WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP
BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Ordinance No. 2025-4

AN ORDINANCE OF WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA AMENDING THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON TO ADD CHAPTER 52, TO BE TITLED "FIRE HYDRANTS," TO ESTABLISH RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND TESTING OF FIRE HYDRANTS, AND TO SET FORTH STANDARDS FOR FIRE HYDRANTS, TO PROVIDE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL OVERSIGHT, AND PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of Washington Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania ("Township") recognizes that fire hydrants are used by the fire companies providing services in the Township in the event of a fire, and thus serve an important public safety purpose;

WHEREAS, the Township deems it in the best of the health, safety, and welfare of its residents to implement regulations for routine maintenance and testing of fire hydrants and to implement standards for minimum flows to ensure that such hydrants will be fully operational in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring a supply of water.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Board of Supervisors of Washington Township as follows:

SECTION 1. The Code of the Township of Washington ("Code") is hereby amended to add a new Chapter to Part II, titled "General Legislation," numbered as Chapter 52, titled "Fire Hydrants," as follows:

SECTION 52-1. INTENT

1. To provide standards and requirements for the inspection, testing, maintenance, connection and repair of fire hydrants located on private properties within the Township.

2. To ensure that every fire hydrant to which the fire department(s) serving the Township connect in the event of a fire or other emergency will function as designed to produce the water necessary to allow appropriate response to the fire or other emergencies.

3. To protect the public health, safety and general welfare of Township residents and taxpayers.

SECTION 52-2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER – Any Township employee or third-party agency that has been duly appointed as Township Code Enforcement Officer by the Board of Supervisors.

EMERGENCY IMPAIRMENT – A condition where a fire hydrant is out of service due to an unexpected occurrence, such as frozen or ruptured hydrant components or an interruption of the water supply to the system.

FIRE DEPARTMENT – The Eastern Berks Fire Department or its successor.

HYDRANT – A fire hydrant as defined below.

IFC – 2018 International Fire Code (IFC).

IMPAIRED HYDRANT – A shutdown of a fire hydrant which renders the hydrant nonoperational and therefore out of service.

IMPAIRMENT TAG – A tag affixed to a fire hydrant to indicate that the hydrant is out of service.

INSPECTION – A visual examination of a fire hydrant to verify that it appears to be in operating condition and is free from physical damage.

MAINTENANCE – Work performed to keep a fire hydrant operable or to make repairs.

OWNER – The person that holds record title to the property upon which a fire hydrant is located. For fire hydrants located in the right-of-way of a public highway in the Township and that are not owned by the Township, the owner is the person that owns the fire hydrant itself.

OWNER'S DESIGNEE – Where the owner is not the occupant of the premises upon which a fire hydrant is located, the occupant, management firm, or managing individual designated by the owner through specific provisions in the lease, written use agreement, or management contract that has the responsibility to inspect, test, and maintain, correct and repair a fire hydrant located on the owner's property.

PERSON – Any institution, public or private corporation, individual, partnership, fire district, or other entity.

PRE-PLANNED IMPAIRMENT – A condition where a fire hydrant is out of service due to work that has been planned in advance.

FIRE HYDRANT – A valve connection to a water main for the purpose of supplying water to a fire hose or other fire-protection apparatus.

TESTING – A procedure of periodic physical and operational checks used to determine whether a fire hydrant is capable of being operated as intended and will perform as intended, for example, water-flow tests. These tests follow up on the original tests at intervals specified in this article.

SECTION 52-3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Responsibility for properly maintaining a fire hydrant shall be that of the owner of the property or the owner's designee. Where the owner of a fire hydrant has designated an occupant, management firm, homeowners' or unit owners' association, or managing individual, through specific provisions in the lease, written use agreement, or management contract, to be responsible for the inspection, testing and maintenance of a fire hydrant in accordance with this article, the owner's designee shall comply with the requirements of this article and shall be subject to enforcement of this article in the event of a failure to so comply.

2. By means of periodic inspections, tests, maintenance, correction, and repair, every fire hydrant shall be maintained in proper working condition, consistent with this article, the applicable IFC standard, and the manufacturer's specifications or recommendations

3. Inspection, testing maintenance, correction and repair shall be implemented with the procedures meeting or exceeding those established in this article and the IFC standard and shall be in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications or recommendations. This article shall control in the event of a conflict among any of the aforementioned applicable standards. Inspection, testing, maintenance, correction, and repair shall be performed by qualified maintenance personnel or a qualified contractor.

4. All fire hydrants, appurtenances, and water mains shall be maintained in an operative condition at all times and shall be free from obstructions and leaks. All hydrant parts shall be maintained in an operable condition at all times and shall be free of mechanical damage, corrosion, rust, and paint, and shall be covered by approved caps.

5. All fire hydrants shall have a well maintained surface coats of paint to prevent rust or corrosion.

6. The owner or owner's designee shall notify the Code Enforcement Officer before testing or shutting down a fire hydrant or its water supply. This notification shall include the purpose of the shutdown, the fire hydrant involved, and the estimated time that the hydrant will be impaired.

7. The owner or owner's designee shall notify the Code Enforcement Officer when the fire hydrant is returned to service.

8. The owner or owner's designee shall promptly correct or repair any deficiencies, damaged parts, or impairments found while performing the inspection, testing, and maintenance requirements of this article.

9. The owner or owner's designee shall promptly correct or repair any deficiencies, defects, damaged parts, or impairments of any fire hydrant of which the owner or owner's designee has knowledge.

10. No person shall deface, damage, restrict or obstruct access to any fire hydrant. All fire hydrants shall be visible and immediately accessible at all times. Hydrants shall not be obstructed by fences, bushes, trees, vegetation, walls, or any other object.

11. No fire hydrant shall be shut off, removed, or relocated unless approved by the Township.

SECTION 52-4. INSTALLATION STANDARDS

1. General Installation

    a. Hydrants shall be located in a manner to provide complete accessibility and so that the possibility of damage from vehicles or injury to pedestrians will be minimized.

    b. Fire hydrants, appurtenances and piping shall be of the type and size approved by the Fire Department.

    c. When deemed necessary by the Code Official and/or Fire Department, all fire hydrants shall be protected from mechanical and physical damage. The method of protection shall be approved by the Code Official, in consultation with the Fire Department. The means of protection shall be arranged in a manner which will not interfere with the connection to or operation of the hydrant.

    d. Fire hydrants along roadways shall have the pumper connection on the street side. Fire hydrants located in parking lots or similar setting shall have the pumper connection facing the building, unless specified otherwise by the Code Official and/or Fire Department.

e. Access for fire apparatus to all fire hydrants shall be in a manner approved by the Code Official, after consultation with the Fire Department. Access shall be a minimum of eighteen feet (18') wide and shall be capable of supporting the weight of fire apparatus. Access to fire hydrants shall be maintained in a passable condition at all times, including removal of snow, which shall be the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

f. Water tanks and fire pumps shall be installed in accordance with all Township ordinances and regulations, Fire Department regulations, and federal and state statutes and regulations.

g. All control valves shall be located where readily accessible and shall be kept free from obstructions.

2. Minimum Fire Flows. Minimum fire flow shall be at least:

a) For one- and two- family dwellings: five Hundred (500) gallons per minute at 20 psi for a period of two (2) hours;

b) For multi-family dwellings, including apartment buildings and townhomes of four (4) or more units together: seven hundred fifty (750) gallons per minute at 20 psi for a period of two (2) hours, with the exception of townhome units which have firewalls between units and sprinkler system in accordance with applicable codes, in which case five Hundred (500) gallons per minute at 20 psi for a period of two (2) hours is permitted;

c) For commercial and industrial buildings, one thousand (1,000) gallons per minute at 20 psi for a period of two (2) hours.

SECTION 52-4. INSPECTIONS, TESTING, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

1. This section shall provide the minimum requirements for the routine inspection, testing, maintenance, correction, and repair of fire hydrants. These functions shall be permitted to be carried out simultaneously.

2. Pursuant to Township requirements, the owner or the owner's designee shall inspect, test, maintain, and, if necessary, correct and repair each fire hydrant to ensure proper functioning, between April 1 and July 31 of each year. The owner or owner's designee shall conduct an inspection of a fire hydrant after each time the hydrant is operated.

3. When conducting a test of a fire hydrant, the hydrant shall be opened fully and water flowed until all foreign material has cleared.

    a) Flow shall be maintained for not less than one minute.

    b) After operation, the hydrant shall be observed for proper drainage from the barrel.

    c) Full drainage shall take no longer than 60 minutes.

    d) Where soil conditions or other factors are such that the hydrant barrel does not drain within 60 minutes or where the groundwater level is above that of the hydrant drain, the hydrant drain shall be plugged and the water in the barrel shall be pumped out.

4. Fire hydrants shall be lubricated annually to ensure that all stems, caps, plugs, and threads are in proper operating condition.

5. Fire hydrants shall be kept free of snow, ice, or other materials and protected against mechanical damage so that free access is ensured.

6. The owner or the owner's designee shall repair as soon as possible a fire hydrant which is impaired or otherwise does not function as required by this article, the IFC, or the manufacturer's specifications.

7. After completing all necessary repairs to a fire hydrant, the owner or the owner's designee shall inspect and test the hydrant consistent with the standards of this article to ensure that the hydrant is operational.

SECTION 52-5. NOTIFICATION OF IMPAIRED OR OUT OF SERVICE HYDRANT

1. The owner or owner's designee shall notify the Code Enforcement Officer in advance of a pre-planned impairment of a fire hydrant or an out of service hydrant.

2. The owner or the owner's designee shall notify the Code Enforcement Officer immediately of an emergency impairment of a fire hydrant, or its being placed out of service.

3. The owner or owner's designee shall affix an impairment tag to an impaired or out of service hydrant at the commencement of a pre-planned impairment and at the time of discovery of an emergency impairment.

4. The restoration of the fire hydrant to full service shall be diligently pursued by all responsible parties.

5. Once the necessary inspection and testing confirm that repairs have restored a fire hydrant to operational status, the owner or the owner's designee shall remove the impairment tag and shall notify the Code Enforcement Officer that the hydrant is operational.

SECTION 52-6. RECORDS

1. Records shall indicate the procedure performed concerning the inspection, testing, maintenance, correction, and repair of a private hydrant. Such records shall include the company, agency, or organization that performed the work, the results, and the date, as well as such other pertinent information as the Code Enforcement Officer shall require.

2. Records shall be maintained by the owner or the owner's designee.

3. The owner or owner's designee shall submit to the Code Enforcement Officer a record of the annual inspection, test, maintenance, correction and repair of each fire hydrant and its components.

4. The owner shall retain the original records of a fire hydrant for the life of the fire hydrant.

6. Subsequent records shall be retained for a period of three (3) years following each inspection, test, maintenance, correction or repair required by this article.

SECTION 52-7. PLACEMENT OF FIRE HYDRANTS

1. The placement of all fire hydrants shall be approved by the Township and the Fire Department serving that area.

2. Fire hydrants shall be spaced as follows:

   a. For commercial, industrial, and multifamily dwellings, fire hydrants shall be spaced so that all proposed and existing buildings will be no more than four hundred feet (400') measured along traveled ways from a fire hydrant.

b. For one- and two- family dwellings, fire hydrants shall be spaced so that all proposed and existing buildings will be no more than six hundred feet (600') measured along traveled ways from a fire hydrant.

3. Additional fire hydrants may be required to be installed on private property to meet the requirements of this Chapter.
4. Existing hydrants may be recognized as meeting all or part of the placement requirements of this Section when meeting the flow requirements and distance measured along traveled ways as established in this Chapter and when approved by the Township and the Fire Department serving the area.

5. Fire hydrants may be required to be added and/or relocated as required by this Chapter, when a building undergoes additions or additional buildings are added. No building addition, alteration, or proposed building shall interfere with the connection to or operation of existing fire hydrants.

6. Any person may request the removal, relocation, or installation of additional fire hydrant(s) by submitting a letter to the Board of Supervisors of the Township and the Fire Department. Approval of both the Township and the Fire Department will be required.

7. Fire hydrants shall be a minimum of forty feet (40') from all buildings and structures. When hydrants cannot be placed at this distance, they may be located closer when approved by the Code Official and the possibility of injury by falling walls is minimal.

SECTION 52-8. VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES

1. A fine of not less than $500 nor more than $1,000, plus costs of prosecution, including reasonable attorney fees, shall be imposed for a violation of this article.

2. Each violation shall be considered a separate and distinct offense. Further, each day of continued violation or noncompliance shall be considered a separate offense. In addition to the foregoing, the Township may take such other lawful action in any court of competent jurisdiction as is necessary to prevent or remedy the violation. Such other lawful actions shall include, but shall not be limited to, an equitable action for injunctive relief or an action at law for damages.

SECTION 52-9. ADMINISTRATIVE NOTIFICATIONS AND FEES

1. The Township will notify private property fire hydrant owners by February 28th of each year to inspect, test, maintain, and, if necessary, correct and repair each fire hydrant to ensure proper functioning., The necessary repair or corrective action

shall be completed on or before July 31st of each year, and the owner or owner's designee shall submit written documentation of the inspection, testing and repair to the Code Enforcement Officer by August 31st of each year.

2. Failure to submit written documentation of a fire hydrant inspection, testing and repair report to the Code Enforcement Officer by August 31st of each year will result in a second notification letter from the Township. Owners requiring a second notification letter will incur an administrative fee of $50.00 plus a certified postage fee.

3. Failure to reply to the Township's second notice and submit a fire hydrant inspection, testing and repair report to the Code Enforcement Officer by September 15th of each year, will result in the Owner of a fire hydrant being designated as noncompliant and in violation of this Ordinance.

SECTION 52-10. NONCOMPLIANCE

1. Due to the potential risk to the public's safety and welfare, Owners of fire hydrants who are designated as noncompliant will be notified, and the Township's Code Enforcement Officer will authorize the Township's designated fire hydrant maintenance company to inspect, test, maintain, and, if necessary, correct and repair each fire hydrant to ensure proper functioning of the noncompliant owner's fire hydrant.

2. Any fees and costs associated with administration and performance of the fire hydrant inspections, testing, maintenance, and repair will be the responsibility of the Owner of the fire hydrant. the Township shall invoice the Owner for said fees and costs, and all such fees and costs shall be reimbursed to the Township by the Owner.

3. Any fees and/or reimbursable costs invoiced by the Township to a noncompliant Owner shall be paid within 30 days after receipt of Township invoicing.

SECTION 52-11. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon adoption hereof and shall remain in force until modified, amended, or rescinded by the Township.

SECTION 52-12. ADMINISTRATION

In the event that any Section or Sections of this Chapter is/are found to conflict with another Township Ordinance or the Township Code, the more stringent shall apply.

SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY. In the event that any provision, section, sentence, clause, or part of this Ordinance is held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect nor impair any remaining provision, section, sentence, clause, or part of the Ordinance, it being the intent of the Board of Supervisors of Washington Township that such remainder shall be and shall remain in full force and effect and for this purpose the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

SECTION 3. REPEALER. The Ordinances of Washington Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, shall be and remain unchanged and in full force and effect except as amended, supplemented or modified by this Ordinance. This Ordinance shall become a part of the Code of the Township of Washington, Berks County, Pennsylvania, upon adoption. All ordinances or parts of ordinances of the Township which are inconstant herewith, are hereby repealed.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Ordinance shall take effect and be in force after its enactment by the Board of Supervisors as provided by law.

ORDAINED AND ENACTED as an Ordinance by the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Washington, Berks County, Pennsylvania, in lawful session duly assembled this 20th day of November 2025.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF
WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP

David Moyer, Chairman

Tom Powanda, Vice Chair

Romnie Long

Romnie Long, Member

Attest: Susan J. Brown (SEAL)
(Asst.) Secretary