Increasing Pottstown’s tax base

Pottstown Council and the Pottstown School Board will have its first joint meeting in more than two years next Thursday, 6:30 p.m. Feb. 27 at the school district administration building.

At the top of the agenda will be a summary of the report on Pottstown by the Urban Land Institute, whose experts visited the borough for six days last October, sponsored by the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation.

The ULI was tasked with suggesting ways Pottstown can promote economic development and enhance its quality of life. Because of its low housing prices, its public transportation system, and an abundance of social service agencies, Pottstown is a magnet for the poor.

At the same time, it has more than 300 tax-exempt properties, including its two most valuable properties, The Hill School and Pottstown Hospital.

The borough’s tax base continues to decline. It is lower than it was in 1998, the last time Montgomery County assessed its properties.

On Tuesday, we published a chart showing the services Pottstown Borough and the school district provide — like water and sewer, police and fire protection, trash collection — at an annual cost of more than $100 million.

Most of those services, essential as they are, do little to make Pottstown more attractive to the potential businesses and middle class residents we need to stay viable.

The ULI’s preliminary report, released in October, focused on PAID, (Pottstown Area Industrial Development Authority), the non-profit agency created to promote new development in the borough.

PAID receives very little taxpayer help and mostly relies on private funding.

At next week’s meeting, PAID director Peggy Lee-Clark will provide an overview of recent investments and discuss tools the borough can use to encourage more development.

The meeting could be one of the most important of the year.

Commentary by Tom Hylton

Pottstown’s Tax Base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total assessed valuation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$816,841,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$764,486,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$761,992,039</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

MAGNET FOR THE POOR — Pottstown’s low housing prices, abundant social service agencies, and bus service foster the concentration of poor and needy residents in the borough. To be sustainable, we need to increase our tax base.

Above, a borough P.A.R.T. bus passes Creative Health Services, one of the stops on its route.

www.pottstowncitizens.org