

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Putting words into action

At last week's Council meeting, Borough Manager Justin Keller announced there will be a joint meeting of Pottstown Council and the Pottstown School Board on a day to be determined this fall.

Joint meetings are usually held annually, but none have been held since the pandemic began.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

I hope we will focus on our joint Sustainability Plan, which Council and the School Board passed in 2018.

With the impacts of climate change becoming more evident every day, the plan is our roadmap to help preserve our part of the planet.

The 128-page document (which can be downloaded from the borough website) contains 39 specific actions grouped in seven categories:

1. Energy —Sustainable Building
2. Mobility
3. Green Infrastructure
4. Health and Nutrition
5. Education and Outreach
6. Local Economy
7. Environmental Stewardship

In 2015, prior to the passage of the plan, Borough Council turned down a \$651,000 state grant to convert 1,821 street lights into energy-saving LED lights because it didn't want to provide a 30 percent match.

But in July, in accordance with the Sustainability Plan, Council voted to request \$700,000 from the Department of Community and Economic Development to convert the street lights into LED lighting. The grant would require a \$310,000 local

match, but the operational cost savings will pay for that match in just 37 months. The project is good for the environment and good for the taxpayer.

Perhaps the most important element of the Sustainability Plan is green infrastructure.

Pottstown has a huge stormwater problem, not only with flooding but with pollution of the Schuylkill River.

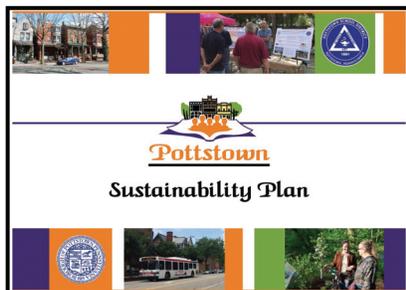
Increasingly, municipalities across the country are planting trees and other vegetation to capture stormwater where it lands and allow it to seep into the ground instead of running off to the nearest storm sewer.

The school district has planted a sidewalk rain garden on the Walnut Street side of its administration building and about 11 acres of meadows on its properties, which absorb stormwater and nourish wildlife.

Shade trees are another important way to manage stormwater. One mature tree can reduce stormwater runoff by more than 1,000 gallons a year (as well as lower temperatures and absorb carbon dioxide).

The Sustainability Plan suggests a goal for Pottstown to increase its tree canopy from 24 percent to 30 percent. Parking lots, which cover more land in Pottstown than buildings, are an ideal place to start.

Current tree canopy	
Philadelphia	20%
Pottstown	24%
Lancaster	28%
Washington, D.C.	35%
State College	38%
Pittsburgh	40%



SUSTAINABILITY PLAN — We hope Pottstown Council and the Pottstown School Board will discuss their Sustainability Plan at their upcoming joint meeting.

Pottstown land use

