

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

The library: education for all

It's time for the Pottstown School District to start paying for the Pottstown Public Library.

This year, Pottstown will spend more than \$110 million for local government services.

Education is by far the greatest expense. Pottstown spends more on public school education than all other local government services combined.

What do we get for our money?

Major local spending, 2021	
Pottstown Schools	\$66,009,372
Water, sewer service	\$20,797,000
Police protection	\$8,252,797
Trash collection	\$3,388,502
Fire protection	\$1,632,071
Public works, streets	\$1,669,752
Parks	\$1,021,340
Library	\$172,939

Pottstown age of population		
Age group	Number	Percentage
<5	1,716	7.7%
5-9	1,491	6.7%
10-14	1,294	5.8%
15-19	1,385	6.2%
20-24	1,521	6.8%
25-34	3,479	15.5%
35-44	2,861	12.8%
45-54	3,253	14.5%
55-64	2,370	10.6%
65-74	1,481	6.6%
75+	1,526	6.8%
TOTAL	22,377	100%

Special Federal Funding for Pottstown School District (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund)		
Name	Allocation	Expiration
ESSER I	\$1,084,349	9/30/2022
ESSER II	\$4,886,6311	9/30/2023
ESSER III	\$9,741,181	9/30/2024
Spent 7/27/21	(\$1,816,903)	
BALANCE	\$13,895,258	

In Pottstown, school-aged children and youth comprise less than 20 percent of our residents.

Over the last 50 years, the cost of education per pupil in Pottstown has risen at triple the rate of inflation.

With the seventh highest local school tax effort in Pennsylvania, Pottstown property owners are

doing far more than their fair share to support our young people.

We have no idea how many of our graduates will stay in Pottstown or return after college. Chances are, most of them won't, or if they come back, they'll live in the suburbs.

The Pottstown Public Library, on the other hand, serves residents of all ages. And unlike school libraries, the public library is open afternoons, evenings, Saturdays, and all summer.

Books, music, videos, internet resources — everything's available at the public library. You can go online from home and browse the entire collection — not just Pottstown's, but almost everywhere in Pennsylvania. If the resource is in one of Montgomery County's 36 public libraries, you can probably get it in Pottstown within a few days.

Many parents bring their children to the library before they're school age to get their first books.

And of course, residents continue to patronize the library into old age.

Right now the borough government contributes \$172,000 toward the library's annual budget of \$600,000. If the school district took that over, the borough could use the money for other critical projects like street and sewer repairs.

Thanks to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund passed by Congress, the school district has received a one-time windfall of nearly \$14 million.

Can we use some of those funds to benefit everyone?

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton