

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Plenty of information online

Earlier this year, I published a series of columns surveying 50 years of changes in Pottstown starting in the late 1960s — some good, some bad.

Psychologists tell us that humans remember negative things much more strongly than positive ones. That's why there's still so much hand-wringing about the closing of our heavy industries and the loss of stores on High Street.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

In writing my little history, however, I was reminded of all the positive things that have also happened. In 1975, for example, we would be hard-pressed to imagine the beautiful borough hall and leafy park we enjoy downtown. And in those days, no one thought a thriving community college in Pottstown would be possible, either

Moreover, there have been a lot more changes — positive changes — than just bricks and mortar.

Online information

Today, thanks to the internet and enlightened public policies, we can easily access a wealth of public information about our county, school district, and borough.

You'd probably have to be a thirty-something or older to remember how difficult and time consuming it was to get the most basic government information in the past.

Assessment information

For example, if I wanted to know who owned a particular property in Pottstown, I would need to go to the codes department at borough hall and flip through a loose-leaf binder which contained only minimal information of ownership listed by address.

Now, of course, you can access information about every property in the county from its website, at any

time of day or night, including the past sales history, dimensions, and photos of each property. You can search by property owner name as well as by address.

Agendas and minutes

Going to a council or school board meeting? At one time it was difficult if not impossible to get an agenda ahead of time. You'd have to physically go to borough hall or the school administration building, perhaps no sooner than the day of the meeting, to get a copy. Now you can download agendas, online, several days before each meeting.



Discussion documents now online

A recent feature greatly enhances these digital agendas. Now the previous month's minutes, plus proposals, contracts, and reports, can be viewed by clicking hyperlinks in the online agendas. Before the meetings, you can actually see the documents your counselors and school board members will discuss. That's transparency!

In the case of the borough, the agendas and minutes are also available online for the Historical Architectural Review Board, the Planning Commission, and the Pottstown Borough (water and sewer) Authority.

School district committee meeting minutes are also downloadable directly from the online agendas.

The minutes for all these boards and commissions are archived going back several years.

School board policies, borough ordinances, forms and permit applications are all available online.

Lots of things are better

So, yes, it was great when downtown High Street was bustling and our factories were booming, but a lot of things about Pottstown are better. Government accessibility is one.

