

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When and Why do I need a building permit?

The Jefferson Township Board of Supervisors voted to opt into the statewide Universal Construction Code with an effective date of July 8, 2004. All 2,566 municipalities across Pennsylvania had to decide to administer the code themselves or let the state do it. Jefferson Township chose to administer it themselves to ensure quality inspections in a timely manner as well as keeping the cost reasonable. The code established uniform construction standards for most building projects and permits are required.

The purpose of a building permit used to be just for building set-back enforcement and tax assessment purposes. Under the new PA UCC, permits assure safe construction thus protecting public health, safety, and welfare. The permit process allows Code Officials to reduce the hazards of unsafe construction by ensuring that minimum standards are being met and that appropriate materials are being used. MOST construction – large or small – requires a building permit in Jefferson Township. Contact the township office at 724-352-2324 to verify the need for a building permit for any project you are considering. You may be referred to the PA UCC Plan Reviewer or Building Permit Officer to answer your questions.

Applications and Building Inspections during Construction

The information needed by the Permit Officer depends upon the type of building being constructed. The basic “types” are: single family dwelling; manufactured & industrialized housing; residential additions; detached structures (of 1000 sq. ft. or more which are accessory to a detached one family dwelling); decks/porches; swimming pools/spas/hot tubs; and commercial & multi-family. (*SOME detached structures less than 1,000 sq. ft. that are accessory to a single (one) family dwelling do not need inspections, but still need a building/township review permit.*) In turn, the need for inspections and/or the number of inspections required during construction also depends upon the type of building/construction. For example, Single Family Dwelling construction will have 10 inspections: 1. Footing, 2. Foundation, 3. Plumbing (under slab), 4. Electrical, 5. Mechanical, 6. Plumbing, 7. Framing, 8. Energy conservation, 9. Wallboard and 10. Final Inspection. (It is requested that you or your builder combine 4,5,6, & 7 if possible.) Contact the township office at 724-352-2324 to obtain a building permit application. The same form is used for the “township review” permit/certificate for structures under 1,000 sq. ft. Please go to FORMS on the on the home page of the Township website www.jeffersonbutler.com

Permits Benefit YOU Directly By:

- Guaranteeing that minimum construction standards are met
- Knowing that you are getting what you pay for from your contractor
- Increasing the longevity of your project
- Possible lower insurance rates
- Generally, reduces damages to structures during natural disasters
- Eligibility for federal funding after a natural disaster
- Higher property values and easier to secure mortgages.

NOTE: When hiring a contractor, you should question their knowledge of the PA UCC and inform them that all work will have to be done in compliance with the construction code. Consider getting references! Contractors must also now ‘register’ with the PA Office of the Attorney General and obtain a number, which can be used to check on the contractor 1-888-52-6680 or www.attorneygeneral.gov in so far as complaints made. (The registration does not certify or license the contractor!!)

Subdivision and Land Development

Jefferson Township has had regulations governing subdivision and land development within its borders for over 25 years, with subsequent revisions over the years. A subdivision is *basically* a division of land. A land development is any improvement to land or property (including but not limited to structures) other than a single-family dwelling. Both Subdivision Plans and Land Development Plans must be prepared by a certified surveyor or engineer and must be presented to the Jefferson Township Planning Commission, the Butler County Planning Commission*, and finally to the Jefferson Township Board of Supervisors for approval. (**Please note that the County of Butler adopted "review fees" as of Jan. 2009.*) These plans must be accompanied by a Subdivision /Land Development Application, and in most cases sewage facilities modules, septic testing, storm water management proposals/studies, etc. must also accompany a plan before approval can be given. Instruction sheets and applications are available at the Township office at no charge. A copy of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is available for download from the township website, or you can contact the township to purchase a copy of the booklet for a small fee.

Land Development Requirements

If you plan to make improvements to your lot which is used for OTHER THAN A RESIDENTIAL single-family dwelling, duplex or out-building, your improvements are considered "land development." (See Land Development definition - Municipalities Planning Code, Article I, Section 107 and Chapter 22, Part 3, Jefferson Township Code of Ordinances; obtain a SUBDIVISION/LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION from the Township Office). At the direction of the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors, submitted Land Development drawings may be reviewed by the township engineer or other professional, the cost of which is the responsibility of the landowner/developer. As a condition of acceptance, performance bonds may be required for determined improvements (Chap. 22, Part 10, Jefferson Township Code of Ordinances.)

Improvements include, but are not limited to: grading, paving, parking areas, curbs, gutters, storm sewers and drains, improvements to existing watercourses, sidewalks, crosswalks, street signs, monuments, water supply facilities, sewage disposal facilities, and storm water control facilities. (Chap. 22, Part 9, Jefferson Township Code)

Application for a building permit for any non-residential structure must be accompanied by 3 sets of certified professional architectural plans. You, as the developer MUST submit these drawings directly to the PA UCC Plan Reviewer (currently Code.sys Code Consulting). Permits (septic or building) for such non-residential structures CANNOT be issued until the Land Development has been submitted, reviewed and approved by the Township.

- Q: Where do I apply for a municipal no lien letter and what is the cost?
Municipal lien letters are generally requested by your lender or your closing agent. The request should be made in writing with a \$15.00 check enclosed made out to Jefferson Township, 157 Great Belt Rd., Butler, PA 16002.
A tax certification may be obtained from the Tax Collector. The current cost is \$25.00.
- Q: Does the township require a dye test when a home is sold?
Although the township has no ordinance requiring a dye test upon sale of a home, it is recommended that one is done for your protection because it is a violation of the Sewage Facilities Act and Clean Stream Law to discharge partially treated sewage to the ground surface. Usually upon the sale of a home being financed the bank will require a dye test. Often a buyer will want a dye test on the home being purchased. Otherwise, upon complaint of a possible malfunction, the Township may require a dye test via the Township Sewage Enforcement Officer.

- Q: How much property must I have to build on?
In newly proposed subdivisions, each lot must be 1.5 (one + one-half) acre or more if they are to be served by on-lot septic and wells. If the proposed subdivision can be served by public water & sewer (must be both) (via Saxonburg Authority/PA American Water), you may have lots as small as ½ (one-half) acre. There are still existing lots in the Township that are less than this. You can still build on these lots if you can meet the township setbacks and have sufficient room for your septic system.
- Q: Is there a “burning ordinance” in the township?
Please refer to the ORDINANCE section, under “FORMS” on the website.
- Q: What is the tax rate for Jefferson Township?
The township real estate tax rate in Jefferson Township was 1.33 mills and had not been changed in over 25 years. In 2008, the County of Butler raised the assessment ratio from 75% to 100% of the 1969 values for the 2009 taxes. The Township in turn, reduced the 2009 real estate tax to 1-mill to accommodate the revised assessment ratio. The Township tax rate remains at 1-mill!
- Q: Does Jefferson Township have an Earned Income Tax?
Yes, the township has had an Earned Income or Wage Tax for many years. It is 1% total, ½ goes to the school district and ½ goes to the township. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ACT 32 of 2008 has mandated the ‘re-vamping’ of the Earned Income Tax Collection across the state! It will reduce the number of state-wide ‘collectors’ from 560 to 69 ‘collection districts’ and restructure how the Earned Income Tax is collected. It was EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2012. BERKHEIMER Tax Administrator is the new collector for the year 2012 and forward: 103 South Duffy Rd., Butler, PA 16001. Ph.# 724-282-0377 (or Customer Care 1-866-701-7206)
- Q: Does Jefferson Township have a Local Services Tax?
Yes, the township had an ‘occupational privilege tax for many years. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania made changes to authorize the name change to “Local Services Tax” and the rate change (up to \$52.00 per year) a few years ago (Act 7 of 2007 of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania.) Jefferson Township collects the maximum \$52.00 from those ‘working in Jefferson Township’ and \$5.00 still goes to the school district. BERKHEIMER Tax Administrator is the new collector for this tax for the year 2012 and forward: 103 South Duffy Rd., Butler, PA 16001. Phone 724-282-0377 (or Customer Care 1-866-701-7206).
- Q: What is the name of our school district?
The name was officially changed to: Knoch School District in the spring of 2023. It was previously known as the South Butler County School District. It is made up of the Borough of Saxonburg, Clinton Township, Jefferson Township, Penn Township, and Winfield Township.
- Q: Where do I vote?
There are two voting areas in Jefferson Township. If you reside north of Hannahstown Rd. and east of Saxonburg Road, you will vote at the municipal building at 157 Great Belt Rd. If you reside south of Hannahstown Road and west of Saxonburg Road, you will vote at the Jefferson Grange on Bullcreek Rd. just north of the intersection with West Jefferson Rd.

- Q. Where do I register to vote?
If you need to register or change registration due to moving into the township, please call the County courthouse switchboard at 724-285-4731 and ask for the Election Bureau.
- Q: Do we have a dog control officer?
The dog officer for Jefferson Township is Dennis Sybert (724-352-4732). If the answering machine comes on, be sure to leave both your name and phone number for a return call.
- Q: How do I report a road problem?
Contact the Township Garage to report problems on township roads like fallen trees or potholes at 724-352-4740. Problems on state roads must be reported to PennDOT at (724-284-8800 or 1-800-FIX-ROAD). In Jefferson Township the state roads are: Dinnerbell Rd.; Freeport Rd./North Pike Road (which are Rt. 356); Rockdale Rd., Saxonburg Road, and Winfield Road.
- Q: Who collects the garbage in Jefferson Township?
Currently, Vogel Disposal Service and Waste Management are coming into Jefferson Township. The homeowner or resident is responsible for hiring their own garbage collector.
- Q: Where do I get recycling bins?
The Township NO LONGER offers recycling bins, due to the fact that the state is no longer funding them via DEP grants and the Township will not be buying them outright. Please purchase your own container(s) and label them "RECYCLING". Please note that Butler County issues a 'hard to recycle' guide annually; look for it under "FORMS" on the township website.
- Q: Does Jefferson Township have weight limits on Township roads, and must I obtain a permit for authorization to exceed the posted highway weight restrictions?
Yes, the Township does have a "road weight limit study" and does require permitting and bonding before authorization can be given for exceeding the posted highway weight restrictions. Application forms are available on the website under "Forms."
- Q. Does the Township have an "open records policy"?
Yes, the Township adopted an Open Records (Right-To-Know) Policy for Open (Public) Records in Dec. 2008 as required by the PA Office of Open Records and the PA Right-To-Know Law Act 3 of 2008. The Open Records (Right-To-Know) Request Form, the Jefferson Township Open Records Policy, the PA Office of Open Records Fees Structure, and the Jefferson Township Fee Resolution are available on the website under "forms."