

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Flooding can't be wished away

Pottstown is an old town with aging infrastructure. Even if our infrastructure was in good condition, none of it was built to withstand the major flooding that will become the new normal with climate change. But it's not in good condition. Just the opposite.

Major repairs to the existing 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 five years.

Pottstown's stormwater infrastructure is mostly underground: "out of sight, out of mind."

But three straight years of flooding show 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.

The borough 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.

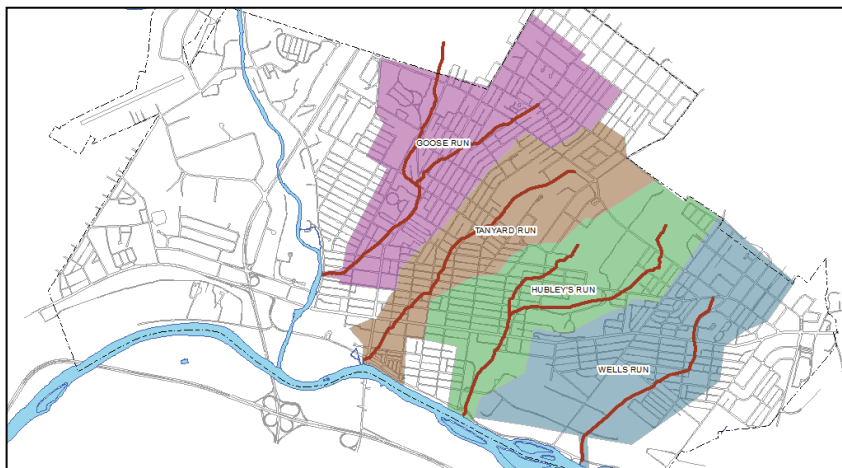
In addition, Pottstown has more than 40 miles of huge pipes to carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River. They too are old and need to be repaired or replaced.

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.