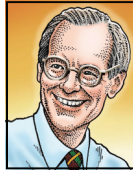


POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Sustainable police force needed

It's a question no one wants to answer, but it must be asked.

With the ever-increasing cost of salaries and benefits, coupled with a declining tax base, can Pottstown sustain a police force with 46 officers?



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Because of police pensions, and health benefits paid to retirees and their families, Pottstown taxpayers are paying for many officers long after they are retired.

As the chart at right shows, the number of

Pottstown's sworn officers has varied considerably over the last 25 years. It's not easy to see a correlation between the number of police officers and crime. Many factors influence crime rates. Studies seeking to link the crime rate to the number of officers per capita have come to disparate conclusions.

Pottstown has 28 officers on patrol in four squads of seven officers each, including a sergeant and a corporal. They work 12-hour shifts, providing 24/7 coverage for the borough.

Other officers serve in the detective division, most working Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with additional coverage 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Other officers work in the community response unit, which is responsible primarily for narcotics work and other proactive policing. These officers work flexible schedules.

The department also has deployed 10 street cameras in the last year, most in the downtown area, funded by the county district attorney's office.

Pottstown's most serious crimes have declined in the last few years. Can we reduce officers and continue to reduce crime?

Because of fiscal problems, Reading gradually shrank its police force from 215 officers to 168 officers, according to the *Reading Eagle*, while reducing serious crime from 6,075 incidents in 2005 to 3,264 in 2015 — a 46 percent reduction.

Police Chief William Heim, who retired in February 2016, was widely credited for reducing crime during his 10-year tenure. Heim told the

Eagle he implemented a new crime reduction plan in 2007 that focused on giving patrol officers more training and more duties — trying to resolve crimes on their own rather than turn everything over to the detective division.

Regardless of whether Pottstown can do more with less, it can't afford to pay for what we have now.

**Pottstown Police
and Pottstown Crime**

Year	Sworn officers	Part 1 (most serious) Crimes	Total crimes
1990	43	1,099	n/a
1991	41	1,208	n/a
1992	38	1,617	n/a
1993	38	1,782	n/a
1994	42	1,602	3,634
1995	41	1,570	3,802
1996	39	1,803	4,359
1997	34	1,900	4,595
1998	37	1,715	4,403
1999	37	1,598	4,603
2000	38	1,386	4,059
2001	39	1,484	4,160
2002	39	1,687	4,299
2003	39	1,712	4,254
2004	37	1,805	4,441
2005	41	1,661	4,328
2006	43	1,790	4,631
2007	45	1,795	4,776
2008	47	1,786	5,065
2009	47	1,521	4,300
2010	46	1,596	4,194
2011	46	1,586	4,325
2012	46	1,398	3,757
2013	45	1,624	3,813
2014	45	1,575	3,773
2015	46	1,543	3,909
2016	46	1,345	3,730