



State Representative

# MARK LONGIETTI

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## New planning power for towns and boroughs

In mid-July, Gov. Tom Wolf signed my bill that will give smaller towns and boroughs access to a key planning tool for the first time.

With the power to acquire property, redevelopment authorities are true instruments of change – it’s through these essential planning bodies that visible progress is made – plans become projects, blight is cleared, vacant lots and abandoned property are repurposed and concrete progress occurs.

For years, planners in many towns and boroughs tried establishing these boards, only to be told that their population did not meet the 10,000-resident size restriction. At the same time, small cities – some with populations well under that size – have been permitted to establish these boards.

My legislation – which takes effect Sept. 12 – will lift that arbitrary restriction so communities of all sizes have access to this important planning tool.

I credit Greenville Town Council President Paul Hamill with bringing the issue to my attention. Paul told me that the town council was interested in considering a redevelopment board but had been told the population was too small. Paul also helped build support for the legislation by garnering the backing of the Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs.

I am looking forward to seeing the ways this new law is going to change the landscape.

## A steadfast voice for Mercer County

There are few things I take more seriously than my commitment to representing you in Harrisburg.

That’s why in 14 years as your representative, I have never missed a day in attendance when the House was in voting session, and why I have personally traveled to Harrisburg to vote every session day during the pandemic.

You have my word that for as long as I am fortunate to be your representative, giving Mercer County a constant, clear voice in Harrisburg will always be my No. 1 priority.



*I had the honor of hosting the Farrelle Steelers when they returned to the state Capitol in February to celebrate their 2019 Class 1A state football championship. The Steelers also clinched the top spot last year, during the team’s 100th anniversary.*

# Standing up to COVID-19

When the pandemic struck earlier this year, our work in Harrisburg quickly turned from regular state business to protecting and assisting residents, workers and small businesses and keeping our communities connected to essential services.

In the first weeks of the pandemic, I worked with colleagues to lift requirements for filing unemployment compensation claims, allocate \$50 million to keep our hospitals operating, allow schools to operate remotely and postpone state tax filing deadlines.

We passed bills to speed additional funding to fire departments and EMS companies and implement comprehensive statewide COVID-19 testing.

We also passed a spending plan allocating \$2.6 billion in CARES Act funding, including \$692 million to improve conditions for long-term care residents and millions to help small businesses, provide housing assistance and fund other critical services. Although there are no quick fixes, the funding will help make the path to recovery a bit smoother.

# Standing up, speaking out for our local businesses

Our local business owners have worked hard to endure pandemic response measures such as temporary shutdowns and reduced-operating restrictions.

As Mercer County remained in the yellow phase of the reopening plan, I voted for legislation to allow online car sales, permit certain real estate transactions to resume, allow restaurants with outdoor seating to reopen (with adherence to safety guidelines) and permit outdoor sportsman clubs and shooting ranges to reopen.

I also spoke out on occasions where I believed a restriction threatened to do more harm than good. In late May, I wrote to the governor, calling on him to move Mercer County to the green phase of the county's reopening plan, and our county reopened the following week, on June 5.

In July, after the governor ordered restaurants and bars to reduce indoor capacity to 25%, I spoke up again, calling on the administration to restore the previous 50% capacity rule. I believe the 25% capacity rule is arbitrary, punishes an entire industry for the actions of a few bad actors and threatens the survival of important local businesses.

# Honored to be named 'State Official of the Year'

In July, I was honored to receive the "State Official of the Year" award from Life Sciences Pennsylvania, together with my colleague state Rep. Tim Briggs.

The life sciences industry plays a critical role in developing and manufacturing medicines that improve the lives of patients with chronic conditions, including work on COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

As co-chair of the House Life Sciences Caucus, I have seen firsthand how the efforts of the industry's innovators and entrepreneurs have enhanced quality of life and strengthened our economy.

I'll continue working to ensure the industry receives the support it needs to keep life sciences thriving in the commonwealth.



*In March, I presented a House citation to Gerard Hanley of Sharpville, who was named Irishman of the Year by the local chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He is pictured with his wife, Patti, and state Rep. Parke Wentling.*



*An inspiring visit with the Sharon Tiger Techs Robotics Team last October.*

# A special place for community learning, business growth

In December, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts awarded the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce \$100,000 to launch the Shenango Valley Community Connections Collaborative.

Located in Sharon's Laurel Technical Institute, the "SVC3" provides a place for small business incubation, showcases artists' work, and contains a "fab lab," with equipment such as 3D laser printers, computers,

design software and woodworking equipment. The lab is available to the entire Shenango Valley community, but especially encourages veterans, minorities, artists and people with disabilities.

## Expanding paths to recreation

In September 2019, our efforts to expand recreational opportunities for residents resulted in a pair of grants that laid the groundwork for projects to extend existing trails and create new ones. These included:

- **\$150,000 to Hermitage for construction and rehabilitation of a pedestrian trail connecting to the trail system at the Hermitage School District, the Rodney White Olympic Park and the future Town Center development. The grant funds more than half of the total project costs of \$280,000.**
- **\$75,000 to the Mercer County Trails Association for the first phase of a project to connect residential Greenville, the commercial downtown, Thiel College and Riverside Park with the athletic fields in West Salem Township.**

## Making progress: nearly \$2.5 million for area infrastructure

Our efforts to strengthen area infrastructure secured more than \$2.4 million in recent months.

In November, Hermitage was awarded \$730,000 to fund roadway improvements at the Shenango Valley Mall property as part of an overall project to revitalize the site and create a town center.

A second grant of \$1.7 million will fund paving, sidewalk repair and additional construction and maintenance for Farrell's Idaho Street, Spearman Avenue, and Darr Avenue to make travel smoother and safer for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.



*In March, I presented a House certificate to Hickory High student Huanhuan Wang, who was selected as a state finalist for the Poetry Out Loud Competition.*



*In early August, I presented a House citation to Mark Benedetto on his retirement after 40 years of service to Mercer County – most recently as Chief Juvenile Probation Officer. Mark was recognized throughout the state for his innovative work in steering young people toward productive lives.*

## Grant to fund Sharpsville playground renovations

A \$40,000 grant to the Borough of Sharpsville will fund renovations to the 13th Street playground adjacent to the Sharpsville – South Pymatuning Little League complex.

Planned improvements – including replacing outdated playground equipment; substituting mulch for gravel; improving sidewalk and ADA accessibility; and installing picnic tables, benches, a shelter and T-ball facilities – will expand play options for children while giving parents and caregivers a place to socialize.

# More than \$4 million to fund third phase of Shenango Township sewer project

A major sewer project in Shenango Township recently received nearly \$4.2 million in third-phase funding – including a grant of nearly \$3.68 million and a low-interest loan of approximately \$481,500 – to help the township meet its obligation under the federal Clean Water Act.

Under a state Department of Environmental Protection consent order enforcing the federal regulation, the township is required to extend existing sewage and collection into areas with a higher on-lot septic system failure rate. The project – which among other things will include wastewater treatment plant improvements – will bring the township one step closer to fulfilling the federal requirement.

## Funding for safe classrooms, online learning

The CARES Act spending plan we passed in May includes \$150 million for school districts to keep students and staff safe as they return to a combination of classroom and online learning.

Schools can use the funding for a wide variety of measures, including implementing safety plans, purchasing online learning technology and obtaining safety supplies and equipment such as sanitizers, cleaners, barriers and other resources.

### Our legislative district received \$3.2 million, allocated as follows:

Farrell Area School District.....	\$547,497
Greenville Area School District.....	\$480,827
Hermitage School District.....	\$309,244
Reynolds School District .....	\$413,972
Sharon City School District .....	\$1,011,657
Sharpsville Area School District .....	\$211,168
West Middlesex Area School District.....	\$252,690

Many of the districts have also received combined grant funding of approximately \$240,000 to ensure students have the necessary equipment they need to participate in online learning.

Other federal safety funding includes more than \$106,000 to Mercer County Career Center, nearly \$69,000 to Thiel College and nearly \$12,000 to Laurel Technical Institute.

## Community library receives critical pandemic relief funding

The Community Library of the Shenango Valley was recently awarded \$5,000 in federal funding for upgraded videoconferencing and social media platform accounts, equipment to boost Wi-Fi capabilities, and planned virtual summer reading and other virtual programming.

Additionally, now that the library has reopened its doors, the grant will fund cleaning and sanitization supplies to ensure the safest possible environment for staff and visitors.

## Fighting hunger and blight

Last November, we struck a blow against hunger and blight by securing tax credits leveraging a combined \$132,000 from local businesses. The contributions included:

- **\$100,000 to Community Action Partnership for a project with the City of Sharon to clear blight on vacant lots when demolished homes are removed; and**
- **\$32,000 to Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County to address food insecurity issues caused by lack of transportation and children's hunger during the summer months.**

The funding is a great example of the progress possible when our local businesses partner with community organizations for positive change. It also represents the first time Mercer County has accessed the Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit Program, which can be a powerful tool as we chart our future.



*Joining me last December in Sharon to celebrate the award to Community Action Partnership was Dennis Davin, Secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development.*

# Funding our fire companies

Fire companies in our district received the following grants earlier this year:

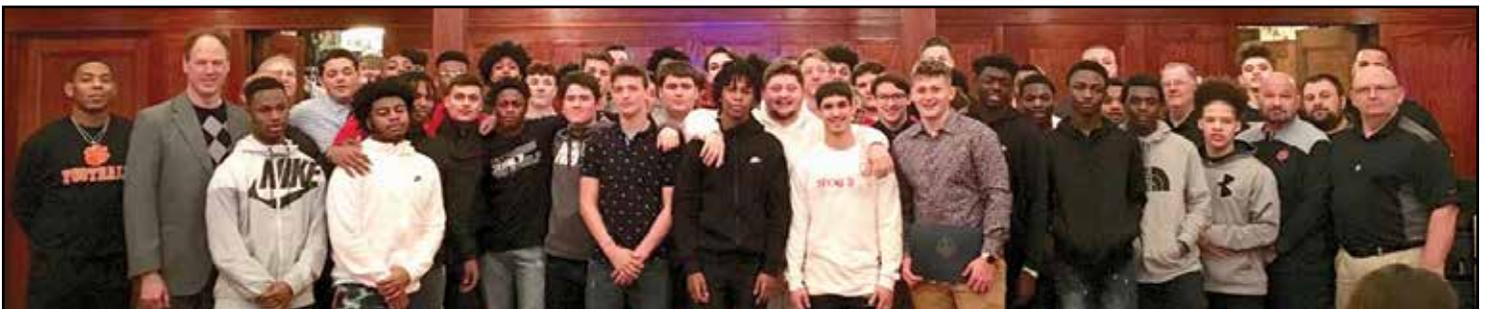
Clark Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$12,467
Farrell Volunteer Fire Department Inc. ....	\$13,152
Greenville Fire Department .....	\$13,426
Greenville Volunteer Fire Co. ....	\$12,057
Hermitage Volunteer Fire Department Inc. ....	\$14,248
Patagonia Volunteer Fire Department .....	\$12,331
Sharon Fire Department.....	\$14,248
Sharpsville Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,289
Shenango Township Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$12,194
Transfer Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,563
South Pymatuning Township Volunteer Fire Association...	\$11,783
West Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,015
West Salem Fire Department .....	\$12,057
Wheatland Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$11,646

The funding may be used for training and certification of members; purchase or repair of equipment and purchase of vehicle fuel; building construction, renovation and repair; debt reduction associated with eligible building or equipment projects; fire-prevention training and education materials for the general public; and overtime costs associated with backfilling positions while firefighters are attending training.

In addition, each of these fire companies may apply for an additional grant of a similar size to help offset some of the losses they incurred due to COVID-19.



*In March, I visited West Middlesex Junior/Senior High School's Tomahawk-T shirt operation and the student entrepreneurs who run it.*



*In January, I got to dine with the talented District 10 Champion Sharon Tigers football team.*

# Cutting costs at the pharmacy counter

Consumers will soon have access to information that can reduce their out-of-pocket costs for medications, thanks to legislation I co-sponsored that was recently signed into law.

The new law takes aim at “gag clauses” sometimes contained in pharmacies’ contracts with pharmacy-benefit managers – third-party companies hired by employers and health plans to administer drug benefit programs.

These contract provisions often work to the disadvantage of consumers by preventing pharmacists from telling customers information that can help them get the best possible price for their medications. For example, a gag clause will prevent a pharmacist from advising customers that they can save money in some cases if they pay cash for a prescription instead of using their health insurance.

Under the new law, pharmacists have the right to provide insured customers information about the amount of their cost share, so patients can get the best price for a medication.



*In December, I presented Dr. George Garrow, Medical Director of Primary Health Network, with an Everyday Hero Award from the PA Medical Society.*



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*It was an honor to participate in a Veterans Day wreath ceremony organized by the Shenango Valley VFW and the Sharon American Legion and their auxiliaries.*



*In November, I presented Joe Fletcher with a House citation for his retirement as Director of the Prince of Peace Center – a nonprofit agency dedicated to strengthening families and reducing poverty.*

**SATURDAYS AT THE SATELLITE!**



**State Representative  
 Mark Longietti**

Starting this September, Rep. Mark Longietti's Greenville satellite office at 182 Main St. (Chamber of Commerce building) will be open **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY** from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the following Saturdays:

**SEPTEMBER: 12 & 26**  
**OCTOBER: 10 & 24**  
**NOVEMBER: 14 & 28**

**Call 724-588-1005 to schedule an appointment!**