

The Milemarker

EAST BRANDYWINE TOWNSHIP

Local Firefighters: Unpaid, Overloaded, Seek Care, Cash and People to Help Out



East Brandywine volunteers answer about 300 fire calls a year.

In September 2009, a local volunteer fire company let a home in Obion County, Tennessee, burn to the ground because the owner had failed to pay his annual fee of \$75 for fire protection. Said the community's mayor, "If homeowners don't pay, they're out of luck."

That incident has become a folklore tale in volunteer fire companies around the nation but Marc Crusemire, president of

East Brandywine Fire Company, insists it never will happen here. The volunteers will be there if a fire breaks out whether or not a resident sends a contribution during the Company's annual fund drive. But Mr. Crusemire wishes more residents would send cash. Last year, 1,350 residents gave financial support; 3,050 did not. The service area covers all of East Brandywine, about two-thirds of

West Brandywine and a small slice of Upper Uwchlan. In a typical year, the Company handles about 300 fire calls and more than 450 emergency calls to cover accidents or illnesses.

People unfamiliar with volunteer fire companies often don't realize just what that means—namely that the 25 to 30 active members of the company work for no pay. Yet the Fire Company's operating costs total close to \$350,000 a year. Where does the money come from?

The fund drive brings in about \$90,000. East Brandywine Township contributes around \$70,000, West Brandywine about \$45,000 and Upper Uwchlan a much smaller amount (the two parties are trying to reach agreement on a fair contribution; Upper Uwchlan officials want to base it on the number of calls; the Fire Company says that's an unrealistic measure since it has to maintain a wide range of equipment no matter how many calls it answers). The Fire Company raises much of the other cash it needs from its various non-fire activities—renting out its banquet hall, an annual chicken barbecue, offering birthday parties and the proceeds (after expenses) from its Kids Festival.

To put the East Brandywine contribution into perspective, consider that the Township this year will commit about 37% of its total income for police protection

and about 1.5% for fire protection.

Operating expenses are only one part of the Fire Company's budget. It also has to plan for capital expenditures and these can be huge. For example, it will need to replace its ladder truck in the near future at a cost of between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000. Other high-dollar replacements will soon be needed. There's also the cost of safety equipment. Recently, the company paid \$125,000 to replace 18 air packs and masks. It costs about \$3,000 just to buy each firefighter's protective gear—coat, helmet, gloves and boots.

Mr. Crusemire said the Fire Company is setting aside about \$124,000 a year toward future

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Who, When and Where

Township Board of Supervisors

CHAIRMAN

David A. Kirkner, CPA

VICE CHAIRMAN

Jay G. Fischer, Esq.

MEMBER

Hudson L. Voltz, Esq.

Township Public Meetings

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

First Thursday at 7:30 a.m.

Third Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

PLANNING COMMISSION

First Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY

Second Tuesday at 7:30 a.m.

Public Committee Meetings

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Second Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Second Monday at 7:30 p.m.

ORDINANCE TASK FORCE

Fourth Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

First Monday at 7:30 p.m.

*Township Meetings held
at the Township Building,
1214 Horseshoe Pike*

Important Numbers

Fire and Ambulance 911

Police (emergency) 911

Police (non-emergency)..... 383-7000

Police Administration 269-4300

Township Administration .. 269-8230

*Township Offices open M to F
9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m.*

Telephone Staff Directory

Tax Collector, Patti Piersol

Home Office (610) 269-4054

Weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For all other staff members, call
269-8230 and press the extension.

200 Norann King, Building Dept.

201 Mary Beth Smedley,
Secretary/Treasurer

203 Scott Piersol, Twp. Manager/
EMC and Fire Marshal

204 Matthew VanLew, Roadmaster

100 Police Administration

Web Addresses

TOWNSHIP www.ebrandywine.org

POLICE www.ebtpd.org

Church Plan for Burial Niches Raises Issues and Hackles



Artist's sketch of the proposed columbarium site

A proposal by Hopewell United Methodist Church to expand its cemetery won qualified support from the Township and strong opposition from residents of Batten Drive.

The plan calls for the installation of two columbariums—vaults with niches to hold urns of cremated ashes. Each columbarium would be about eight feet high, nine feet wide, about two feet deep and have 48 niches. In addition, the church proposes to install a labyrinth that can be used for “prayerful meditation,” a memorial garden and a small outdoor worship center where 50 to 60 people may gather. In presenting the plan to the Planning Commission, Arnold Kring noted that about four in ten families today are choosing cremation and the proportion is expected to grow. He also noted that an in-ground burial can cost more than \$12,000 compared with \$2,000 to \$4,000 for cremation.

The plan the church presented to the Commission also proposed using an existing right of way to give access from the columbarium to Batten Drive. The new structures and gardens would be on church-owned land between the existing cemetery and Batten Drive.

The Township, on advice of its engineer and its solicitor, said the proposal calls for a special zoning exception and for a land development plan. Mr. Kring said neither is necessary since the church is merely expanding an existing use. He also complained about the cost and time involved. The Board of Supervisors insisted on both provisions, however. Vice Chairman Jay Fischer said the land development plan is needed to address such issues as impervious surface, a proposed road, grading and stormwater management. At their November 4th meeting, the Supervisors voted to have the church proceed under these guidelines.

The Batten Drive residents opposed the plan on a number of issues, including noise, the many people likely to gather for services so close to their properties, the lack of screening of their yards from the proposed structures and safety issues if those attending services were to use the right of way to Batten Drive. A number of residents said church officials told them that the land now being considered for the columbariums would never be developed.

STOP SIGNS

PennDot has installed four-way stop signs at the intersection of Creek, Highspire and Lyndell Roads. Because of poor sight lines along Creek Road, the intersection has been very challenging for motorists on Highspire and Lyndell Roads.

East Brandywine Fire Company

continued from page 1

capital expenses within his current budget. “We will have a balanced budget again in 2011,” he says. “We won’t spend more than we have.” But he yearns for a consistent source of new revenue. “We absolutely need a fire tax,” he says, repeating a wish of many years by various Fire Company officers. Under state law, a municipality may levy a fire tax of up to 3 mills. The current East Brandywine real estate tax is 2.75 mills.

He also likes to stress that beyond its emergency services, the Fire Company is a business. In addition to money, it needs talents not related to firefighting, he says. He ticks off a list of possible volunteers that includes accountants, contractors with useful contacts, people who could help with kids’ events and fundraisers. “I’d love to have a grant committee of two or three members who could help us get money from the state or federal governments, or from other funding sources.”

Members of the Fire Company truly are a tight-knit band of brothers (and sisters). Their training calls for a fire course of 140 hours and a weekly Wednesday night training session. Members obviously enjoy the camaraderie of coffee and bull sessions. They have to be on call 24 hours a day—though night shifts are scheduled to give some time off the clock. Enough members live and/or work close enough to the fire hall that Mr. Crusemire figures the fire equipment can be manned and rolling within four minutes of getting an emergency call.

Much of the Fire Company’s non-emergency work centers on young people. The company runs regular fire safety courses at four elementary schools and hosts an annual open house at the fire hall that draws scores of enthusiastic school kids. There they get to marvel at

and climb in and out of the fire equipment and examine the many pieces of specialized fire fighting tools (in an amazing commitment to housekeeping, each and every piece of equipment and every tool is kept in spotless condition).

Kids also are the focus of the annual Kids Festival held in Community Park (this year the date is June 11). The Festival, with its park-full of slides, climbing walls, bounce rooms and other entertainment is a major draw, attracting well over 1,000 visitors. What the partygoers don’t see is the behind-the-scenes work. Planning for the 2011 event already is well advanced and when June rolls around it will take some 120 workers more than two days to put all the amusement sites in place. This does not include the many hours calling on sponsors to help finance the project.

Similarly, the Fire Company’s barbecue is a time-draining experience. It takes days to arrange and set up and the event itself takes about 12 to 15 hours of work for each of the volunteers.

The birthday parties at the fire hall, started in 2009, also call for many work hours. There were about 12 parties in 2010 and the Fire Company hopes to add to that number this year. In the early days, donations ran from \$100 to \$400 for each party; this year “we’ll probably be asking for \$200 to \$250 per party,” says Mr. Crusemire.

The number of children at the parties varies but has totaled as many as 30. The day’s features include a talk on fire safety, checking out the equipment and a visit from Sparky (a firefighter dressed in full equipment) and Freddie, the little robot fire plug who toots and whistles and carries on conversations with the kids (a big favorite who’s also featured at school fire

safety days). For now, people bring their own food and drink. A large party generally calls for five or six supervising adults. “We’re always looking for additional help,” says Mr. Crusemire.

In another tip of the hat to young people, the Fire Company recently lowered the age for junior firefighters from 16 to 14. These young members learn the basics of the job and work on many projects around the fire hall. The hope is that, in time, they will become full firefighting members.

Looming over all other issues are the long-term questions of whether or not the Fire Company can continue as an all-volunteer organization and the adequacy of its present headquarters on Bondsville Road. At the moment, the volunteer status seems secure although the time may come when, as has happened elsewhere in the region, the company hires one or two full-time officers. Scott Piersol, who in addition to being the Township Manager and Fire Marshall is also Treasurer of the Fire Company, estimated three years ago that a full-time, paid fire department would cost the community more than \$1,000,000 a year.

The present fire hall has limitations. It has no bunkroom so firefighters who have to spend the night there sleeping on temporary cots or in sleeping bags placed on the floor. There is little office space or privacy. And if the present ladder truck, with a 75-ft. ladder, is replaced with a 100-ft. model—something the Fire Company wants—it won’t fit in the existing building. The Fire Company did bring the accommodations issue to the Board of Supervisors a couple of years ago and suggested a possible move to a new site on Horseshoe Pike. The Supervisors asked for a plan identifying the best

PRESERVED OPEN SPACE



The Open Space Committee won approval from the Board of Supervisors to buy close to 20 new signs to place on properties it has bought or on which it has acquired easement rights. The signs—shown here with their two sides—will let residents know which properties are being preserved, thanks to their taxpayer funds. In most instances, the Open Space Committee must get permission from the landowners to put up its signs.

future options. “We want to do what’s best for the Township and the company,” says Mr. Crusemire. “We have to study our options, consider how much debt to take on. We’ve got to be fiscally responsible. We want to lay the groundwork for future generations.”

On and Off the Drawing Board

The Giant Supermarket

Giant Foods and the Township still are at odds over the company's proposal to build a supermarket on Horseshoe Pike next to the Brandywine Village Shopping Center. Money is the big issue, and the two sides are far apart.

The Township says Giant will be liable for a traffic impact fee—assessed on the anticipated number of trips customers and suppliers will make to the store—of about \$1.88 million. In addition, it wants Giant to make a number of road improvements on Horseshoe Pike and to build a connector road linking Horseshoe Pike and North Guthriesville Road.

The developer who would build the store for Giant argues that it doesn't have to build the connector

road but if it does, it would lose more than 9,000 sq. ft. of retail space. The two parties differ widely on the value of that space.

At the Board of Supervisors mid-October meeting, Chairman David Kirkner told the developer that the Township was willing to cut its impact fee to \$250,000 if Giant fulfilled all the Township's other requirements. Peter Miller of Carlino East Brandywine LP, the developer, made it clear that this offer was unacceptable and he and his attorney left the meeting.

The Township, as of early December, was awaiting a further response. In spite of the ongoing disagreements, it seems likely that the two sides may yet reach a compromise.

ON THE MOVE

The following real estate transactions took place between early September and early December.

21 Batten Drive.....	\$413,000
132 Bolero Drive.....	\$377,500
600 Corner Ketch Road.....	\$245,000
28 Cumberland Drive.....	\$800,840
113 Evergreen Drive.....	\$355,000
25 Gloucester Drive.....	\$268,000
29 Gloucester Drive.....	\$275,000
11 Hawk Hill Road.....	\$625,000
1153 Hopewell Road.....	\$257,900
201 Lemmon Way.....	\$420,000
386 North Buck Road.....	\$425,000
10 Patterdale Place.....	\$385,000
603 Pinebrooke Circle.....	\$230,000
315 South Caldwell Circle.....	\$600,000
3 Summerhill Drive.....	\$525,000
102 Waring Drive.....	\$427,000
341 Zynn Road.....	\$249,000

Source: Weichert Realtors, West Chester

Residents Send Gifts and Messages to Troops



Volunteers assemble the gift stockings in the municipal building.

Once again, local citizens rallied to gather gifts for service men and women on duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the help of scores of volunteers, Operation Military Christmas Package gathered and assembled 386 stockings packed with everything from CDs to books to games to shaving accessories to candy.

It was a team effort, says Sandy Moser, the chief organizer of the event. "No one in our group does this project for recognition. It's all about letting the service men and women know that we do remember them and we recognize the sacrifice they are making for each of us."

Special mention does go, though, to Village Hardware. The store publicized the event, ran a raffle and bake sale, kept a donation jar and ran a pinball tournament. Croppers also collected

three or four large boxes of items donated by employees. Shoppers were generous in adding to the donations. Students at Brandywine-Wallace Elementary School made Christmas cards to include in all the gift stockings, many including the message "Thank you for keeping us safe." "I have to think that this message was just as important to the recipients as the candy and other goodies," says Mrs. Moser.

Each stocking included this message from "residents and friends" in East Brandywine Township: "Wherever you are this holiday season, we know the sacrifices you're making for all of us. We are with you in spirit. Your courage keeps us safe. Your sacrifices make others free. May God keep you safe and bring you home to a grateful nation."

Chaplains in each country distributed the gifts to the troops.

Police Officers Sworn In

Two officers who've been serving part-time with the East Brandywine Police Department—**Beau Shephard and Dan Orris**—were sworn in as full-time members of the force. **John Hayes** was sworn in as part-time officer.

Officer Shephard graduated from Twin Valley High School in 1998, served as an intelligence analyst with the U.S. Marine Corps, is a graduate of the Delaware County Community College Police Academy and holds an associate degree in general studies from DCCC. He was hired part time in East Brandywine in December 2009.

Officer Orris is a 1998 graduate of Coatesville High School, holds an associate degree in specialized technology from the Bradley Academy of Visual Arts and also



Officers Shephard (left) and Orris.

is a graduate of the DCCC Police Academy. He was hired part time in East Brandywine in May 2009.

Officer Hayes is a 2000 graduate of Archbishop Carroll High School and served in the U.S. Air Force for four years including duty in Afghanistan in 2004. He holds



Officer Hayes

an associate degree in administration of justice from Delaware County Community College (2007) and is a 2010 graduate of the DCCC Police Academy. He also has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from West Chester University.

THREATENED WITH FORECLOSURE?

The Housing Partnership of Chester County wants to help homeowners who through no fault of their own and regardless of income are financially unable to make their mortgage payments. The Partnership administers the Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP). It provides mortgage assistance to Pennsylvania families in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure. Those accepted in to the program receive loans to help bring delinquent payments current and may be eligible for continuing payment assistance for up to 24 months. Under the program, mortgage payments are made directly to lenders on behalf of the homeowner. For more information, contact Maria Carter at (610) 518-1522 or visit www.housingpartnershipcc.com.

State Offers Pictures and Alerts on Troublesome Traffic Spots

Ever have the fear as you zip along Horseshoe Pike in morning rush-hour traffic that you may run into even more congestion on the Route 30 Bypass? Get an advance look at conditions before you leave home by checking 511PA.com. The site gives a real-time look at the traffic on the Bypass and on Route 202. The pictures come courtesy of the scores of cameras that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation installed along both highways and show just how well (or poorly) traffic is flowing. The 511 site posts warnings about tie-ups caused by accidents or construction.

You also can get traffic reports by calling 511. PennDot urges drivers not to access its web site while they're driving.

In September, PennDot celebrated the first anniversary of the system it calls its "Travel Info to Go." It's already highly popular. In its first year the website had more than 697,000 visits and the phone system was used more than 490,000 times. Users may register to receive personalized traffic alerts by e-mail or messaging. Nearly 8,300 people already subscribe.

In Chester County, traffic information and live camera views are available for U.S. routes 30, 202, 422, PA 100 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (check the website for location of the cameras). Currently, the system covers 1,759 miles of highway and there were plans to add another 630 miles of state roads before the end of 2011. PennDot also planned to provide a 511 feed via Twitter.

Traffic Map



Scene of an accident on Route 30 east of Route 340 captured by 511 camera.

Revised Loop Road Plan



Sketch plan shows the route of the proposed bypass. The roundabout at the intersection of the loop road and Bondsville Road is not yet included.

The layout of the long-discussed loop road around the Village of Guthriesville is being slightly revised. The illustration above shows the western end of the road splitting off from Horseshoe Pike almost opposite the Brandywine Village Shopping Center, crossing behind the Township Municipal Building before merging on to East Reeceville Road. It then crosses Bondsville Road (there may be a roundabout at this location, which is not shown on this sketch, to aid traffic flow), and then a return to Horseshoe Pike just east of the Wright Agency. The loop will offer east and west connections to East Reeceville Road and similar east and west connections where it rejoins Horseshoe Pike.

There will be two-way traffic on the highway through the village with one eastbound and two westbound lanes.

Township Manager Scott Piersol stresses that the sketch represents only a concept. Before the loop road can be built, it needs a fully engineered plan, PennDot approval and, above all, funding. In the best of worlds, the road is unlikely to be built for at least 10 years, which may seem an eternity to rush hour commuters. But keep one thought in mind: the Community Park, another Township dream, opened in 1991 with a couple of playing fields. Today, almost 20 years later, it is a Class A recreation facility with four baseball fields, more than five soccer fields, a couple of miles of walking trails and other amenities.

Township's Financial Outlook is Modestly Hopeful for 2011

Township finances look in pretty good shape going into 2011 and residents will not face any increase in taxes or refuse and recycling fees. In part, optimism about projected revenues stems from a likely pickup in new residential construction, though this plus sign is unlikely to affect all the developments under construction or on hold in the Township.

Township Manager Scott Piersol, in presenting his budget proposals to the Board of Supervisors, said building permit fees are expected to increase “significantly” this year as the second phase of the Applecross Country Club development gets into full swing in the spring. He also expects to see a rebirth of construction in Southdown Homes’ Hideaway project off Little Washington Road. On the downside, Southdown indicated that it wants to delay a start on its Hillendale development on Creek Road because of continuing uncertainty in the real estate market.

In all, Mr. Piersol projects total income of \$4,749,028 for 2011. Savings realized in health care costs and insurance premiums, along with significant expense reductions in the Police and Public Works areas, have reduced expenses to \$4,627,349, leaving approximately \$161,660 or so for a capital reserve allocation.

On the revenue side, the earned income tax is expected to bring in \$1.27 million and the real estate tax to bring in \$1.37 million. As of November, the total value of property in the Township was \$483.8 million, according to Chester County records.

On the expense side, public safety costs—mostly for police

protection—are expected to rise by \$80,183 to a total of \$1.55 million.

Last fall, the Township had hoped to save between \$150,000 and \$200,000 by refinancing more than \$5.8 million in outstanding bonds, largely debt incurred for construction of the new municipal complex. But the market’s current distaste for municipal bonds, strengthened for Pennsylvania offerings by the widely-publicized possibility of a bankruptcy filing by Harrisburg, combined with East Brandywine’s lack of a budget cash balance, upset this move. After Standard & Poor’s gave the proposed bonds a BBB+ rating (rather than the hoped for A), the possible saving by refinancing shrank to about \$73,000. The Board of Supervisors decided to put off any action.

Michael Wolf, managing director of Boenning & Scattergood Inc., the Township’s advisor on the project, said it could help the Township to change its accounting system and also to move beyond inter-fund transfers at the end of its financial year. Last year, rather than go to an outside source for a tax-anticipation loan, the Board of Supervisors once again authorized borrowing from its Open Space fund to cover expenses. The loan will be repaid, with interest, as tax revenues come in during the spring months. Mr. Wolf also recommended strongly that the Township establish a multi-year goal of developing a general fund balance of \$1,000,000, or about 25% of total revenues. The Supervisors’ response was muted. Supervisor Jay Fischer noted that to build such a nest egg would call for about a 20% increase in local taxes.

PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

With winter storms threatening, and summer storms not far behind, the Township wants to help residents prepare for what may be ahead. It recommends various sources of information.

The American Red Cross has good information on the Web at www.redcross.org.

Chester County Department of Emergency Services, at www.chesco.org/des, also has much information including its "Residents Awareness and Emergency Preparedness Guide" (check link "emergency preparedness"). The Guide also is available at the Township offices.

The County also provides a "Special Needs Registry" for

individuals who need special help in an emergency. The system also can give special severe weather alerts through e-mail, cell phones and PDA's through the RSAN network. For additional information, contact Township Manager Scott Piersol.

MONTESSORI BACKS OFF

A proposal to open a new Montessori school for about 50 students on a Horseshoe Pike property next to the Pinebrooke Village development appears to be finished. Both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors believed the plan for the school called for far too much impervious surface and that the location would create severe traffic issues, especially during morning rush hour. The applicant has withdrawn its proposal.

NEW PARK PAVILION

An anonymous donor has offered to pay for a new pavilion in Community Park, to be located between the two new baseball fields on the new northern section of the Park. Engineering work is expected to start next year with construction of the building in 2012.

The Township also hopes to attract sufficient funds to build a composting toilet facility at the site in the future, and possibly install a solar facility to power the building.

When the new section of the park was opened in 2009, the Township had to postpone plans for a pavilion because of lack of funds.

Planning Commission Seeks Two Non-Voting Members

The Board of Supervisors wants to recruit two new members of the Planning Commission, both of whom would serve in an ex-officio capacity. This means they would take part in all Commission discussions but would not have a vote. Ex-officio members usually move to be full members of the Commission when a vacancy occurs.

In December, ex-officio members Carl Croft and Michael Wagoner were voted full members following the resignations of Stephen Cushman and Mervin Thomas. Mr. Cushman, a former vice chairman and chairman of the Commission, served on the Commission for 27 years and

played a key role during the past few years when the Commission considered multiple residential and commercial developments in the Township. He will continue as an ex-officio member. Mr. Thomas was a member of the Commission for 12 years. Earlier, he was the Township building inspector for more than a decade.

Bruce Rawlings, Commission chairman, thanked both men for their "invaluable contributions."

The Planning Commission examines all development proposals made for the Township and often spends many months making sure those it approves meet all the Township's ordinances relating to such issues as wastewater manage-

ment, landscaping, impact on traffic and compatibility with the Township's "way of life."

The Commission then recommends any plans it approves to the Board of Supervisors for final action.

Commission members also take an active role in the Ordinance Task Force, a body responsible for creating the basic set of rules that govern Township operations.

Individuals interested in joining the Commission should contact Township Manager Scott Piersol by e-mail at ebrandywine.org.

The New Middle School

The Downingtown Area School District upped the ante in its disagreement with the Township over some of the conditions it must meet if it builds its new middle school on Bolinger Road. The District announced in mid-November that it would take legal action against the Township to force what it deems a satisfactory plan for sewage disposal. It claims the Municipal Authority, which oversees disposal, is delaying an agreement that both can agree to.

Both the Township and the District have indicated that they expect to work out a deal but the District feels it's under the gun to move matters forward quickly. It already has lost its goal of opening the new school in September next year. It now says it must proceed promptly if it is to open by September 2013.

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Editor

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Design

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Major Shredding Event

April 9, 2011

9:00 am to 1:00 pm

East Brandywine along with a number of neighboring townships will hold a major shredding event on **April 9, 2011** from **9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.** in the Ace Hardware parking lot in **Thorndale**. Here's an excellent chance to get rid of old and current personal papers including cancelled checks, bank statements, credit card invoices and other items that may include personal information. **Limit of 4 boxes** per resident, please. DNB First, NA has agreed to underwrite the cost of this event.



Local residents prepare care packages for troops overseas. See page 4.

Postmaster: deliver to current occupant

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1214 Horseshoe Pike
Downingtown, PA 19335-1153
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