

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Progress taken for granted

Tonight the Pottstown School Board will conduct its regular once-a-month voting meeting.

We're holding it on Zoom, and broadcasting it live on Facebook, so anyone who so desires can watch the meeting in real time on his smart phone or computer.

Pottstown citizens can also comment at the meeting by registering on the school district's website ahead of time, and at the appropriate time during the meeting, they will be let in virtually to have their say.

In addition to the voting meeting, the board also conducts four virtual committee meetings (piggybacked together so they are held on just two nights) which are also open to the public to watch from home and to comment if they want.

These meetings are all recorded and posted on the district's Facebook page, so viewers can watch them at their convenience, and they are archived going back at least a year or more.

If you'd prefer to read about it later, the minutes are posted in writing not long after meetings and archived back for years, all on the district website.

Ditto for the borough.

In addition, the agendas for all these meetings are posted at least one day before the meeting on the district website.

If there are special reports or contracts to be discussed, those items are included on the agendas with hyperlinks that can be read or even downloaded as pdfs.

Both the school district and the borough have conducted virtual or hybrid meetings since the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020.

Thanks to virtual meetings, the school board and council have taken a quantum leap in accessibility to the public.

At last week's finance meeting, one of our board members suggested we go even further.

Usually each month, there are contracts the school district signs with various entities, such as special education providers or consultants or contractors.

This board member wants the contracts to be available for all to view before committee meetings, not just before voting meetings. That gives everyone plenty of time to look them

over.

Well, why not?

As someone who's been involved in Pottstown civic matters for nearly 50 years, either as an observer or participant, I find the amount of information available to the public today is mind-boggling.

Not that long ago, no public material was available electronically.

If you wanted to know what was going on at a public meeting, you went in person or read a thumbnail version in the newspaper afterwards, which depended on the perspective of the reporter.

There was no such thing as obtaining agendas ahead of time. When you attended a meeting, the printed agendas were on a table for you to pick up.

There were no attachments with reports or proposed contracts. If you wanted the minutes for any meeting, you had to call the business office and ask for a hard copy, which might or might not be free.

Minutes of previous meetings going back a few months or more? The district and council keep minutes in a special book. You can make an appointment to visit the secretary's office and peruse them under someone's watchful eye.

Of course, I'm just talking about meetings.

Both the school district and the borough have a superabundant amount of other documents on their websites.

Information? It's all accessible. But we take progress for granted.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton



OPEN TO ALL — Citizens can watch public meetings from the comfort of their own homes, and they can make public comments virtually.