

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

When \$600K is a drop in the bucket

Here's the good news: Pottstown Borough will receive two state grants totaling \$600,000 to assess and repair its crumbling stormwater infrastructure.

Here's the bad news: Major repairs to the system will cost about \$14 million over the next decade or so.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

A maintenance plan by engineering consultants has been sitting on the shelf for four years now. Pottstown's stormwater infrastructure is mostly underground: "out of sight, out of mind."

But last month's flooding shows it's imperative we address the problem.

Pottstown's streets and homes and businesses are sitting on miles and miles of underground pipes, a lot of them a hundred years old or more.

There are two kinds of sewer pipes. Sanitary sewers carry wastewater from toilets and sinks and home drains to the Pottstown Sewage Treatment Plant on Moser Road.

Pottstown also has larger pipes, and stone arches over covered-up streams, that carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and the Schuylkill River.

Miles of stone arches

Pottstown has four such streams totaling 6.5 miles that were arched

over as the town was developed.

The stone arches covering these streams have begun to fail. An arch under Walnut Street near York street collapsed in 2004 and cost \$600,000 to repair. More recently arches have collapsed on private property and not been repaired.

It's bad enough if an arch fails under a street, where at least it's accessible. But 80 percent of these covered streams flow under private property, including scores of houses and multi-story office buildings.

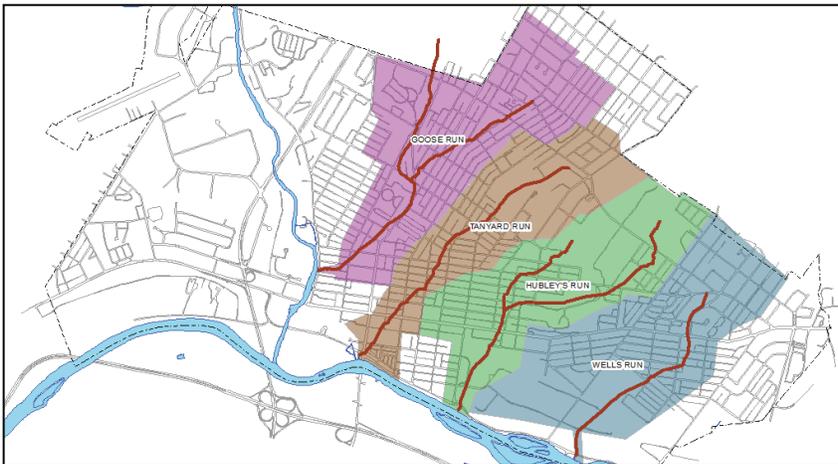
Pipes and inlets

In addition, Pottstown has more than 40 miles of huge pipes to carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River. They too are old and need to be repaired or replaced.

And the borough has 1,751 inlets for these pipes that have to be kept clear and maintained.

With among the highest property taxes in the state, and declining assessments, it's hard to see where Pottstown will find the money.

| Projected annual stormwater costs | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ramp-up | \$780,000 |
| Years 1-3 | \$900,000 each year |
| Years 4-6 | \$950,000 each year |
| Years 7-9 | \$1,450,000 each year |
| Years 10-12 | \$1,420,000 each year |



COVERED STREAMS — Pottstown has four major streams totaling 6.5 miles that were arched over as the borough was developed. In addition, the borough has more than 40 miles of underground stormwater pipes and 1,751 inlets. This infrastructure is aging and needs repairs and upgrades. Last month's flooding shows why.