

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Police compensation soars

Last month, Pottstown Borough Council received a 153-page report from state-approved economic consultants regarding the borough's financial outlook.

The consultants concluded that unless Pottstown can rein in personnel costs — including pensions and health benefits — it will need major tax increases annually to cover a growing budget deficit. That in turn will lead to a downward spiral of disinvestment in Pottstown.

Salaries and benefits for uniformed police officers are the highest borough expense.

According to the consultants, the police department comprises 73 percent of the 2019 general fund.

Police wages have risen well beyond the rate of inflation for decades.

Thirty years ago, the top base salary for a Pottstown patrolman was \$26,886 — that's \$55,408 in today's dollars. But the top base pay today is \$86,819 (more for corporals and sergeants) after four years of service, and this does not include longevity, night-shift differential and other add-ons.

As the borough negotiates with the Pottstown Police Officers Association for a new contract beginning in 2020, we simply cannot afford the kind of raises we've provided in recent years.

As shown in the chart below, in the last ten years the total wages earned by Pottstown officers, including overtime, longevity, and other factors, have increased well beyond the rate of inflation. Twenty-eight officers — more than half the force — 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 sworn officers, according to the consultant's



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

report..

Only two live in Pottstown.

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

In fact, at the most recent council meeting, the borough's auditor warned that extravagant health coverage poses even more financial danger than pensions.

(Thursday: Borough pensions and health benefits)

Gross employee compensation							
Officer	2009	2018	increase	Officer	2009	2018	increase
Police chief	\$83,434	\$116,937	40%	EW	\$80,182	\$119,156	49%
Police captain	\$84,832	\$105,164	24%	FG	\$72,989	\$107,023	47%
BW	\$76,356	\$107,431	41%	GF	\$74,669	\$107,743	44%
JO	\$77,546	\$107,466	39%	HL	\$76,115	\$105,034	38%
ML	\$82,507	\$118,792	44%	JP	\$56,769	\$99,153	75%
SH	\$71,221	\$102,225	44%	JR	\$68,999	\$92,746	34%
TI	\$69,092	\$97,597	41%	JS	\$68,999	\$94,132	36%
TL	\$66,575	\$104,586	57%	MB	\$73,920	\$113,131	53%
BG	\$84,979	\$131,727	55%	MW	\$80,366	\$109,255	36%
BR	\$73,654	\$120,062	63%	NS	\$71,487	\$98,427	38%
EK	\$96,250	\$137,966	43%	PY	\$77,122	\$105,377	37%
MB	\$84,218	\$139,371	65%	RT	\$73,908	\$108,878	47%
MP	\$81,568	\$111,417	37%	SM	\$61,504	\$114,425	86%
BF	\$66,559	\$101,954	53%	CH	\$69,935	\$92,449	32%
CZ	\$68,012	\$112,041	65%	RG		\$90,353	
DM	\$77,804	\$105,845	36%	CJ		\$95,107	
TC		\$87,986		AL		\$100,865	
TC		\$77,119		MM		\$94,599	
BC		\$102,940		JM		\$96,623	
MD		\$91,244		MM		\$90,705	
AF		102,560		ZR		\$102,376	
MG		\$91,239		BU		\$83,593	
Cumulative inflation rate 2009 to 2018 18.5%							