

'Eyesore' school bus parked along New Holland Pike not breaking any laws [Lancaster Watchdog]

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Driving along New Holland Pike in East Lampeter Township you can expect to see the usual scenic homesteads, woodlands, the Conestoga River ... and a shabby-looking school bus.

The retired Blue Bird bus, with chipping paint and a mattress visible through the back windows, has been stationed on a grassy spot a few feet off the side of the road long enough that Google Maps has registered it as a landmark, placing a bus icon on maps of the area.

Susan Franz, a resident of Upper Leacock Township, drives past the bus several times a week when she goes to church, or to volunteer or to visit Lancaster city.

"It's an eyesore," Franz said. "I'm surprised other people haven't complained."

Franz first noticed the bus about two years ago, she said. But living in a different township, she doesn't know whether residents have brought it to the attention of officials in East Lampeter. Franz emailed the Watchdog to see what, if anything, could be done.

East Lampeter residents have called the township about the bus before, and officials have spoken with the owner, township manager Ralph Hutchison said. But there's not much the township can do because the bus is parked on private property and is not abandoned.

Township zoning ordinances prohibit dumping on public land, but the bus is on private land so dumping laws don't apply.

Moreover, the bus is operational and the owner has said it is registered as a recreational vehicle, Hutchison said, which means municipal ordinances regulating junkyards and nuisances do not apply.

The bus previously sat in a floodplain, which violated township zoning, Hutchison said. It had to be moved out of the floodplain to comply with the law, and now sits at its current spot near the road.

Ultimately, because the bus is not breaking any laws and sits on private land, it can stay where it is, no matter how other people feel about it.

The owner of the bus, Michael Burch, could not be reached for comment prior to publication.