

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Needed: insightful candidates

The next three weeks are critical to Pottstown's future. Five seats on the Pottstown School Board are up for election this year, as well as three positions on Pottstown Council: the second ward, fourth ward, and sixth ward.

Starting Tuesday, candidates may circulate nominating petitions, to be filed with the county election board by March 10. A minimum of ten signatures are needed to be placed on the primary ballot for either school board or council. Unlike council candidates, school board candidates can circulate petitions for both the Democratic and Republican nominations.

It's hard to believe, but government in Pottstown, a town of just 22,000 residents, is spending more than \$100 million this year. Of that, about \$56 million is going for public schools. Nearly \$45 million pays for police, water and sewer service, public works, trash collection, and administration.

These huge financial decisions are made by just nine people on the school board and seven on council.

As a community, we are becoming poorer. For years, the percentage of low and moderate income residents in Pottstown has steadily increased. About 71 percent of our students come from low income families — triple the percentage of three decades ago.

We have among the highest taxes in Pennsylvania, and the assessed value of our real estate is declining.

The actions our elected officials take in the next few years will de-

termine whether Pottstown can maintain and perhaps increase its quality of life, or whether we will continue a downward spiral of steadily increasing taxes and declining property values.

We need elected officials who can see the big picture, ask the right questions, and gather the pertinent facts needed to make good decisions.

This requires a great deal of effort. Unfortunately, some office holders are unwilling or unable to make that effort.

Instead, they often indulge in what is known as "policy by personality." They make judgments based on whom they like and don't like. Voting by personality allows decision-makers to avoid the hard work of analyzing information, developing thoughtful policies, and seeing they are carried out.

Pottstown has plenty of bright, altruistic residents. Many are hesitant to get involved because of the rough and tumble of politics — made much worse in recent years by relentless negativity and malicious personal attacks on the Internet and elsewhere.

But voters can't make good decisions if they don't have good candidates to choose from.

As Aristotle wrote more than 2,000 years ago, "In the Olympian Games it is not the handsomest and strongest that win the crown, but those who actually compete, for it is some of these who are victorious."

Likewise, Pottstown is not necessarily governed by its best and brightest, but by those who are willing to run for office.

We need volunteers — people of good will — now.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Summary

- **Pottstown borough and school district have among the highest taxes in Pennsylvania.**
- **Faced with substantial financial difficulties, our town needs public officials who can absorb information, analyze it, and make rational decisions.**
- **We need people of good will — with critical thinking skills — to run for office.**