

Community Leadership, Public Service, and the Civic Engagement Record of Eric J. Bartosz

 The Chicago Journal



Eric Bartosz, Founder of BAR40, photo courtesy of YMI Talking

Community leadership can often be cultivated in many regions of the country through years of volunteer efforts, public committee service, and collaboration with local government. Nationally, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, over 60 million Americans participated in organized volunteerism in 2023. This level of commitment has helped build local infrastructure, public recreation, and safety programs that rely heavily on community engagement and support. Many towns rely on residents assuming positions that require sustained effort, thoughtful planning, and long-term dedication. Where communities share public resources, such as multiple

township trails and local recreation facilities, collaborative governance groups have started to become much more common.

Within this larger context of civic involvement, Eric J. Bartosz has served a variety of public and community organizations in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. His involvements include trail management, youth support programs, recreational planning, and volunteer emergency response. These reflect a pattern of participation in efforts that require both structural decision-making and hands-on service. Bartosz gradually entered these roles while working in professional leadership and training fields that often intersect with community-oriented projects.

One of his most visible roles has been serving as President of the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission, a position he began in 2021. The Commission manages a multi-municipality trail system linking Lower Saucon Township, Hellertown, Upper Saucon Township, and Coopersburg. The trail itself forms part of a regional initiative that attracts thousands of walkers, cyclists, and runners each year, with local estimates noting regular seasonal spikes. Oversight responsibilities include planning, maintenance coordination, safety concerns, environmental preservation, and inter-township communication. The Commission works to maintain a shared asset that requires predictable cooperation, and Bartosz's participation reflects the community model in which residents take active roles in stewardship.

Bartosz has also served on the Parks and Recreation Committee in Upperr Saucon Township. This committee provides recommendations on township parks, including facilities, events, and planning needs. The group reviews maintenance requirements, assesses new proposals, and works with township staff to develop improvements. According to municipal records, the committee is often involved in long-range planning regarding public spaces that support sports, events, and family activities. Committee work in a locality like this requires at least some familiarity with local infrastructure and the ability to balance often-competing priorities. Bartosz's participation in the committee situates him within the larger civic process through which ideas about public space evolve over time.

Other elements of his civic contributions include serving on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lehigh Valley. For decades, the organization has been active in youth mentorship nationwide, with national data indicating that a structured mentorship program can significantly increase academic engagement and long-term confidence among participating youth. Board members are responsible for supporting program expansion, fundraising planning, and providing organizational oversight. Service in this capacity reflects a growing trend in which professionals contribute to youth-oriented non-profits to strengthen community networks. Bartosz's position on the board placed him within the strategic structure of an organization serving hundreds of children and families across the region.

Since 2016, Bartosz has also served as a volunteer firefighter in Upper Saucon Township. Volunteer firefighting remains a fundamental part of public safety in much of Pennsylvania, where many stations depend on volunteers. The number of volunteer firefighters in Pennsylvania has fallen from about 300,000 in the 1970s to approximately 38,000 in recent times, according to the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute. That decline has added even more value to volunteer participation for departments reliant on community members who can respond in unpredictable circumstances. Bartosz's engagement places him among those residents who contribute to emergency response operations through active service.

In addition to his official committee and board positions, Bartosz has organized community races that raise funds for local causes and nonprofit groups. Many of the races involve coordination with township departments, sponsors, volunteers, and participants. Community races have become a standard method to support local needs, as participation in organized running events remains strong nationwide. Data from Running USA reported millions of race registrations annually, reflecting broad interest in community-organized athletic events. Bartosz's race-planning efforts fit within this trend by linking physical activity with charitable giving.

Observers of his civic work more often note that his service aligns with his broader approach to leadership, centered on accountability, routine, and long-term consistency. While these characteristics are most evident in his professional career and writing, they also shape how he participates in community roles. In each of his positions, he emphasizes structured planning, steady involvement, and incremental progress. These are the same principles that undergird the operational side of local government committees, nonprofit boards, and public safety organizations.

His involvement in several organizations also illustrates a common way that individuals connect personal philosophy with civic endeavor. Community leadership researchers frequently find that personal values of responsibility and community betterment often drive this civic involvement. In this framing, Bartosz's various roles reflect a broader trend observed among citizens who volunteer in multiple areas rather than a single activity. Multi-role volunteering is a relatively prevalent phenomenon among volunteers with leadership or training backgrounds, since those contexts already prime individuals to be responsible and to follow through consistently.

Parks and recreation planning demands awareness of local interests, budget constraints, and community expectations. Youth mentorship board service involves long-term program stability and strategic decisions that affect real families. Firefighting requires rigorous training and personal readiness. Community race organization requires public coordination and detailed planning. Collectively, these activities form a broad civic record spanning safety, the environment, youth development, and community wellness.

In context, this background reveals the range of responsibilities local leaders often take on and how civic engagement can support many facets of regional life. As the Lehigh Valley continues to evolve and expand, community organizations will increasingly depend on residents committed to sustained service. Against this backdrop, the life of Eric J. Bartosz provides one example of how focused leadership and constant outreach can shape regional efforts and the functioning of civil society.