

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Flooding: the new normal?

The last four years have been the wettest on record in Pennsylvania, going back to 1895, when records were first kept.

In the last year, rainfall in the region has been about 70 percent more than its historical average of 45 inches annually.



“These numbers are significant in my mind for a few reasons, meteorologist Ed Vallee told The Morning Call last week.

Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

“First, there have been a lot of irrefutable studies that show we are warming. And then, just based on simple thermodynamics, when you have more warmth, the atmosphere is going to be able to hold a lot more moisture. That means the probability that we see additional heavy rain risks will continue to rise.”

Worldwide, the five warmest years in recorded history have been the last five, and 18 of the 19 warmest years have occurred since 2001.

The oceans are warming faster than a United Nations panel estimated just five years ago. One fifth of the world’s coral reefs have died in just the last three years.

About 30 million acres of tropical forest were lost in 2018.

The Himalayas are melting faster than ever before. Temperatures in the arctic this spring were as much as 40 degrees above normal, melting

ever higher amounts of the Greenland ice sheet.

We’ve been talking about this for years, but now the effects are starting to hit home.

Last Thursday, just 24 hours after state and local officials held a press conference in Pottstown to discuss the borough’s crumbling stormwater infrastructure, torrential rains flooded much of Pottstown.

Low lying homes near the Manatawny Creek were flooded, as was Memorial Park. The bridge to the park’s island was heavily damaged. College Drive where it intersects with High Street was also ripped up by stormwater. Neither is likely to reopen anytime soon.

Last week’s press conference was designed to tout Gov. Wolf’s proposed RestorePA initiative, which would invest \$4.5 billion over the next four years for critical infrastructure and other “high impact projects.”

However, the plan depends on levying a severance tax on shale gas, something the Republican majority legislature has thus far declined to do.

Meanwhile, Pottstown will need to spend at least \$1 million annually to patch up the inadequate stormwater infrastructure it already has, and millions more to improve it.

Thursday: Pottstown’s 2016 stormwater plan will be expensive to implement.



FLOODING ON WALNUT STREET THURSDAY