

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Strictly business

Taxpayers are aghast.

Here we are in the beginning of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, and the school board has approved a three-year contract with business administrator Maureen Jampo, raising her compensation 33 percent by the end of her contract.

It was a unanimous vote. What could we be thinking?

I can tell you what I'm thinking. As a school board member who's never voted to raise taxes during 10 years on the board (and won't do so this year, either), it's strictly a business decision.

Keeping Ms. Jampo for three more years is far more cost-effective than letting her walk and trying to replace her.

It was a different world when I entered adulthood in 1970. In Pottstown, the borough manager, superintendent of schools, police chief, fire chief and chamber of commerce director all lived in Pottstown.

Now none of them do.

Of 46 police officers, only two live in Pottstown. Just 15 percent of our teachers and other school professionals live in Pottstown.

People are now highly mobile.

In 1970, Linford Moyer, Pottstown's business manager, was a Pottstown High School graduate and lived in Pottstown,

When he retired in 1980, he was succeeded by Jim Bush, who had been assistant business manager. Bush also was a Pottstown High School graduate. His father had been president of Pottstown Council and later a school board member.

But by the time Bush retired in 2006, none of our administrators lived in Pottstown. His replacement, Linda Adams, lived in Berks County and had been business manager for the Oley School District.

When Linda Adams retired in 2017, Maureen Jampo, of Schwenksville, took her place for \$40,000 **less** than Mrs. Adams had been earning.

With her new contract, Ms. Jampo will now be earning what Linda Adams earned four years ago.

The Pottstown School District has a \$64 million budget and more than 500 employees.

By far the most important one is Superintendent Stephen Rodriguez. Not only does he direct the educational program, he has the responsibility to keep us solvent.

When former superintendent Jeffrey Sparagana retired in 2016, the board reviewed 20 applications and interviewed nine prospective superintendents. They all had big ideas about educational programs, but none on cost containment.

We then asked Mr. Rodriguez, our human resources director, if he would act as interim superintendent for a year. He agreed.

The next year, we went through another round of interviews. By that time, Mr. Rodriguez decided he would be a candidate.

He now had on-the-job experience, and he was head and shoulders over every other candidate. He got the job.

Mr. Rodriguez has assured the board he has no intention of going anywhere when his contract expires in June 2021. But he has also told the board he is heavily dependent on Ms. Jampo's financial expertise.

Any replacement would cost the same or more as Ms. Jampo. There would be disruption and no guarantee a new person could do as well.

My greatest concern about Mr. Rodriguez is burnout. In addition to being the poorest district in the region, Pottstown is experiencing the unprecedented upheaval of the coronavirus and finding a new way to teach remotely — all on the fly.

And Mr. Rodriguez has four school-aged children of his own at home.

Our superintendent has a huge burden, and the school board cannot in good conscience make his job even harder than it is.

*Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.*



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton



MAUREEN JAMPO



STEPHEN RODRIGUEZ