

# SWISSVALE NEWS

DECEMBER 2011

## SWISSVALE FIRE DEPARTMENT IS RE-INVENTED FOR 2012

**B**ig changes are coming for Swissvale's Fire Department in 2012 as a consolidated facility is built to house both the municipal and volunteer fire companies. Swissvale is one of the few municipalities to have both paid and volunteer fire companies, and for more than 100 years they have had separate facilities. That will change in 2012 as a new station is created at 7400 Irvine Street,



*Deputy Fire Chief Dave Miller with Fire Chief Clyde Wilhelm and Seagrave aerial truck*

site of the old Strather's Funeral Home.

volunteer fire company dates back to 1903. The paid department was established in 1907.

Despite some popular misconceptions, the Swissvale volunteer fire company is very much the real deal. Career and volunteer firefighters work shoulder-to-shoulder to respond to about 1,000 emergency medical calls and 500 fire calls annually.

The paid department has three full-time firefighters and 13 who are part-time. The volunteer roster has 24 members. The fleet includes three pumpers and an aerial ladder truck.

The paid fire department will move out of the Roslyn Street Borough Building and the volunteer firefighters will vacate their long-time quarters at 7419 Washington Street.

The new facility will provide better service to the community and reduce duplication of costs and effort involved in maintaining two separate stations. It is expected that savings will approach \$1 million a year.

Financing for the new facility comes through a package of government grants, sale of the 7419 Washington site and low-interest loans.

Fire fighting in Swissvale has a grand and noble tradition. The

Fire fighting in Swissvale has a grand and noble tradition. The

*(Continued on page 2)*

## SWISSVALE NEWS IS YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

*Let us hear from you*

*Swissvale residents, businesses and organizations wishing to publish information about community news and events in the Swissvale News, or to place advertising, should contact:*

**William McCloskey**

566 South Trenton

Pittsburgh, PA 15221

412-371-8570 [wmpgh@msn.com](mailto:wmpgh@msn.com)

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Pittsburgh, PA 15218

412-271-4234 [kroprint@aol.com](mailto:kroprint@aol.com).



## NIGHT OF LIGHTS IS DECEMBER 3

**S**wissvale's annual Night of Lights celebration will be held Saturday, December 3, in the parking lot of the CVS shopping center at Church Street and Monongahela Avenue.

The evening starts at 6 p.m. when Santa arrives to light the lights on the Christmas tree. Santa and "Mrs. Claus" will pose with residents for photos.

There will be treats for everybody, entertainment by a dance troupe, a hayride, caroling and the lighting of a menorah.



## SCHEDULES FOR HOLIDAY WORSHIP

**A**s the holiday season nears, those looking for information about places of worship and seasonal events can find what they need on the Swissvale Borough website. There you will find a listing of names, addresses, phone numbers and individual websites for places of worship in our area.

See: [http://swissvaleborough.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=84&Itemid=142](http://swissvaleborough.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=84&Itemid=142)



## SWISSVALE FIRE DEPARTMENT

(Continued from page 1)

The majority of Swissvale's firefighters also are trained as medical first responders, emergency medical technicians and paramedics.

Paid firefighters also are responsible for enforcement of building-related codes and ordinances, including building permits, occupancy permits, zoning compliance, and property maintenance and fire code violations.

Borough Fire Chief Clyde Wilhelm, a 28-year veteran and alumnus of the volunteer fire company, became borough fire chief in January 2010 and also is the borough's chief building code officer. Under Wilhelm, code inspections have more than doubled since 2009.

The chief oversees compliance with the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code. All building permits are issued by the fire department. The fire chief also serves as the borough's zoning officer and ensures compliance with borough zoning ordinances. Additionally, the fire department enforces the borough's occupancy permit ordinance.

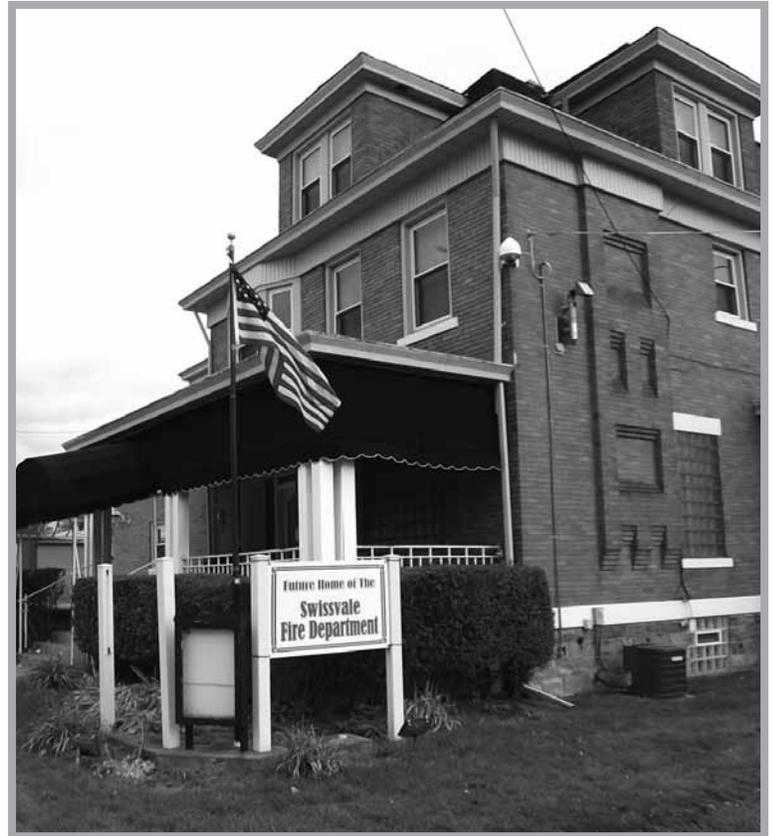
For a town like Swissvale, only about 10 percent of the fire department's work involves putting out fires. The other 90 percent involves first response to medical and accident emergencies and an exhaustive routine of code and permit inspections. During 2010, firefighters answered 1,496 calls—that's an average of four per day.

Mixed in with the good news, it's sad to report that Swissvale's principal fire rig, a Seagrave aerial ladder truck, is decrepit and badly needs replacing. It's now 35 years old and lacks many of the systems and capabilities of today's high-tech fire trucks.

Like all fire trucks it's shiny and attractive with brilliant paint and gleaming diamond-plating, but it already was 21 years old when the borough bought it used. It would take about \$750,000 to replace it with a new unit.

It works, but requires lots of maintenance and repair, and firefighters have to be extremely careful about the weight of the firefighter and equipment they send up the ladder. It's rated for just 250 pounds and the firefighter's gear alone can easily weigh 50 pounds.

The Swissvale Fire Department works closely with surrounding fire companies and provides and receives mutual aid from the Edgewood, Rankin, Forest Hills, Wilkinsburg, Homestead, North Braddock, Braddock and Braddock Hills departments.



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## SWISSVALE POLICE HAVE NEW ELECTRONIC TOOLS

Miscreants in Swissvale and Regent Square need to know that they're being watched. Hi-tech surveillance cameras have been deployed along South Braddock Avenue between the Swissvale-Pittsburgh line and Edgewood Towne Centre, as well as throughout the borough, with a special focus on commercial zones and recreation areas.

More important, the camera feeds don't just go to a darkened room somewhere in a municipal basement. Real-time images can be monitored by officers in patrol vehicles using on-board computer consoles as well as by those on duty in the station.

This doesn't mean that officers necessarily will watch a crime occur and then rush out to arrest the bad guys — although that certainly could happen.

More likely, the camera system will be used to watch for suspicious conditions or activities to help officers plan their patrols, with the aim of deterring crime.

The archived images also will have value as an investigative tool, capturing views of people, vehicles and other factors to identify suspects and witnesses after a crime has occurred.



Police Chief Greg Geppert said the cameras are mounted up high (he won't say where) and are controllable for aiming over wide areas and for views distant from the mounting point.

There actually are two camera systems. One system blankets South Braddock Avenue and surrounding side streets. Because of the choke point caused by the Parkway East underpass, both vehicular and pedestrian traffic going through the borough can be monitored.

Those feeds also are available in Edgewood Borough, which shares with Swissvale the policing responsibilities for Regent Square and Edgewood Towne Centre.

Geppert noted that there is close cooperation among surrounding police departments and that they share a common dispatch system. For that reason, it's common to see Swissvale, Edgewood and Wilkinsburg units all responding at a crime or accident scene in Regent Square.

City of Pittsburgh and Port Authority police also are on the fringes of the area and can respond when conditions warrant it. Given the small dimensions and urban character of the neighborhoods, police response is never more than a few seconds away.

A second camera system targets the Swissvale Business Loop and municipal playgrounds where bad behavior can originate among young people hanging out.

Impetus for the camera systems came from a series of bold armed robberies during 2010 that targeted pedestrians in the community. Those incidents prompted police officials in the boroughs to work more closely than ever and to enlist the expertise of the District Attorney's office and county police.

For 2012 the Swissvale police department will have a complement of 25 officers — 15 of them full-time and 10 part-time. Geppert said two part-time officers routinely are detailed to the Woodland Hills Middle School, where, historically, trouble can boil up quickly.

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## SWISSVALE LIBRARY POPULARITY GREW IN 2011

Things are looking up at the Swissvale Library as professional staff and volunteers work to upgrade the institution's lending materials and its reading programs while also implementing ever-changing technology.

During 2011, more people—Swissvale residents and visitors alike—used the library's facilities for reading, study, borrowing, internet access and research, as well as library-sponsored activities for all age groups.



Director Kate Grannemann, PhD, said patron data shows that the library's materials are more interesting and appealing than ever, as borrowing activities were up an average of 10 percent during the past year.

Patron interest continues to grow because of a clever array of reading programs designed for book lovers from preschool and on through the age continuum. Educators know that

enthusiasm for books and reading is best inculcated in early childhood—especially now that there are so many competing sources of information on TV, computers and hand-held devices.

Patron traffic and interest also are boosted, Grannemann said, by the library's four seasonal outreach activities—used book sales in Spring and Fall, a craft sale in Summer (to coincide with Swissvale Community Days), and a Winter holiday baked goods sale.

Also upcoming on December 9 is holiday decoration of the library and sale of hand-crafted ornaments.

Residents and patrons might be startled to learn that the library does its work with a tiny staff of only eight employees—all part-time—plus six regular volunteers and an intern.

Still, the handsome building is 94 years old and showing its age inside and out with spotty landscaping, peeling exterior paint and original interior plaster and trim. Lighting and air-conditioning at least are contemporary.

Supported by a complicated administrative arrangement with the Woodland Hills School District, the venerable structure gets "just enough" maintenance and modest upgrades to keep it going.

One glaring deficiency at the library is the lack of an accessible ramp that would open the library to many more residents who depend on wheelchairs and walkers.

The library building is perched well above street level with two courses of concrete steps leading to the front door. A ramp placed beside the steps would be too steep to be practical for either assisted walking or navigation by wheelchairs.

The creation and placement of permanent war memorials in years past on both sides of the entrance plaza block the direct routes that a more gently sloped ramp would follow to bridge the front door and the sidewalk. Design and installation of a different sort of ramp or an elevator system—though expensive—seem the only alternatives, though neither reportedly are planned.

*Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale is located at 1800 Monongahela Avenue, 412-731-2300, [www.swissvalelibrary.org](http://www.swissvalelibrary.org).*

## SWISSVALE TOWERS IS A HAVEN FOR LOCAL SENIORS



Swissvale Towers doesn't get much attention because of the quiet, orderly lives of its residents. Even so, it's a special place and an icon in the community—providing comfort, safety and accessibility for some of the borough's most solid citizens.

Located at 1826 Monongahela Avenue, near the corner of Church Street, the nine-story facility was built new in 1982 and contains 101 one-bedroom apartments. Currently it is fully occupied.

Anna Mason, manager of the facility, said residents must qualify to live there by being at least 62 years of age and having regular income not to exceed \$22,400 annually.

She added that Swissvale Towers is in no way an "old age home," or "assisted living" facility—it's simply an apartment building for independent senior individuals.

"People choose to live here and they go about their lives exactly as they see fit," Mason said.

Although there are common facilities within the building, such as a community room, there are no programmatic goings-on except those organized by the residents themselves.

It's a good deal for residents who rent their apartments. For the first year they have a one-year lease. Thereafter, they go month-to-month.

Under guidelines set by federal HUD regulations, residents pay 30 percent of their income as rent. Under that formula, a resident with annual income at the maximum of \$22,400 would pay rent of \$560 per month.

It's a good deal, too, because of the building's central location—across the street from the CVS pharmacy, two blocks from Edgewood Towne Centre, close to several places of worship, and next-door to the Swissvale Library and Senior Center which sponsor a wide range of activities geared to the interests of seniors.

## SWISSVALE SENIOR CENTER EVENTS

### *Daily Activities:*

- Mondays Monday Wii Bowling 10 a.m.  
Exercise 12:30 to 2 p.m.
- Tuesdays Nurse 10 a.m. to noon  
Bingo 12:45 p.m.
- Wednesdays Exercise 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.  
Nickel Bingo 1 p.m.
- Thursdays Dance 10 a.m. to noon  
500 Bid 12:30 p.m.
- Fridays Exercise 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.  
Bingo 12:45 p.m.

Lunch is served daily for a donation of \$1.50. Patrons must sign up the day before.

### *Special Activities:*

- **Monday, November 28**  
**"Trim the Tree"**  
Help us decorate the center for the holidays.
- **Sunday, December 4**  
**Trip to Nationality Rooms** at the University of Pittsburgh, noon to 4 p.m. This is a free event and OPT will pick you up at your home and return you to your home. (Patrons must be registered for OPT.)
- **Thursday, December 8**  
**National Brownie Day**
- **Sunday, December 11**  
**"Kennywood Holiday Lights"**  
5 to 8 p.m., cost \$12.99.  
OPT will pick you up at your home and return you to your home. (Patrons must be registered for OPT.)
- **Wednesday, December 14**  
**Holiday Menu**
- **Monday, December 19**  
**Trip to Monroeville Mall**, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
OPT will pick you up at the senior center and return you there. (Patrons must be registered for OPT.)

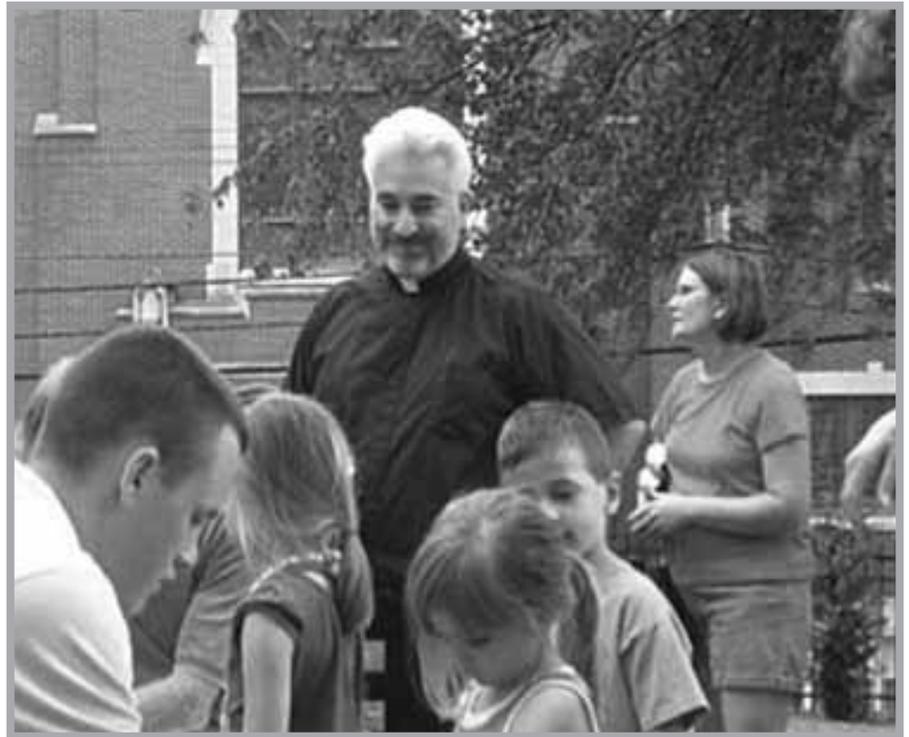
*Swissvale Senior Center, 7350 McClure Avenue, lower level of Swissvale Library building, Jodi Trovato, manager. Hours 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone 412-731-6125.*

## DID YOU KNOW...?

Swissvale officially has a land area of 1.3 square miles and a population of approximately 9,000 residents. There are more than 5,000 individual built structures (commercial, institutional and residential) within the municipal borders and 32.5 miles of roadways.

At its maximum, Swissvale had 15,919 residents in 1940.

## WORD OF GOD ENTERS 2012 WITH NEW LEADERSHIP



*Pastor John Lynam*

Word Of God Parish is moving toward a joyous holiday season as its new pastor, Father John Lynam, gets established for his first Christmas season.

Father Lynam, who also is pastor at the nearby Madonna Del Castello parish, was given the role at Word Of God after the removal for misconduct of the parish's long-time pastor.

Things had been unsettled earlier this year at the parish and school since the departure of Father Francis J. Drabiska, who had been pastor for 16 years. He had been stealing parish funds to finance a surreptitious lifestyle.

With two large, enthusiastic parishes under his supervision, the new pastor has lots on his plate as he divides his time between facilities on McClure and South Braddock avenues.

What many parishioners don't know is that Father Lynam is a tough guy—having served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps and working as an auto mechanic before joining the seminary at age 32, a relatively advanced age.

Father Lynam, 50, is a native of Wilmerding. He was ordained in 2000. He became pastor of Madonna Del Castello in January 2008 and was appointed at Word of God last April 18.

Father Lynam is assisted at Word of God by Ron Demblowski, the parish's pastoral associate since 2007. A Swissvale resident with a master's degree in religious studies, Demblowski is certified as a pastoral associate.

Word of God parish was established on May 28, 1994. The parish was formed by merging the parishes of St. Anselm and St. Barnabas in Swissvale and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rankin.

## LIVING SPIRIT MINISTRY HOLIDAY EVENTS DECEMBER 11 AND 24

Living Spirit Ministry has a hearty helping of activities for the community during the holiday season.

The Churches of Swissvale will conduct a community Holiday Carol Celebration at 7 p.m. Sunday, December 11, at Living Spirit Ministry, 7415 Irvine Street. The celebration will consist of musical selections and talent performances provided by the churches in the community. Everyone is invited.

Those interested in sharing talent or needing further information should call 412-351-1802.

Living Spirit also invites members of the community to share in a Christmas Eve celebration. This special candlelight service will begin at 7 p.m. Saturday, December 24. For information call 412-351-1802 or visit their website at [www.swissvaleumc.org](http://www.swissvaleumc.org).



*Living Spirit*  
**MINISTRY**

Swissvale United Methodist Church  
7415 Irvine Street  
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## UCP/CLASS STRIVES TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

It's a busy time at UCP/Class as the organization settles into its new facility on South Braddock Avenue, continues to serve its clients without missing a step, and works toward becoming a valued neighbor for the Swissvale and Regent Square communities.

The agency already has made a substantial difference in the neighborhood since opening four months ago with its renovation of what had been an eyesore former supermarket and its bringing about 100 skilled workers into the community each day.

Regent Square merchants and Edgewood Towne Centre are direct beneficiaries of this major bump in the worker population. Since the grand opening August 12, the UCP workers have found their way to most of the district's eating and drinking establishments as well as dry cleaners, jewelers, gas stations and other businesses.

UCP/Class stands for "United Cerebral Palsy Community Living and Support Services." The name acknowledges that the 60-year-old organization has its roots in a parent group dedicated to helping those living with cerebral palsy.

Because the UCP name is not particularly descriptive, many residents have wondered what the name on the building actually signifies. Not a few have confused UCP with UPMC and thought it might be a clinic or back-office facility for the giant health care system. However, the two are not affiliated.

Development Director Courtney Walker said the organization is considering plans for a community-wide open house that would allow residents to see the facilities and meet staff members and clients.

The UCP location at 1400 South Braddock is home to the agency's administrative offices, Residential Services, Attendant Care Division, Community Partners, UCP Kids program and Consumer Employer Resources Department.

During its history the organization has dramatically broadened its mission and now serves individuals living with disabilities caused by a broad spectrum of causes, including traumatic brain injury. The new facility complements the organization's original location at 4638 Centre Avenue, Oakland, which continues to operate.

The sprawling three-story structure had been largely under-utilized since the former Center for Creative Play abruptly ceased operation there in March 2008. The agency purchased the building in June 2010 and held a ground-breaking ceremony last February 11 to observe the start of the 30,000-square-foot renovation project.

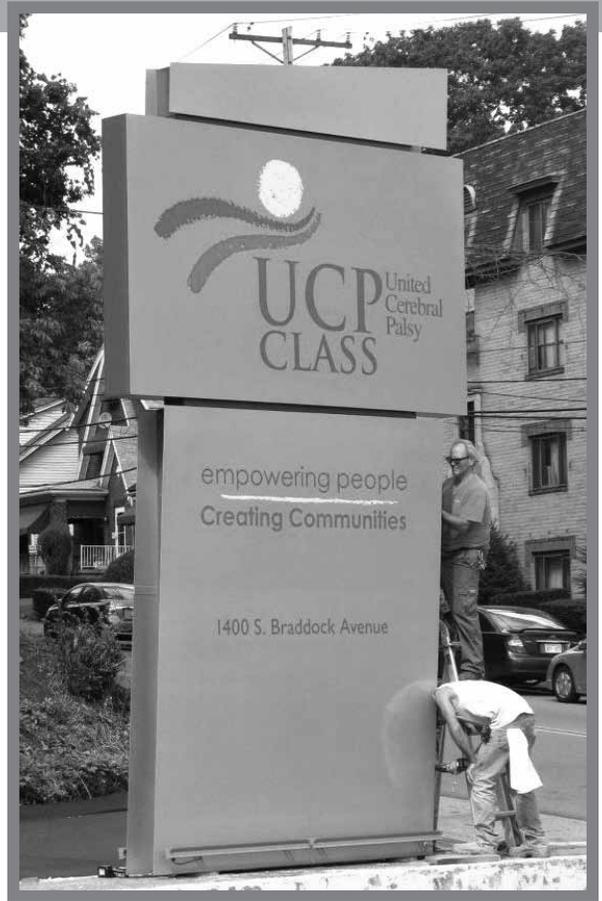
UCP/CLASS works continually to develop innovative approaches that promote independence for adults and children with disabilities so they can fully participate in their home communities and pursue their activities of choice.

Currently, more than 3,000 individuals are served—up from 400 in 1980.

The new Swissvale location, adjacent to the Parkway East, eases travel for workers serving clients around the region.

Although Swissvale benefits from the influx of well-paid employees—and their paychecks—the borough's public safety burden is minimal. The upgraded building is greatly improved for fire safety and the hours and activities that take place there pose none of the police issues that would occur with a comparably sized commercial or retail business.

*For more information about UCP/CLASS and its programs, services and facilities, see [www.ucpclass.org](http://www.ucpclass.org).*



*Workers finish new UCP entrance*



*UCP Development Director Courtney Walker*

# THE DIRECTORY

DECEMBER 2011

## **BOROUGH BUILDING**

7560 Roslyn Street  
Swissvale, PA 15218  
412-271-7101

Monday - Friday  
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## **TAX OFFICE**

7447 Washington Street  
Swissvale, PA 15218  
412-351-3342

Monday - Wednesday  
9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Thursday  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## **COUNCIL MEETINGS DATES**

Agenda meeting, 7 p.m.  
last Wednesday of month

Council meeting, 7 p.m.  
first Wednesday of month  
Second floor of borough building

## **MAYOR**

Deneen Swartzwelder  
412-271-3811  
e-mail [mayorwissvale@aol.com](mailto:mayorwissvale@aol.com)

## **SECRETARY**

Amanda Ford  
412-271-7101  
e-mail [swisadm2@hotmail.com](mailto:swisadm2@hotmail.com)

## **CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Iva Russo  
412-271-6923

## **POLICE CHIEF**

Greg Geppert  
412-271-8777

Police non-emergency  
412-473-3056

## **FIRE CHIEF**

Clyde Wilhelm  
412-271-3940

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

Carmine Russo  
412-271-0350

## **MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURT**

300 Rankin Boulevard  
Rankin, PA 15104  
412-271-7734

Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## **SWISSVALE BOROUGH WEBSITE**

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