

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Unsustainable spending

The Pottstown School Board is likely Thursday night to pass a preliminary 2020-2021 budget of \$65,721,174 with no tax increase.

An anticipated shortfall of \$1.7 million will be covered from reserves, which this year's budget forecasts will be about \$9 million at the end of our current fiscal year, June 30.

No staff or programs will be cut in 2020-2021.

Right now, the district has healthy reserves, but no one knows when that will change.

Economists tell us America is facing the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, with a current unemployment rate of nearly 15 percent. Most economists think recovery will take years, not months.

Pottstown's tax base has been declining for years, and the financial crisis means things will get worse before they get better.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth

has seen its income and sales tax revenues plummet. It's hard to see how the state will be able to increase school funding in the next few years.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Many of my school board colleagues are hopeful the state will accelerate the implementation of a "fair funding" formula adopted by the legislature in 2016 which would bring an extra \$13 million to Pottstown if fully funded.

I am not optimistic that will happen any time soon.

Pottstown School District spending has been triple the rate of inflation in the last 45

years, fueled mostly by huge increases in the number of specialists and aides.

Has all this actually increased student performance? We don't know. No statistics exist to measure achievement over several decades.

We do know Pottstown has the seventh highest school taxes in the state.

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

Swelling staff, skyrocketing costs		
1974-1975		
Enrollment		4,481
Percentage low income		18%
Speech, therapists, psychologists		3
Special education enrollment		136
Special education teachers		8
Classroom aides		5
Budget		\$7,099,876
Cost per pupil		\$1,584
45 years later ...		
2019-2020		
Enrollment		3,342
Percentage low income		73%
Speech, therapists, psychologists		23
Special education enrollment		553
Special education teachers		39
Classroom aides		65
Budget		\$64,284,813
Cost per pupil		\$19,235
Increase in per pupil costs, 1974 to 2019		1,215%
Rate of inflation, 1974 to 2019		419%