

**BERWYN TOWNSHIP: DECENNIAL COMMITTEE'S
REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND EFFICIENCY ACT
2024**



I. BACKGROUND

On June 10, 2022, Governor Pritzker signed the Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency Act, 50 ILCS 70/1 *et seq.*, into law. This law requires Illinois townships, road districts, and township multi-assessment districts to convene a committee to study and report on local government efficiency.

The Berwyn Township (“Township”) formed its Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency (the “Committee”) on June 1, 2023. This Committee is set to study local efficiencies, report recommendations regarding efficiencies, and increase accountability to the Cook County Board, potentially leading to significant improvements in our local government operations.

II. OBJECTIVES

- Describe the Berwyn Township’s governing statues, ordinances, procedures, jurisdiction, intergovernmental agreements, shared services and interrelationships with other governmental units and the State.
- Identify efficiencies and make recommendations for greater efficacy.
- Increase transparency with internal and external stakeholders.

III. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Berwyn Township 2023-2024 Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency

Elected Official	David J. Avila, Township Supervisor
Elected Official	Tomasa Ambriz, Township Trustee
Elected Official	Edward Espinoza, Township Trustee
Elected Official	Jesse Miranda, Township Trustee
Elected Official	Maribel Zapata, Township Trustee
Resident	Thomas Rasmussen
Resident	Zulema Ortiz
Township Attorney	Larry Zdarsky
Township Staff	Jessica Aquino Rodriguez, Operations Manager

IV. COMMITTEE MEETINGS


First Meeting	June 1, 2023 at 6:00 PM	In Person, Berwyn Township
Second Meeting	August 12, 2024 at 6:30 PM	In Person, Berwyn Township
Third Meeting	September 9, 2024 @6:30 PM	In Person, Berwyn Township

V. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF GOVERNING STATUTES, ORDINANCES, RULES, PROCEDURES, POWERS, AND JURISDICTION

The Illinois Legislature established the Township of Berwyn in the early 1900s, within the exact boundaries of the City of Berwyn. Under the Township of Berwyn, the Public Health District was established by the Berwyn Citizens' vote during the Town Election on April 6, 1920. The Township and Health District took on the crucial role of overseeing a range of human and social services for residents, including, but not limited to, healthcare, welfare, and community support. Meanwhile, the City of Berwyn was responsible for managing municipal services such as police, fire, and public works, distinct from the Township's responsibilities

Under the visionary leadership of John R. Cermak, Berwyn Township made history in 1939 by becoming the first Township in Illinois to build its own Health Center. This monumental achievement, made possible by federal grants under the Works Progress Administration, was a testament to Cermak's dedication to public health. The Township and Public Health District then moved its headquarters from 3208 Oak Park Avenue to its new facility at 6600 W. 26th Street, which further solidified our commitment to serving the community. The park next to the building was named Lesak Park on April 11, 1972, in honor of Albert R. Lesak as a recognition of his many years of exemplary and unselfish devotion to his duties as Supervisor of the Berwyn Township and Chairman of the Board of the Public Health District of the Town of Berwyn.

GOVERNING BOARDS




Township Board of Trustees

- Supervisor (*Chairman*)
- Clerk (*Recording Secretary*)
- Trustees (*4*)

Public Health District Board

- President (*Township Supervisor*)
- Secretary (*Township Clerk*)
- Treasurer (*Township Assessor*)

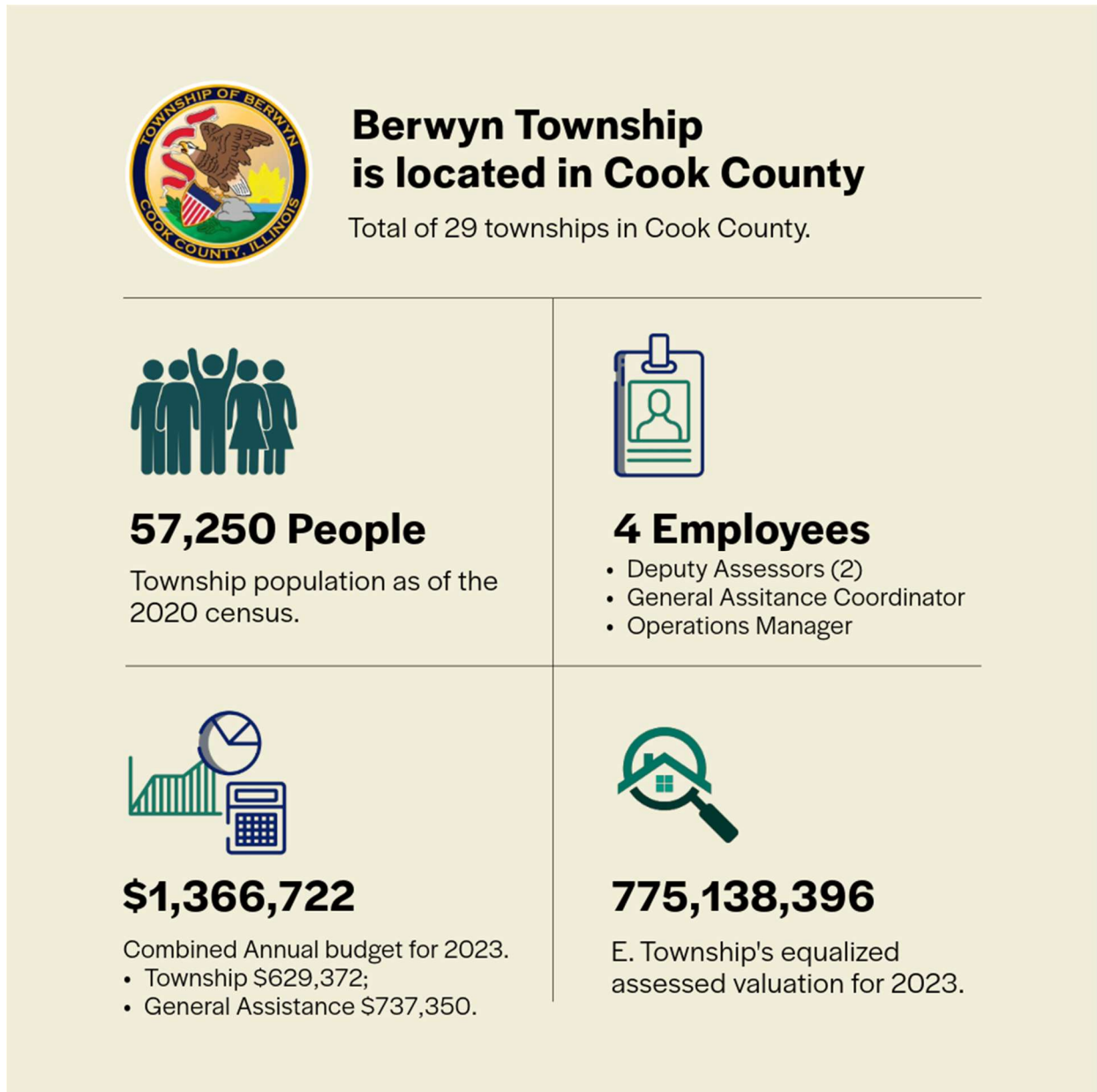
It's important to understand that the Township and the Berwyn Public Health District are two separate and distinct governmental bodies, each with its own governing board. The Township is governed by the Board of Trustees, which consists of four elected Township Trustees and is chaired by the Township Supervisor. The Health District's governance body consists of the Township Supervisor, Clerk, and Assessor. They participate in a voting process at the beginning of its fiscal year (April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024) to elect each other for the positions of President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

As part of good governance and the implementation of best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the following rules, policies, and procedures have been enforced:

- Firearms in The Workplace Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Policy Against Discrimination Harassment and Sexual Misconduct
- Acknowledgment of Receipt and Understanding Our Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct
- Drug & Alcohol Use / Abuse Policy
- Emergency Action Plan
- Family and Medical Leave Act and Military (FMLA) Policy
- Policy Regarding Internal Control Procedures
- Internet/E-Mail Policy
- Safety Policy
- School Visitations Leave Policy
- Shared Employee Cost Reimbursement
- Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) Policy
- Wage and Salary Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Policy Against Workplace Violence

The Township is one of 29 Townships in Cook County. The Berwyn Township, which is home to 57,250 residents as of the 2020 census, relies on the general assistance and welfare services. The Township operates with a team of four dedicated employees, excluding elected officials. For the year 2023, the district has an annual budget of **\$2,898,101** to ensure efficient service delivery. Furthermore, the Township's equalized assessed valuation for 2023 stands at \$775,138,396.

VI. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



VII. PROGRAMS OFFERED

A. GENERAL ASSISTANCE

General Assistance (GA) is a township administered program designed to assist persons who are unemployed and actively seeking employment or who are in waiting for other state or federal benefits and do not have the resources to provide for basic needs. Basic needs may include shelter, food, household supplies, utilities, personal essentials and other expenses deemed essential to the health and well-being of the family.

The GA program is a public assistance program mandated by state law for qualified individuals. GA can only be provided to residents residing within Berwyn Township who are 18 or older, a United States citizen or qualifying immigrant, and not eligible for other state or federal monetary benefits. GA can provide monthly payments to help individuals meet basic needs. Applicants will be required to complete an application and provide necessary forms and documentation before assistance eligibility can be established.

B. EMERGENCY MEDICAL I.D. BRACELET PROGRAM

The Berwyn Township implemented a program to provide Emergency Medical ID bracelets free of charge to Berwyn residents with a medical or mental health concern. The bracelet will help first responders obtain important medical information and emergency contacts when assisting a resident.

C. ASSISTANCE TO FILE “ACCESS TO CARE” APPLICATION

A non-profit primary healthcare program offering low-cost healthcare services for low-income, uninsured individuals, or those insured with a \$1,500 or higher deductible, residing in suburban Cook County. This program is available to individuals who are ineligible for public health programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. Benefits include primary care physician visits, labs and x-rays, prescription medications, and more.

D. PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

By statute, the Township Assessor is the Deputy to the Cook County Assessor and is under direction from that office. However, since the Township Assessor does not assess, this office is in the unique position of being able to assist taxpayers with assessed value complaints along with other services, such as filing exemptions.

1. Property Tax Appeals

The Township Assessor and its Deputy Assessors are here to help you and make your property tax appeal process as simple as possible. The Township is divided into neighborhoods, and your home is given a class code that is determined by the style of the house you live in. Our assessors will look for properties that are “comparable” to your home, and that are in the same neighborhood and class as your home in evaluating your appeal.

2. Property Tax Exemptions

There are different exemptions you may be able to apply for regarding your property taxes. They include, but are not limited to,

- Homeowner Exemption Application

- Senior Exemption Application
- Senior Freeze Application
- Disabled Veterans Exemption
- Disabled Persons Exemption
- Certificate of Error Application
- Assessed Valuation Appeals
- Computerized Property Tracker to Assist with Appeals
- Tax Estimates for New Home Buyers
- Local Tax Rates
- Recent Residential Sales Prices
- Researching Property Index Numbers
- Verify Taxpayer of Record
- Verify Exemption Information
- Assistance with Variances
- Name and Address Change on Tax Bills

E. COMMUNITY SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

- Berwyn Sunday Markets
- Costume Pet Parade
- Community & Health Resource Fair
- Berwyn Township Community Hero Awards
- Dumpster Days & Recycling Program
- Tax Appeal Workshops
- Citizenship Workshop

F. PROPOSED PROGRAM IN DEVELOPMENT PHASE

The Berwyn Township has the following services/programs in development phase.

- Emergency Assistance Program; tentative launch in 2024 – 4th quarter
- Senior Resource Program in collaboration with Public Health District; pilot program launched in May 2024 at the Berwyn REC
- Onsite Mental Health Program in collaboration with Public Health District; tentative launch 2025 – 1st quarter

VIII. BERWYN TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

The Berwyn Township 708 Community Mental Health Board is dedicated to promoting a community-based system of quality services related to mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse. These services are not only comprehensive, covering a wide range of needs, but also equitably available to all residents of the Township of

Berwyn. Our goal is to ensure that no one in our community is left behind when it comes to mental health support.

Through the dedicated efforts of our residents and social service agencies, the Berwyn Township 708 Community Mental Health Fund was established in 1974 by referendum. A Board of Directors was appointed shortly after. What started as funding for four agencies through local tax dollars has now grown into a significant support system, with the 708 Board currently funding 13 agencies and 25 programs. This growth is a testament to our community's commitment to mental health.

IX. SOCIAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The **Berwyn Township** partners with the following organizations to offer social services:

Entity	Services Offered
Access to Care	A non-profit primary healthcare program offering low-cost healthcare services for low-income, uninsured individuals, or those insured with a \$1,500 or higher deductible.
CareAdvisors	Assist residents gain rapid access to government benefits and community-based social services.
Chicago Greater Food Depository	Program provides free boxed lunches to children and youth in our community during the summer.
Cook County Sheriff	Electronic recycling program.
IL Department of Aging	Benefit Access Program provides discounted license plate stickers and free RTA passes for Seniors & people with disabilities.
IL Secretary of State	Mobile DMV services.

The **Berwyn Township 708 Community Mental Health Board** partners with the following organizations to offer mental health services:

Entity	Services Offered
Beds Plus Care	Mental Health: Supportive housing and homelessness prevention.
The Children’s Center of Berwyn-Cicero	Mental Health: Early childhood care and education, parent, community education for prevention.
Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero	Mental Health: Child and adult outpatient services.
Housing Forward	Mental Health: Homeless outreach and engagement.

IWS Children’s Clinic	Mental Health: Children’s mental health and healthcare integration project.
NAMI Metro Suburban	Mental Health: Drop in center, living room program, school education program.
Pillars Community Health	Mental Health: Community mental health services; Domestic violence services.
Proviso Children’s Advocacy	Mental Health: Child victim advocate services.
Sarah’s Inn	Mental Health: Intervention services program; Prevention services; Training and education.
Solutions for Care	Mental Health: Caregiver resource center.
Youth Crossroads	Mental Health: Comprehensive youth services.
Community Support Services	Development Disabilities: Case management and respite care.
Oak-Leyden Development Services	Development Disabilities: Children’s services, early intervention, clinic services.
UPC Seguin	Development Disabilities: Development/life training program; community employment alternatives program; Berwyn social/recreational program; Transition from school to adulthood program.
West Suburban Special Recreation Association	Development Disabilities: Fun appetite cooking classes.
Way Back Inn	Substance Use Disorders: Outpatient, residential and family treatment services

X. INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Entity	Services Offered
Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)	IGA, Data Sharing Agreement
City of Berwyn	IGA, Emergency Management Cooperation
City of Berwyn	IGA, Multi-purpose Sport Field & Walkway

XI. REVIEW OF LAWS, TOWNSHIP POLICIES, TOWNSHIP RULES AND PROCEDURES, TOWNSHIP TRAINING MATERIALS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

We have reviewed the following, non-exhaustive list of laws, policies, training materials, and other documents applicable to the Township to evaluate our compliance and to determine if any of the foregoing should be amended.

YES	State laws applicable to Townships, including, but not limited to the Township Code (60 ILCS)
YES	Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120)
YES	Policy on public comment
YES	Designation of OMA officer (5 ILCS 120/1.05(a))
YES	All of Elected Officials have completed OMA Training (5 ILCS 120/1.05(b))
YES	Schedule of Regular Meetings for 2024 (5 ILCS 120/2.03)
YES	Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140)
YES	Designation of FOIA officer (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))
YES	FOIA Officer Training (5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))
YES	Computation and Retention of FOIA Requests (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))
YES	Posting Other Required FOIA Information (5 ILCS 140/4(a); 5 ILCS 140/4(b))
YES	List of Types or Categories of FOIA Records under Township’s Control (5 ILCS 140/5)
YES	Periodic Meetings to Review Closed Meeting Minutes (5 ILCS 120/2.06(d))
YES	IMRF Total Compensation Postings (5 ILCS 120/7.3)
YES	Designation of Whistleblower Auditing Official (50 ILCS 105/4.1)
YES	All of our Elected Officials have filed statement of economic interests (5 ILCS 420/4A-101; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5)
YES	Sexual harassment prevention training (775 ILCS 5/2-109(c))
YES	Our Intergovernmental Agreements
YES	Our Social Service Agreements or Contracts
YES	Our budget and financial documents
YES	Governmental Account Audit Act (50 ILCS 310)
YES	State Ethics Laws, including, but not limited to the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (5 ILCS 430/1-1)
YES	Reports on government efficiency, including “Local Government Efficiency and Size in Illinois: Counting Tax Revenues, Not Governments” by Wendell Cox (2016); “Local Democracy and Townships in the Chicagoland Area,” by Wendell Cox, (January 2012).

XII. WHAT HAVE WE DONE WELL

ACCESSABILITY: The Berwyn Township is committed to being the most accessible form of government, ensuring residents have access to general assistance and other welfare resources within the community.

EFFICIENCY: The Berwyn Township and Health District combine resources such as accounting, auditing, legal services, payroll, insurance, personnel policies and procedures, information technology, phone, and utility contracts. These resources are effectively managed by a dedicated full-time administrator (Operations Manager) who plays a crucial role in overseeing the daily operations of Township and Health District programs, providing support to the staff, and assigning staff to different units as needed to meet the residents' needs effectively.

Berwyn Township is proud to announce that it has no bonded indebtedness, a testament to its secure financial situation. This absence of financial burden ensures a stable and secure future for the community, instilling confidence in our financial stability.

Our collaboration with the agencies mentioned in Section 9 of this report is a testament to our commitment to a streamlined and effective system. It reduces the need for duplicating efforts and contributes to our operational efficiency.

EXCELLENCE: Excellence is our top priority, and we are committed to providing outstanding service to everyone in the community. Staff training and development are essential. We have completed additional in-person staff training has been completed to ensure continued exceptional service. This training included a three-month Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion course, as well as a five-month Restorative Mediation course to enhance communication and listening skills, foster a restorative leadership approach, and nurture positive interactions within the community.

XIII. WHAT INEFFICIENCIES DID WE IDENTIFY/WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEP?

In order to uphold our commitment to exceptional service, we have made the following recommendations:

- Firstly, the incorporation of a Customer Service Software and an Electronic Medical Record System will significantly enhance our ability to provide comprehensive assistance to residents. This will also lead to improved operational efficiency, ensuring a seamless experience for our customers and patients.
- Secondly, we will focus on developing Standard Operating Procedures for all divisions within our organization. This step is crucial as it will not only help us maintain smooth business operations and continuity but also provide a structured framework for our future growth and success.

XIV. STUDIES ON GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCIES

In conducting this report, we examined various studies on local government efficiency. The studies reveal the following points:

- The average local government in Illinois serves 1800 residents, which is lower than the national median of 2850 individuals.

- Most townships in Illinois do not have bonded indebtedness. When combined with road districts, they are a crucial aspect of local democracy. Township expenditures have increased at a slower rate than those of any other level of government since 1992.
- Townships have lower labor costs and predominantly employ part-time workers.

XV. OUR COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

Based on our assessment, we recommend focusing on two key areas to improve accountability and efficiency. Firstly, it is crucial to prioritize the continuous development of the organization's website to ensure it remains up-to-date and user-friendly. Additionally, it is imperative to enhance our presence on social media platforms to effectively disseminate information and create engaging interactions with the community.

Secondly, increasing resident participation in public meetings is essential for fostering a sense of community engagement and collaboration. Encouraging active involvement in these meetings will not only provide valuable insights but also strengthen transparency and accountability within the organization.

Submitted on December 2, 2024 by:



David J. Avila, Township Supervisor
Chairman, Decennial Efficiency Committee of Berwyn Township