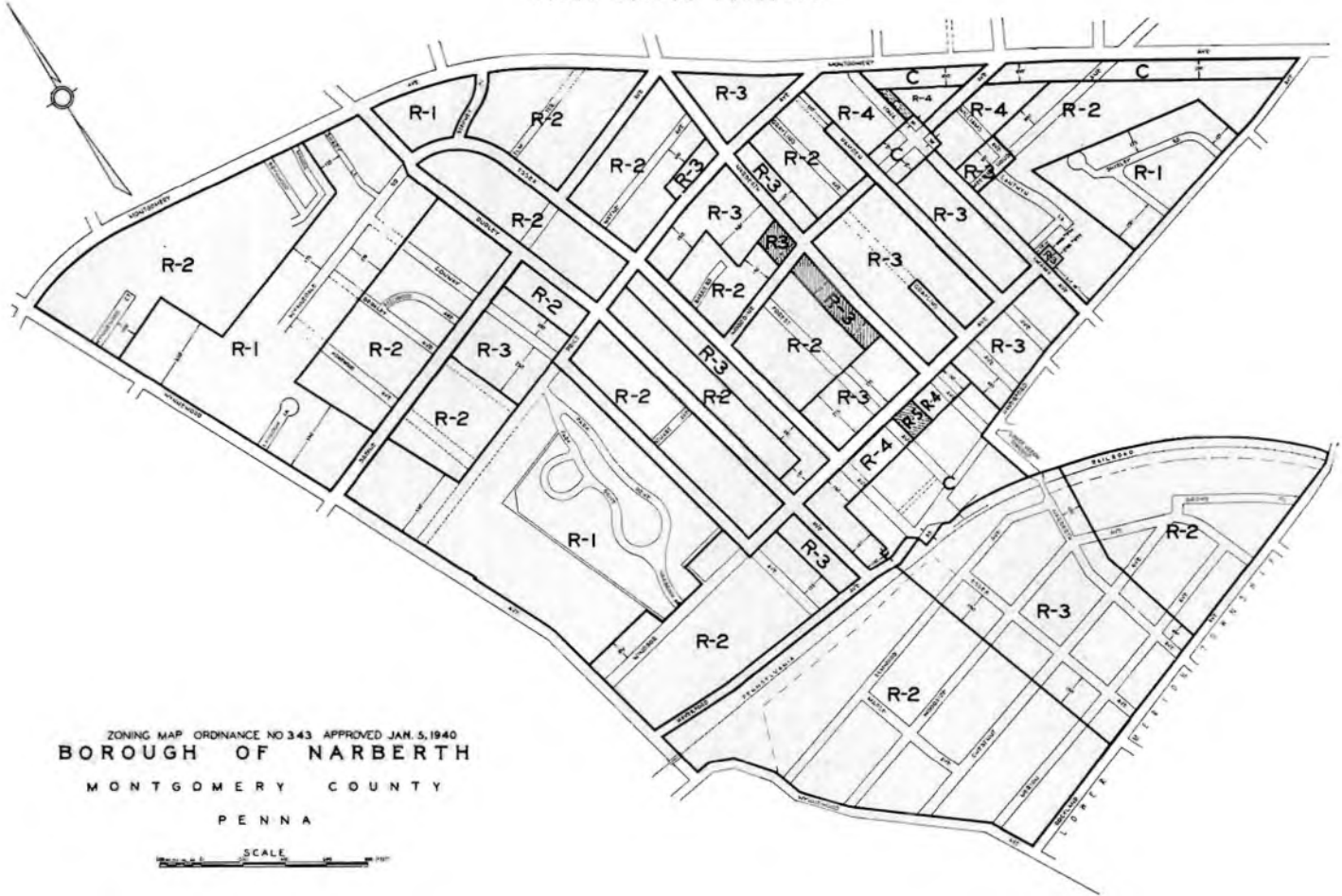
R-4 permits multiple dwellings (apartments or rows) but protects against too much congestion by limiting square footage to 1250 sq. ft. minimum per family, and specifying yard sizes and set-backs. There is also an R-5 zone recently established for one location, to constitute a "modified Commercial" for medical and dental offices, but no stores.

There are, of course other small distinctions between the various zones which we need not list here since this outline is to help understand the present problem.

The "problem" is the danger of old homes—some built over a half-century ago—being turned into rooming houses or allowed to depreciate. Many are owned by older people whose children have grown up and moved away. The old homestead is just too big and costly in view of present day heating costs and repairs to be occupied by only two people.

Some of these older homes are or have been kept up remarkably well to date; others already show their age. Why, ask some home owners, can't we divide our home into two apartments, and rent one floor?

That would not be permissible under the present zoning restrictions in R-2, the largest area in Narberth. A change in the ordinance would be necessary, but only after careful study and the sounding of public sentiment.



ZONING MAP ORDINANCE NO 343 APPROVED JAN. 5, 1940  
**BOROUGH OF NARBERTH**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
PENNA



The Planning Commission was asked early last year to suggest necessary changes in zoning, and on June 4 submitted a report recommending:

"That, in addition to the present construction allowed in R-2 Zone, two apartments be permitted in any single or semi-detached house, but only where the mean average width of the lot is 40 feet or more, and further, that the lot area of 2500 sq. feet per family shall be provided." The report added:

"We feel that the Building Code should be amended to require a rear service entrance from all second floor apartments, to remove garbage and other waste material from the rear rather than through the front entrance. And further, conversion of present houses to apartments should be restricted to keeping their outside appearance the same as at present. Cases arising when this would not hold true should be referred to the Board of Adjustment."

The Commission also added that garage or lot parking should be available, back of the set-back line of the front yard, to keep cars off the street and back of the house line, yet not block each other in a driveway. This could be a problem with two families and a single car garage.

In view of recent requests for relaxing of zoning restrictions, Council considered this report and is now seeking public opinion in the matter. The Planning Commission indicates such a change should "result in better maintenance of existing structures."

So—you see—this is a timely problem on which the citizens have a right and a duty to express themselves *before* new legislation is adopted.

## Board of Adjustment

Increasing responsibility may fall on Narberth's Board of Adjustment as zoning changes impend.

The Pennsylvania statutes, which authorize municipalities to enact zoning ordinances, require that a Board of Adjustment shall be created at the same time. That is a precaution to prevent property owners from being unjustly restricted or penalized in the exercise of their normal rights by any too literal or too arbitrary enforcement of the zoning laws. Any property owner who is dissatisfied for any reason by the refusal of a permit to build or alter his premises may take an appeal to the Board of Adjustment and be granted a public hearing before that board. At this time the Board considers whatever evidence and testimony he may wish to submit and, at the same time, hears whatever opposition may be presented.

The construction of buildings is entirely subject to the Building Code of the Borough and the Board of Adjustment has no authority to modify it.

The Narberth Board of Adjustment is composed of three citizens, appointed by Council, each serving for three years without compensation. One term expires each year.

*Records* of cases heard, including minutes of each hearing and the written decisions of the Board are on file in the Borough office where they may be read at any time by interested citizens.

# Borough Bookkeeping

During 1952 the cost of operating local government was still on the increase, just as costs were everywhere. Most of the rise was due to higher salaries and wages, conforming with other communities and the general U. S. pattern.

To some extent the increased costs were offset by careful operational procedure along several lines. The cost of public works was kept at a minimum; increased revenue was received from real estate sales taxes; delinquent per capita taxes were collected through the diligence of the tax collector.

So the year closed with a fair balance to carry over to 1953, which, as our taxpayers know, made it unnecessary to raise the tax rate this year, even with a higher budget. Warning is given, however, that this present rate cannot be maintained if costs continue to spiral. Even our neighbors in the Township had an increase this year, despite great increase in building.

Studies are planned in the matter of assessments; a preliminary comparison of sale prices of properties sold during the past two years, as against their assessed valuation, indicated that some inequities exist, and that a general independent survey may be desirable. Although assessments have been handled fairly and ably in past years, it is to be expected that properties built over a 50-year span will not be entirely comparable in their valuation in today's market.

Our outstanding debt was reduced to a new low—\$47,000 net in legal sinking funds. Against this we received \$21,000 from sale of the lot at Forrest and Windsor Avenues, which is held in deposit in a special savings account and will be used to pay a portion annually of the amortization of the debt as provided by law.

The financial housekeeping required to keep our square mile of borough with its six thousand residents comfortably and safely governed takes a lot of time, donated by a variety of civic-minded persons. While there is a small remuneration for the duties of Solicitor, Treasurer, Assessor and Auditors, they all do much more than they are compensated for. Others on Council and Commissions and Boards receive no pay.

# Cost of Borough Services in 1952

TOTAL    AVERAGE FAMILY'S WEEKLY SHARE

ASHES, TRASH AND GARBAGE COLLECTION

**\$28,200**    **37¢**

POLICE PROTECTION

**\$24,600**    **32¢**

FIRE PROTECTION

**\$15,950**    **21¢**

STREET MAINTENANCE

**\$13,150**    **17¢**

STREET LIGHTING

**\$9,800**    **13¢**

MILK CONTROL, VISITING NURSE SERVICE, ETC.

**\$3,000**    **4¢**

LIBRARY

**\$4,000**    **5¢**

COMMUNITY BUILDING & PLAYGROUND

**\$8,150**    **10¢**

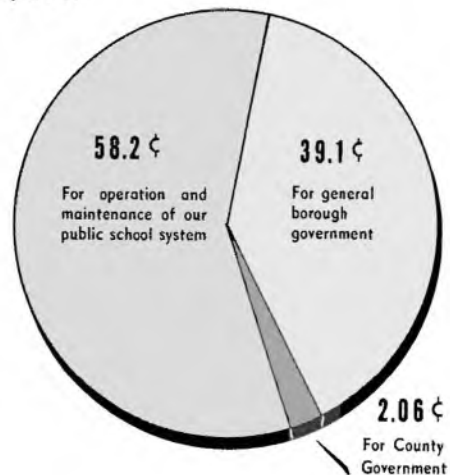
PAYMENTS ON DEBTS INCURRED FOR STREETS, SEWERS, ETC.

**\$10,600**    **14¢**

OFFICE SERVICE, TAX COLLECTION, ETC.

**\$10,450**    **14¢**

*How Your  
Tax Dollar  
Was Spent  
in 1952*



# Borough Government Provides



CONWAY AVENUE "BEFORE AND AFTER"

Photo at left, taken in July, 1952, shows Conway Avenue above Sabine as it was then, a dirt road, full of holes and bumps. Borough worked out paving whereby cost was divided among abutting property owners with Borough chipping in \$1,000 and saving property owners considerable additional expense. Photo at right shows new smooth paving.



This car equipped with flashing light and two-way radio is in operation 24 hours per day by the Narberth Police. Here Sergeant August Bailey, in car, and Sergeant Charles Girvin receive a radioed message from Lower Merion police headquarters in Ardmore. Narberth police work is coordinated with Lower Merion, providing greater efficiency.



Borough Health Officer removes quarantine sign from Narberth home. Board of Health checks on communicable diseases.

# Varied Services to Citizens



Traffic bottleneck at the busy intersection of Haverford and Essex Avenues will be eased. The Borough plans to widen Haverford Avenue on the south side, beginning at western end of bank building and extending to Station Circle. Frame building adjoining station will be razed as part of the project. Two large trees will be spared if possible.

Library's reference room is intensively used by students. Narberth Library prides itself upon a comprehensive reference collection which is also widely used by adults. Many students do their "home work" at the Library.



Youthful and adult borrowers alike enjoy facilities of Narberth Community Library. Mrs. Althea Herold, Librarian (at desk), reports circulation increased last year. Library houses 14,695 books, was open 304 days during 1952.

# Transacting Borough Business

Many items come up during the course of a year in borough business, perhaps too small to be of interest to every citizen, yet important to those who are affected by the action taken.

For example, take the matter of payment for street openings, necessary when water lines or other utilities have to be repaired beneath the pavements. This has gradually caused rough spots and settlements. Our charges for such street openings, based on an ordinance of before the War, were so small we could not do an adequate patching job. So last year we upped the charge for street openings from \$9 to \$20 a square yard, and now a reinforced concrete base is used to repair the opening.

A street improvement most people would not see was the relining and strengthening of the 100-year-old Wynnewood Avenue bridge over the bed of Indian Creek, above Windsor Avenue. We straightened out the creek bed, and while at it, eliminated a sanitary hazard of drainage which had long been a source of complaints. The whole job cost the taxpayers about \$1000.

Continuing study is being made of ways and means of reducing the Borough wage costs, either by contracting with outside forces for a portion of our work, or by more mechanization. Higher labor cost increases the need for careful study of our hand work around the town. Ash and trash collection is one of the services now being surveyed from a cost point of view. It now amounts to about \$1.10 per month per family.

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In line with the democratic principle of giving every citizen a voice in government, and of getting a cross section of opinion on controversial matters, Council held a hearing on Rent Control in Borough Hall on September 5. It was attended by 50 renters and 16 landlords. The question to be discussed was whether an emergency existed locally in defense housing which would justify extending controls until the end of April, 1953.

There was free expression of opinion in the best town meeting tradition. As a result, Council held an adjourned meeting on September 29 and voted 6 to 1 to continue controls. Members of Council, however,

publicly expressed a dislike for controls generally, as a matter of principle, but were unwilling to end such controls suddenly when surrounding areas still maintained them. They felt that the tenants should be given more time before abruptly discontinuing the controls

*“Central Park,” as the lot at Windsor and Forrest had been dubbed, was sold by the Borough as of July 31, to Dr. Fred A. Slack, who was promoting a dental center for this area. The plot was rezoned (R-5) to permit such use for medical or dental offices and laboratories. The sale price was \$21,000, approximately what the Borough paid for it. Dreams of a new borough building faded away when construction costs kept rising beyond our ability to pay.*

Council bought a walkie-talkie for the Narberth Fire Company last year—cost, \$400—to enable firemen to call from blaze to pumper, or to summon extra help.

*At the Playground three new drinking fountains had to be installed. Some youngsters could not control their destructive natures, and outdoor items do not last too long, even if it is a public convenience like a drinking fountain. There was some trouble, too, with breaking of windows in the Community Building, until drastic punishment was threatened.*

Plaques were awarded the Borough by the National Safety Council and the American Automobile Association for our having experienced no traffic fatalities during the year just passed. If you like statistics, our Police gave out 194 tickets for overtime parking at meters last year, and there were 30 accidents which warranted reporting, with \$8,428 of estimated damage. Injuries in traffic accidents were very minor, only 12 requiring medical attention.

The most dangerous corner in Narberth now is N. Narberth and Windsor, which is being checked carefully by police.

A new Chevrolet was purchased for the Police last February. Our police car travels 42,000 miles a year, yet never gets more than two miles away from the Borough, just occasional trips to Ardmore police station.

Steps were taken during the year to place all Borough employees, including Police under the provisions and benefits of Federal Social Security.

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More statistics: The Narberth Fire Company answered 68 alarms last year (1952) of which 41 were outside the Borough but within the zone assigned to our volunteer company. No firemen were seriously hurt in action, thanks to careful training and caution by their leaders.



Raising 65 foot ladder which also serves as a water tower.

A fire company needs trained personnel. To meet this need, the Narberth Fire Company holds monthly drills so that its volunteer members may become skilled in the use of the complicated—and expensive—equipment employed in fire fighting.

Equipment of the Narberth Fire Company includes a Seagrave 65 foot aerial ladder truck with a 750 gallon pumper and all manner of special equipment, a Seagrave Pumper which can deliver 750 gallons of water per minute, and an American LaFrance Combination equipped with a 100 gallon pump.

The area in which the Narberth Fire Company operates includes much of Penn Valley, portions of Wynnewood and most of Merion in addition to the Borough of Narberth. This territory is assigned by the Middle Department (fire insurance) Rating Association.

Because of the high standards of

## Fire Drills Protect Citizens

the Narberth Fire Company in equipment, personnel and training, Narberth and the area included in its fire zone enjoys the lowest possible fire insurance rates.

Shown here is the Narberth Fire Company in action. (Photos by Bill Harris, courtesy *Main Line Times*.)



Firemen practice use of life net. Proper technique is in sitting position as shown.



Volunteers donning boots, coats and helmets at Fire House preparatory to jumping aboard apparatus for fast run to fire.



Company's mascot, Dong, mounts his seat in the Combination as Driver Percy Teaford prepares to answer alarm.



Hydrant drill. The 2½ inch hose is attached to fire plug.



Hose must be removed from apparatus after fire and dried. This vehicle carries 1400 feet of 2½ inch hose in addition to booster line.



Resuscitator is important life saving equipment. Men are trained in its use.



Fire Chief Albert Nulty uses "walkie talkie" as three 2½ inch lines are attached to pumper.

## Recreation — A Community Activity



Basketball courts are popular.

One of Narberth's chief assets is its community playground. On this six acre tract is situated the Community Building housing the Library and quarters for many local organizations including the Women's Community Clubs, the American Legion and Girl Scouts. A newer structure is the Field House with dressing rooms for teams, locker and shower facilities.

Two basketball courts with smoothly paved, quick drying surfaces are in use the year 'round.

The baseball field with its covered and open stands is the scene of many a thrilling game as Narberth maintains its reputation as a "baseball town."

Under the trees are located the swings, slides and other equipment for use of the younger children. Six well maintained tennis courts, open throughout the Spring, Summer and Fall, are popular with teen agers and adults alike.

During the summer months a supervised program of activities is carried on at the Playground with trained recreation leaders in charge. Last summer, there was an average of 200 boys and girls taking part in the organized play. Basketball and baseball teams were formed with volley ball, stick ball, quoits and ping-pong proving popular. Craft classes in charge of Mrs. Mabel Hunsicker enrolled 75 youngsters and made a variety of baskets and artwork.

Playground activities are in charge of the Narberth Recreation Board, a five member body appointed by the Burgess. Maintenance of the buildings and grounds is the responsibility of Council through the Borough Property Committee.

# Borough Directory

## BURGESS

Sterling M. Chain

## COUNCIL

Robert M. Cameron, President  
Howard Cotter, Jr.  
Leonard A. Drake  
Nathan McClure  
Douglas C. Miner  
Dr. Richard T. Smith  
Joseph F. Tripician

## SECRETARY OF COUNCIL

Ruth W. Graham

## SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

George B. Suplee

## SOLICITOR

Henry A. Frye

## TREASURER

John A. Mowrer, Jr.

## TAX COLLECTOR

Richard L. Miller

## ASSESSOR

E. L. Nies

## BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Robert F. Wood, Chairman  
S. Howard Patterson  
Robert A. Class

## AUDITORS

Arthur C. Staples  
Elmer D. Hackman  
Chester C. McKibbin

## PLANNING COMMISSION

B. G. Simpson, Chairman  
C. H. Woolmington, Secretary  
W. Elmer Titus  
T. Noel Butler  
E. Milton Parran

## CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Franklin C. Hutchinson, Chairman  
Earl L. Hoffman  
C. Howard Nold

## RECREATION BOARD

William S. Howard, Chairman  
Mrs. Lulu W. McCartney  
Douglas C. Miner  
Samuel K. Barclay  
Ralph E. Hoyle

## JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Vincent Colelli  
Robert E. Baker

## SCHOOL BOARD

Eugene H. Ogdin, President  
Ralph E. Hoyle, Vice-President  
Mrs. Lulu W. McCartney, Secretary  
Clifford Y. Narrigan, Treasurer  
Mrs. Ingeborg T. Robb  
Paul L. Caulwell  
P. Mark Parthemore, Jr.  
Joseph S. Roddy, Jr., Supervising  
Principal  
Roland Fleer, Solicitor

## FIRE COMPANY DIRECTORS

William S. Howard, President  
John H. Jefferies, Jr.  
Horace T. Smedley  
Richard M. Gillis  
Burns F. Best  
Arthur L. Cooke  
Ernest L. Jenkins  
Robert J. Hobson  
Leonard A. Drake  
Albert H. Nulty, Chief  
W. D. Stapp (Representing Merion Civic  
Association)  
F. A. Fontyn (Representing Wynnewood  
Civic Association)  
Carl B. Metzger, Jr. (Representing Penn  
Valley Civic Association)

## SHADE TREE COMMISSION

Dr. Walter Steckbeck, Chairman  
George D. Stewart  
George B. Suplee

## BOARD OF HEALTH

W. James Drennen, President  
Dr. A. G. Denman  
Burns F. Best  
W. Ralph Giles  
Mrs. Jane Miner  
George B. Suplee, Secretary and Health  
Officer

## COMMUNITY LIBRARY TRUSTEES

Mrs. May K. Cameron, President  
Miss Fanny H. Loos, Secretary  
Mrs. Eunice Frye  
Mrs. May T. Drew  
Joseph F. Tripician  
Rev. Gordon Gilbert  
Miss Jean Staples  
Elliott Morse  
Leon Piercey  
Mrs. Ingeborg T. Robb  
Mrs. Mabel Hunsicker  
Earl L. Hoffman  
Mrs. Althea Herold, Librarian