

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Police ever more costly

At its committee of the whole meeting tomorrow, Pottstown Council will begin deliberating on whether to raise taxes 18.6 percent, cut costs, or do a little of both. Because the lion's share of the borough budget is consumed by salaries and benefits, cutting costs will likely mean layoffs.

In 2008, the borough laid off 12 employees and increased real estate taxes 10 percent.

Since then, Pottstown police officers have enjoyed the borough's fastest growing salaries and benefits.

As shown in the chart below, since 2009 the total wages earned by Pottstown officers, including overtime, longevity, and other factors, have increased at almost triple the rate of inflation. Sixteen officers earned more than \$100,000 last year. (The chart shows only officers who have been employed since 2009.)

The Pottstown Police Department currently has a chief and 45 uniformed officers, just one short of its all-time high of 47 officers in 2009.

Only one lives in Pottstown.

Police officers are entitled to other benefits that must be paid by local taxpayers long after the officers' active duty is over.

Pensions

Police officers are eligible for full retirement at age 50 with at least 25 years of service. They receive an extra monthly payment for more than 26 years of service, plus cost of living increases.

This year, the police pension fund required a \$1 million contribution, and the pension fund for non-uniformed employees required a \$343,000 contribution.

In 2017, after state subsidies, the local taxpayer-supported-general fund provided \$672,000 for these municipal pensions.

Retirees' health insurance

Another major taxpayer liability is Other Post-Employment Benefits. This refers to health insurance benefits paid to police retirees and their families.

As of this year, the taxpayer liability for these benefits is more than \$26 million, and the unfunded liability is expected to grow by \$2 million a year. Yet the borough contributed nothing to the fund this year.

Invaluable service

We all recognize police perform a valuable service to the community. We greatly appreciate the risks they take for us. But there are limits to what we can afford.

Given the borough's sharply declining tax base, can Pottstown afford 46 officers?



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Employee compensation based on W-2 forms

Officer	2009	2016	increase	Officer	2009	2016	increase
Police chief	\$83,434	\$110,607	32%	C.Z.	\$68,012	\$98,659	31%
Police captain	\$84,832	\$101,977	17%	D.M.	\$77,804	104,752	26%
B. W.	\$76,356	105,047	27%	E.W.	\$80,182	\$97,114	17%
C.C.	\$69,704	\$100,466	31%	F.G.	\$72,989	\$98,004	26%
J. O.	\$77,546	\$100,852	23%	G.F.	\$74,669	\$122,758	39%
M.L.	\$82,507	\$117,840	30%	H.L.	\$76,115	\$97,479	22%
S.H.	\$71,221	\$98,488	28%	J.P.	\$56,769	\$94,233	40%
T.I.	\$69,092	\$89,906	23%	J.R.	\$68,999	\$83,725	18%
T.L.	\$66,575	\$93,951	29%	J.S.	\$68,999	\$90,738	24%
B.G.	\$84,979	\$111,096	24%	M.B.	\$73,920	\$111,677	34%
B.R.	\$73,654	\$109,394	33%	M.W.	\$80,366	\$99,252	19%
E.K.	\$96,250	\$127,311	24%	N.S.	\$71,487	\$94,130	24%
M.B.	\$84,218	\$122,616	31%	P.Y.	\$77,122	\$91,521	16%
M.M.	\$81,840	\$96,706	15%	R.T.	\$73,908	\$101,906	27%
M.P.	\$81,568	\$104,437	22%	S.M.	\$61,504	\$102,720	40%
B.F.	\$66,559	\$89,628	26%	C.H.	\$69,935	\$90,095	22%

Only police officers employed as of 2009 are listed

Cumulative inflation rate 2009 to 2016 11.9%