

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Can we act for the common good?

Last week, the Pottstown School Board had a two-hour workshop session discussing district goals.

After serving eight years on the board, and observing board interactions for decades, I believe this is the best board, perhaps, in 30 years.

Board members are starting to make decisions based on facts and analysis, not on egos, and that often hasn't been the case in the past.

As we move forward, I think it's vitally important to recognize the public school community is not the only game in town.

**Sixth highest taxes**  
Pottstown has the sixth highest tax effort in the state — more than 95 percent of the 500 school districts in the Commonwealth. It's been that way for at least 20 years, and taxation is slowly killing this town. The total assessed value of Pottstown's real estate is lower than it was two decades ago, when the county last reassessed.

**Excessive spending**  
Our taxation is exorbitant because prior school boards had a long history of spending beyond the community's ability to pay. Per pupil, we spend more than two-thirds of the districts in the state, and we simply can't afford it.

And the reason given is, "We have to put the education of our children first."

**Silo thinking**  
This is known as "silo" thinking. "Whatever I'm doing is more im-

portant than everything else." But the people who are footing the bill, the residents and property owners of Pottstown, have their own priorities.

### Priority 1— Potable Water

The most important service local government provides is potable water. In Pottstown, residents of all ages take ample clean water for granted. It costs money to have that.

### Priority 2—Sewers

Young and old in Pottstown thankfully have access to toilets and drains for wastewater. That's not cheap.

### Priority 3— Public Safety

Pottstown residents are concerned about safety. Our residents and taxpayers gladly pay for police and other first responders because we want to feel secure in our homes and on the streets.

### Priority 4—Sanitation

We have weekly trash pickup. Otherwise we'd have bags of garbage everywhere. Sanitation affects everyone.

### Priority 5—Streets

Very few Pottstown taxpayers stay at home all day. They need to go places. Our streets must be maintained by government.

### Priority 6—Public Education

I suggest that for most Pottstown residents — with or without children in public schools — education is their sixth local government priority, certainly not their first.

### Sustainability

Our most important task is to make Pottstown viable by retaining productive citizens and attracting new ones. That means controlling taxes.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

**Silo thinking will eventually put  
Pottstown under water.**



*Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.*