

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## School construction finally done

In 1997, the Pottstown School Board hired an architectural firm called Hayes Large to evaluate Pottstown's school buildings.

The firm's conclusion was that none of the buildings was up to snuff and millions of dollars of renovations and new construction would be needed.

Eventually, three architectural firms would be involved over the years, developing myriad plans which were debated by an ever-changing cast of school directors and administrators.

Finally, it appears, we are done.

The high school and middle school have been renovated and greatly enlarged. Four of the district's five elementary schools were retained as neighborhood centers. One was closed.

Bonds totaling nearly \$70 million were issued and will be paid off over the next 20 years, at a cost of about \$4 million per year. Another \$8 million will be spent over the next 7 or 8 years out of the

district's annual budget to do roofing and other work not included in the renovation plans.

It sounds expensive — and it is expensive. The bond payments and maintenance costs will amount to about 8 percent of upcoming school budgets. But the really big ticket items, as always, are salaries and benefits.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

At the same time we've enlarged our schools, we've enlarged our staff. With the same number of students as in 1997, we have about 40 percent more special education teachers and twice as many aides — all of whom qualify for health benefits and pensions

Since 1997, our school budget has increased at double the rate of inflation. These increases are simply not sustainable, yet our children are more needy than ever before.

We have to figure out how to do more with less. The K-12 model we have now no longer works for many students. The school community needs to find ways to change it.



**2001-2002 Pottstown High School: renovated and enlarged for \$18.9 million**  
**1999-2001 Pottstown Middle School: renovated and enlarged for \$19.6 million**



**2012-2013 Barth Elementary School: renovated for \$6.2 million**  
**2013-2015 Franklin, Lincoln, Rupert renovated and enlarged for \$18.9 million**

**Yet to come: \$8 million planned over 7-8 years for miscellaneous repairs at the elementary, middle and high schools and administration building.**

**GRAND TOTAL \$71.6 million**