

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Trees: modest cost — big benefits

As people gather for today's Fourth of July Parade, they will find 48 newly planted trees on High Street and other Pottstown thoroughfares.

Last December, Pottstown Council agreed to an offer from my wife and me to remove dead street trees and stumps and replace them at no cost to the borough. (One council member voted no.)



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

We are the inheritors of Trees Inc., a non-profit corporation established by Pottstown civic leaders in 1984 to

plant and maintain street trees in the borough.

Trees Inc. raised about \$470,000 between 1984 and 1988, which was used to plant 1,500 street trees in Pottstown.

Over the next 20 years, the group planted 400 more new trees and 700 replacement trees.

By 2000, Trees Inc. was devoting its resources to maintenance. During a 7-year period from 2000 to 2007, the borough contributed about \$21,000 annually to trim street trees.

But in 2008, Borough Council stopped its contributions. It subsequently abolished the Shade Tree Commission and adopted a new ordinance making it practically impossible to plant — even replace — street trees downtown.

This was why we needed a special vote of Council last year to remove and replace dead trees this spring.

As Trees Inc. ran out of money, it merged last year with an-

other non-profit, Save Our Land, Save Our Towns, which is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of traditional cities and towns.

Save Our Land now administers the Pottstown Tree Fund, thus far financed by my wife and me.

Nothing has done more to enhance Pottstown's environment and quality of life than its street trees, yet their total cost over the last 33 years — including tree trimming and sidewalk repairs — has been less than \$1.2 million. Less than a quarter of that has been local taxpayer dollars — the rest has been donations and grants.

Borough government spends nearly \$100 million annually. Perhaps it should allocate something to trees.

Pottstown Tree Fund over 33 years

New trees planted	1,911
Replacement trees planted	757
Dead trees, stumps removed	685
Stumps only removed	298
Trees trimmed	10,913
Sidewalks repaired	431
Ash trees treated for EAB	137
Costs:	
Tree planting	\$561,169
Removing dead trees, stumps	\$76,477
Tree trimming	\$328,508
Sidewalk repairs	\$113,385
Park maintenance	\$81,913
Emerald ash borer treatment	\$35,617
Total cost over 33 years	\$1,197,519
Percent borough funded	23%

HIGH STREET, right, and other major streets have been transformed during the last three decades with the planting of 1,900 new trees and 750 replacement trees. The trees shown in this photo of the 2015 Fourth of July parade did not exist 30 years ago. In April, the Pottstown Tree Fund removed numerous dead trees and stumps and planted 48 replacement trees.

