

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Facing up to hard truths

Back in 2016, an engineering consultant delivered a 57-page stormwater master plan to the Pottstown Water and Sewer Authority.

Pottstown’s literally crumbling stormwater infrastructure needs major repairs and upgrades, the study concluded, at a cost of millions of dollars annually.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

The plan has been sitting on the shelf for three years now. Pottstown’s stormwater infrastructure is mostly underground: “out of sight, out of mind.”

But last week’s flooding shows it’s imperative we address the problem.

Pottstown’s streets and homes and businesses are sitting on miles and miles of underground pipes, a lot of them a hundred years old or more.

There are two kinds of sewer pipes — sanitary sewers, which carry wastewater from toilets and sinks and home drains to the Pottstown Sewage Treatment Plant on Moser Road.

Pottstown also has larger pipes, and stone arches over covered-up streams, that carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and the Schuylkill River.

Miles of stone arches

Pottstown has four such streams totaling 6.5 miles that were arched over as the town was developed.

The stone arches covering these streams have begun to fail. An arch under Walnut Street near York street collapsed in 2004 and cost \$600,000 to repair — for a span that was only 50 feet long. Arches have collapsed on private property and not been repaired.

It’s bad enough if an arch fails under a street, where at least it’s accessible. But 80 percent of these covered streams flow under private property, including scores of houses and multi-story office buildings.

Pipes and inlets

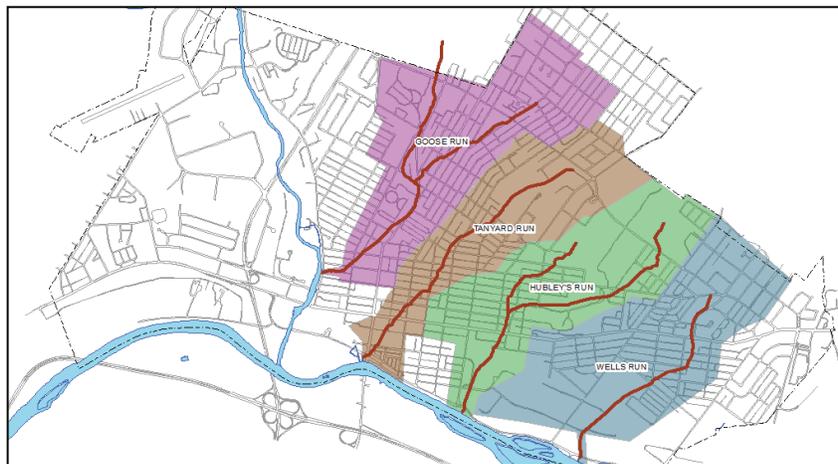
In addition, Pottstown has more than 40 miles of huge pipes to carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River. They too are old and need to be repaired or replaced.

And the borough has 1,751 inlets for these pipes that have been kept clear and maintained.

The consultants estimate it will cost millions of dollars to maintain this system in the coming decade.

Next week: How to pay for it.

Projected annual stormwater costs	
Ramp-up	\$780,000
Years 1-3	\$900,000
Years 4-6	\$950,000
Years 7-9	\$1,450,000
Years 10-12	\$1,420,000



COVERED STREAMS — Pottstown has four major streams totaling 6.5 miles that were arched over as the borough was developed. In addition, the borough has more than 40 miles of underground stormwater pipes and 1,751 inlets. This infrastructure is aging and needs repairs and upgrades. Last week’s flooding shows why.