

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Social Services “R” Us

On Tuesday, we discussed the controversy over attempts by Beacon of Hope, a non-profit, to lease space from St. Paul’s United Church of Christ, Franklin and Grace streets, for a 35-bed “pop-up” warming shelter this winter.

Long term, Beacon of Hope plans to build a permanent shelter at High and Glasgow streets. The non-profit received a zoning variance for a 45-bed shelter in September from the Pottstown Zoning Hearing Board.

The lion’s share of the money to build the shelter is coming from Montgomery County.

In August, the Montgomery County Commissioners adopted a plan to distribute more than \$161.4 million in federal pandemic stimulus money to municipalities and non-profits throughout the county.

It’s a huge amount of money. As one commissioner said, “We will never have the opportunity again, I don’t think in any of our lifetimes, to invest \$161 million in our community.”

About \$19 million was earmarked for Pottstown. And where, specifically, is it going?

Last year, Pottstown Borough identified \$39 million in critical infrastructure needs like roads, stormwater arch repairs, and bridge replacements that must be addressed.

But less than \$3 million of the \$19 million is going to borough government.

The rest is going to social service agencies.

Thanks to its older, higher density housing, lost-cost rentals, public transportation, and abundance of social services agencies, Pottstown is already a magnet for the poor.

These agencies are subsidized by Pottstown taxpayers, because their non-profit properties are exempt from real estate taxes. Pottstown’s tax base is shrinking, and the number of tax exempt properties is growing.

Pottstown desperately need funds to fix up the town and make it attractive to families who will keep us economically viable. Instead, the county money will reinforce the existing system.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

<b>\$161.4 million Montgomery County Recovery Plan 2022</b>		
<b>Funds allocated mostly to Pottstown: \$19,283,207</b>		
Pottstown Hospital - Tower	Street medicine	\$1,757,107
Lincoln Center Family/Youth	In-school creative arts therapy	\$620,000
Creative Health Services	Agency-wide improvement	\$1,500,000
Play and Learn	Support victims of domestic violence	\$1,000,000
Boy Scouts of America	Education and mentoring for youth	\$630,000
TriCounty Active Adult Center	Improving seniors’ mental health	\$50,000
YWCA Tri-County Area	Expand facilities in Pottstown	\$5,500,000
Colebrookdale Railroad	Railbike initiative	\$252,600
Strive Initiative	Greatness Sustainability Plan	\$130,000
Trellis for Tomorrow	Our Food, Our Future in Pottstown	\$1,000,000
Pottstown Beacon of Hope	Emergency Shelter for homeless	\$1,300,000
Genesis Housing Corp.	Affordable housing	\$300,000
Church of the Apostolic Faith	Glorious Garden/ Affordable Housing	\$500,000
Eternal Life Christian Center	Affordable Housing and Free Clothing	\$318,500
TriCounty Community Network	Training and support for non-profits	\$340,000
Centro Cultural Latinos Unidos	Proceed-Succeed/COVID 19	\$85,000
Greater Philadelphia YMCA	Gun Violence Prevention Program	\$300,000
Pottstown Borough Authority	Lead Service Replacement Project	\$2,750,000
County Recovery Office	Business support, split with Norristown	\$500,000