

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Marshaling resources

In yesterday's column, using the city of York as an example, we pointed out that Pottstown will never solve its financial problems with economic development alone.

Despite tens of millions of dollars in economic development in recent years, York is so destitute it plans to lay off nearly half its police officers next year and possibly turn over its public school system to a private charter school operator.

It would take a huge and, frankly, unimaginable increase in our tax base to sustain the upward spiral in government spending we've seen in Pottstown during the last decade or so.

### Government spending

The Pottstown School District, for example, has the twelfth highest taxes of 500 districts in Pennsylvania. These taxes are an enormous disincentive for residents and businesses to locate here.

Yet if the Pottstown School District was spending the same, per pupil, as cost-conscious districts such as Lebanon and Upper Darby, which have similar demographics to ours, we could reduce spending by about \$14 million annually.

### Pensions, health benefits

Both the school district and the borough have major health and pension costs. For example, Pottstown police officers can retire at half pay at age 50, after 25 years' service, with cost of living increases, and health benefits paid for life.

These kind of benefits will eventually force Pottstown into the draconian personnel cuts York is now contemplating.

### Quality of life issues

Aside from current government spending, there are other needs to be addressed. Pottstown has stunted on such quality of life basics as sidewalks, street trees, street resurfacing, and housing rehabilitation.

### Other funding sources

There are three other possible

funding sources: government grants, the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and payments in lieu of taxes from tax-exempt property owners.

### Government Grants

Pottstown borough and school district have received millions of dollars in grants in recent years, for such things as pre-school education, walking and biking routes, parks, a non-profit theater, and housing rehabilitation.

It is essential we maximize these grant opportunities.

### Wellness Foundation

Pottstown also has a health and wellness foundation created in 2003 when the non-profit Pottstown Memorial Medical Center was sold to Community Health Systems. Most of the proceeds went to establish a trust fund overseen by a 15-member, self-perpetuating foundation board whose members serve 3-year terms.

Thus far, the foundation has given out about \$23 million over 11 years to local governments and non-profits to promote healthy living within a ten-mile radius of Pottstown.

We have created on our website ([www.pottstowncitizens.org](http://www.pottstowncitizens.org)) a chart showing these grant recipients based on press releases issued by the foundation.

### Voluntary donations

Many municipalities seek voluntary donations from philanthropists and tax-exempt property owners.

**(Tomorrow: The Hill School)**



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