

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Seventeen years, \$22 million in grants

There are two ways Pottstown government can pay for public improvements: It can spend local tax dollars, or it can seek public and private grant funding.

As we pointed out last week, the borough's steadily declining tax base and ever-growing personnel costs for wages, health coverage, and pensions leave virtually nothing for special projects and amenities.

But the borough has become more proficient in obtaining grants — about \$22 million over the last 17 years.

To provide an overview, we post on our website a chart showing grant applications made by the borough in the last 17 years. Go to www.pottstowncitizens.org, then to [Pottstown Borough](#) and then to [Grants](#). The borough also publishes an updated grant chart which can be found as a hyperlink in its monthly Committee of the Whole agenda on the borough website.

Vital but not seen

Pottstown faces enormous liabilities for its crumbling stormwater system. The borough has four streams totaling 6.5 miles that were covered over as the town was developed. Much of Pottstown's stormwater is diverted into these streams, which flow into the Manatawny Creek and the Schuylkill River.

The stone arches covering these streams have begun to fail. One arch under Walnut Street near York street collapsed in 2004 and cost \$600,000 to repair. Another collapsed under Grant Street in 2013.

Grant money from the Environmental Protection Agency and Com-

munity Development Block Grant program administered by Montgomery County has so far helped to fix them.

PART

Pottstown's bus system, called PART (Pottstown Area Rapid Transit) is paid almost entirely with grants from the federal government.

Pottstown Airport

Improvements to the airport have been funded by PennDOT's Bureau of Aviation.

Park improvements

About \$2 million has gone to improvements at Riverfront and Memorial parks, including re-oriented ballfields, a new spray park, walking paths, new parking, and other projects.

Other major projects in recent years include:

- Renovations to the Pottstown Regional Public Library.
- The acquisition and renovation of a former 5&10 for the Steel River Playhouse.
- The acquisition of the former Pottstown Metal Weld building for the Carousel at Pottstown. Another grant helped renovate the building.
- The underpass connecting the North and South buildings of Montgomery County Community College West Building.
- Engineering needed for the construction of Keystone Boulevard.
- Replacement of the roof and HVAC system at Ricketts Community Center.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



• Walk/Bike Pottstown. The borough obtained nearly \$2 million in grants for new sidewalks and bike lanes connecting Pottstown schools and neighborhoods.

We'll discuss this more in subsequent columns.