Bond issue for streets?

Pottstown owns 60 miles of streets, and a lot of them are in horrendous condition.

PennDOT owns another 10 miles of streets—generally our busiest ones—like High, Hanover, and Charlotte streets.

Much of High Street needs to be repaved, but that’s PennDOT’s responsibility. Unfortunately, a lot of people unfairly blame its terrible condition on the borough.

Streets are often dug up to replace water and sewer lines, and PECO digs up streets for new and replacement gas lines. The borough authority will repave streets it has dug up, and PECO will also if it has made two or more lateral cuts within 50 feet.

The borough typically does not use local funds to pave streets. Instead, it uses an allocation from the state, generated by state gasoline taxes, called the liquid fuels fund.

This year the borough will receive $930,000, which is enough to pave streets won’t be paved this year.

The borough does have another option: a bond issue. A $3 million bond could cover the cost of paving all of Pottstown’s worst streets, and annual bond payments could be covered by future liquid fuels allocations.

Yerger said that ideally, five miles of streets should be paved annually. Once the worst streets are paved, we should stick to that schedule.

The Pottstown School District, which serves the same taxpayers as the borough, has nearly $64 million in outstanding debt for school renovations that benefit students and school staff.

When our streets are full of ruts and potholes, it affects everyone and presents a negative image of our town.

Perhaps the borough should make an investment in our streets.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

REPAVING BEECH STREET IN 2014

3.78 miles of borough streets, at a cost of $250,000 per mile.

Unfortunately, that doesn’t come close to covering streets that badly need to be repaved.

Public Works Director Doug Yerger has developed a ratings system that ranks each block from a 1 (like-new condition) to 5 (lots of patches and cracks and an uneven riding surface).

There are 14.3 miles that have the worst rating, which means that more than 10 miles of deteriorated streets won’t be paved this year.

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