

TOWNSHIP OF  
— MIDDLETOWN —  
BUCKS COUNTY

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## Township Maintains Preservation of Styer Orchard and Store

On Monday evening, the Middletown Township Board of Supervisors culminated months of work to realign the operation of the Styer property with the vision of its namesake, Pop Styer. For the last 20 years, despite sharing a name, the orchards and store have operated as two separate entities. The decision to bring together the orchard and store as one operation was not taken lightly, nor was it hastily made.



The Board of Supervisors' rationale for this vision is that having one lessee oversee the operations of the entire property will allow the harvest from the orchard to be retailed at the storefront. Additionally, a long-term lease will assure that the lessee is able to invest in the vitality of the orchard and strategic interest of the operation. This was the strategy of Pop Styer.



Both the Barberides (the store operators) and the Fields (the orchard operators) were provided formal written notice of the Township's intention not to renew the existing leases as early as December 2019. Although the store lease was originally set to expire in July 2020, the Township granted an extension

in recognition of its essential function to the community amid the pandemic.

As the January 31, 2021 lease conclusions approached, both the Barberides and the Fields were informed of the Township's goal to enter into a long-term lease with one party for operation of the orchards and store. In recognition of the existing relationships with the property and the Township, both were given the exclusive opportunity to submit proposals in December 2020.



The proposals were thoroughly reviewed by the board and staff. Multiple meetings were held with both candidates and tours of the property were conducted. A committee of the Board of Supervisors interviewed the two candidates and there was unanimous agreement to offer the lease agreements to Tim Field. Undoubtedly, one of the impacts created by this transition is the displacement of the store's employees. In an effort to minimize the displacement, Tim Field has proactively invited existing store employees to apply for continued employment under his operation of the store.

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## Honoring Pop Styer's Legacy

T. Walter 'Pop' Styer purchased the property that is now referred to as Styer Orchard in 1910, paying \$4,500 for the initial 52 acres of land. Located near the intersection of Woodbourne Road and Langhorne-Yardley Road, the property was originally planned as a tree nursery. During the Great Depression, the savvy Pop Styer shifted his business to producing affordable fruits and vegetables for a community reeling from economic hardship and food insecurity.



Adding a farm store in 1972, allowed Pop Styer to retail produce off the accessible and soon-to-be-bustling Woodbourne Road, poising itself as a rural market for the new and thriving community of Levittown just down the road. The market would see another boost as the Highland Gate, Cider Knoll, and

Maple Point neighborhoods rose within walking distance in the 1980s.

As Pop grew older and as the pressure for development loomed heavy, he sought to preserve the farm as an asset to the community long beyond his lifetime, providing affordable produce and a means to educate future generations about agriculture. With a combination of funds from Middletown Township, Bucks County, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Township purchased the Styer property for \$2.2 million in 1999. Shortly after the sale, Pop Styer passed away on June 8, 1999, at the age of 102.

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## Looking to the Future

Tim Field grew up on the Styer property and spent much of his childhood working the orchards under the direction of his parents. When the opportunity arose in 2019, Tim and his then-fiancée Kristin moved back to the Styer property to take up orchard operations. Since getting married in 2019, Tim and Kristin welcomed twin sons Chase and Cole in September 2020.

"Kristin and I are grateful for this opportunity to unite the orchard and the market. We look forward to serving the community while carrying on Pop Styer's vision. I am most excited for my sons to grow up and have the same experiences as I had on the farm," commented Tim Field.

After two decades as separate operations, Field is planning to rebrand the businesses to communicate the unification of the farm store and orchard. At the farm store, he plans to maintain fresh food, bakery and grocery offerings,



with produce coming from the orchard directly to the farm store for the first time in many years. He also intends to transition toward creating more products in-house, using produce from the orchard to create new signature and seasonal treats. There are also plans to relocate the cider press to the store to educate patrons about the cider-making process. Changes proposed at the farm include planting new and modern apple varieties as well as adding new pick-your-own crops such as blackberries, strawberries and blueberries. Limited seasonal "agri-tainment" opportunities will be added such as a corn

maze and nighttime hayrides in the fall and an old-fashioned holiday experience in the winter.

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215-750-3800

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