

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Cost-effective administration

Pottstown got a bargain last month when Pottstown Council appointed Justin Keller as new borough manager. Keller will earn \$107,000 annually, considerably less than former Manager Mark Flanders, who retired last December at a salary of \$132,000.

Moreover, Keller, who served as assistant borough manager to Flanders, will not have an assistant of his own. That's a savings of another \$79,000 not including benefits.

Before being named borough manager in 2012, Flanders had more than 10 years' administrative experience as Pottstown police chief. Keller's only administrative experience was less than two years as assistant manager before his recent promotion.

Yet he transitioned smoothly as interim borough manager from last December until August, when he signed a two-year contract with the borough ending Dec. 31, 2019.

Over at the school district, Stephen Rodriguez is beginning the second year of a four-year contract as superintendent.

He is also working without an assistant. In 2012, when longtime administrator Jeffrey Sparagana was named superintendent, he eliminated the assistant superin-

tendent position. But when Sparagana retired in 2016, he strongly recommended an assistant superintendent be hired to help Rodriguez. Otherwise, Sparagana said, the school board would be "setting him up for failure."



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Rodriguez agreed to work for the same salary as Sparagana, and without an assistant. Two years later, there's been no sign of failure.

Moreover, freshman business manager Maureen Jampo, No. 2 in the district hierarchy, just completed her first year. She's paid about \$25,000 less than her predecessor.

Like Keller, Rodriguez first served as an interim, so his job performance was well known before he was given a contract.

As a school board member, I sat in on interviews with a score of superintendent candidates before and during the time Rodriguez served as interim superintendent. The board concluded he was head and shoulders above them all.

Both Keller and Rodriguez are familiar with Pottstown's dismal financial condition — rising expenses, some locked in with union contracts — and a steadily declining tax base.

Yet they're both willing to do the job. Pottstown is fortunate to have them.



Pottstown superintendent of schools Stephen Rodriguez, left, and newly appointed Borough Manager Justin Keller, right, oversee budgets totaling more than \$100 million.