

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Responsible GOVERNMENT

## Pottstown Schools staffed by commuters

Last week, the Pottstown School District created a new administrative position. Terri Lampe, who was economic development director with Pottstown Borough until that position was eliminated last month in a cost-saving move, will now be economic development director for the school district.

Lampe has something in common with other Pottstown administrators: She doesn't live in Pottstown. None of the district's central administrators, including its Executive Team, lives in Pottstown. None of Pottstown's school principals lives in Pottstown.

David Krem, the superintendent, who has been with the district 13 years, lives in the Southern Lehigh School District. Reed Lindley, the assistant superintendent, who has been with the district 15 years, lives in the Pottsgrove School District. Jeffrey Sparagana, Director of Education and Human Resources, who has been with the school district 16 years, lives in the Exeter School District.

The reason Pottstown administrators don't live in Pottstown is obvious: They choose not to. By law, school districts like Pottstown may not impose residency requirements, so employees can live where ever they wish. Although a handful of school districts — like Lower Merion — are so affluent that some employees can't afford to live there, Pottstown has among the lowest housing prices in southeastern Pennsylvania.

About 85 percent of Pottstown's teachers and other professional staff live outside Pottstown. However, most of its non-professionals — like aides and maintenance workers — do live in Pottstown.

Some argue that in a highly mobile society, it doesn't matter where people live. With public school teachers and administrators, we think it does.

Pottstown is a geographic community. The students who attend Pottstown public schools do so because they live in Pottstown. The taxpayers who pay for Pottstown public schools either live in Pottstown, own real estate here, or both.

What makes us a community is where we live. That's why the Hill School re-

quires all its students to live on campus at least one year as a requirement for graduation, even if a student's home is in Pottstown. The Hill School believes that to truly be a part of the school community, you have to live on campus 24/7.

The Pottstown School District is no different. A school district employee who lives in Pottstown is a much greater asset to the community than one who does not. Resident employees not only pay taxes that support our schools, they benefit our borough just by their presence, interacting daily with other Pottstown residents. They understand the community better. They have a much greater investment in our community, financially and emotionally, than those who commute in and out of town every day.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

Former Borough Manager Bob Jones believed Pottstown policemen who live in the borough help stabilize our neighborhoods and increase

the quality of life in our borough. He negotiated with the Pottstown Police Officer's Association a residency bonus of \$1,000 annually for policemen who live in the borough. Practicing what he preached, Jones, who came to Pottstown after retiring as an admiral in the U.S. Navy, lived in Pottstown the entire eight years he served here.

Many professions are mobile — people frequently change jobs for advancement — but public school teaching is different. The longer teachers and administrators work in one district, the more they benefit. Reaching the top of the teacher salary schedule in Pottstown, for example, takes 18 years. And teachers and administrators are rarely laid off. They enjoy job security that few other professions offer.

It is unrealistic to expect every Pottstown teacher and administrator to live in the borough. But we should encourage school district employees to live in Pottstown, because they add value to our community and help make it a better place to live.

*Thomas Hylton, a 36-year resident of Pottstown and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, is treasurer and Web site editor of Pottstown Citizens for Responsible Government.*

### Summary

- Not one Pottstown School District administrator lives in Pottstown.
- About 85 percent of Pottstown's teachers live outside of Pottstown.
- The Pottstown School District would serve the community better if more of its employees — especially administrators and teachers — lived in the borough.