

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Non-profits would pay also

On Tuesday, we discussed the rising cost of managing stormwater in Pottstown.

Pottstown's storm sewers and arches are aging and will need major repairs.

Currently, Pottstown property owners are paying the costs of stormwater management through their real estate taxes.



Commentary by
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But innovative municipalities are funding stormwater costs through a special fee charged to property owners based on the amount of impervious surface on their properties.

Runoff is created when rainfall "runs off" impervious surfaces, which prevent it from percolating into the ground.

With an impervious surface fee, the property owners would pay in proportion to the amount of runoff their property creates.

Geographic Information Systems make it easy for the borough to calculate how much impervious surface is located on each property.

An additional feature of a stormwater runoff fee would be its application to tax-exempt properties.

Because a stormwater runoff fee is not a tax, tax-exempt properties like

The Hill School, Pottstown Hospital (Tower Health) — even the school district — would have to pay just as they already do for water and sewer services.

In 2017, Tower Health of Reading acquired the for-profit Pottstown Memorial Medical Center and immediately filed to become tax-exempt.

The borough and school district are contesting the hospital's tax-exempt status in court, but in the meantime, the school district and borough are losing more than \$1 million annually in real estate taxes.

But the hospital has a very big footprint, and one of the largest parking lots in Pottstown. Therefore it would pay a substantial stormwater runoff fee.

West Chester Borough, one of the municipalities with a stormwater runoff fee, is suing West Chester University, which refuses to pay the fee. Last week, Chester County court denied a petition from the university to quash the lawsuit.

Homeowners would pay a modest fee because most homes don't have much of a footprint. Properties with large one-story buildings and parking lots would pay a lot more.

Unlike real estate taxation, where people often pay for services used by others, the people creating the runoff problem would pay to solve it.



NON-PROFITS would pay for runoff from their impervious surfaces just like taxable properties. Although non-profits are tax-exempt, a stormwater runoff fee is just that — a fee, not a tax. Pottstown Hospital, above, has one of the largest parking lots in Pottstown. The Hill School, below, has parking lots and many expansive roof surfaces, such as its gymnasium complex and hockey arena.

