

Competence, not Cronyism, in Township Board Appointments

Issue: Who is serving on the various township boards and authorities, including the planning commission, and how are they selected?

Our Position: Members of township boards and authorities should not be nominated on the basis of party affiliation and personal relationships. These bodies must be prepared to represent the interests of ALL of the residents of Tredyffrin and ensure that decisions are made and actions taken that are reflective of the needs and desires of ALL members of the community. Therefore, we call for all boards and authorities be nominated based on the following principles:

- ❖ **Competence:** Although township boards and commissions are generally citizen volunteers, many of the issues that they are called on to deal with are complex and important. We believe that every effort should be made to find residents with the background and qualifications necessary to fully appreciate all of the implications of the issues, subject to the principle of balance and diversity below.
- ❖ **Transparency:** We believe that the residents of Tredyffrin have a right to know who the members of township boards and authorities are, their backgrounds and qualifications for the position, any potential conflicts of interest that they may have, and the process by which they came to be nominated and appointed. We believe that this information should be publicly available to all residents.
- ❖ **Balance and Diversity:** We are concerned by the imbalance on township boards and authorities, in particular with respect to gender and party affiliation. We believe that the composition of these bodies should represent different perspectives and points of view, as well as different neighborhoods voices.

Background: During the Board of Supervisor's meeting on March 5, 2007, Supervisor Warren Kampf nominated his neighbor, Republican Robert Whalen, to a seat on the Township Planning Commission rather than Susan Wachter, a Democrat nominated by Supervisor Paul Drucker. According to the Main Line Times (3/8/07), Mr. Whalen is a career army officer who currently works as a real estate developer. Dr. Wachter is "a Professor of Real Estate and Finance and of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. President Clinton appointed her, and the Senate approved her, to be Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and she served in that position from 1998-2001. She also served on the White House Task Force on Livable Cities." During the ensuing (rather heated) discussion, Mr. Drucker strongly objected to this nomination based on his belief that Dr. Wachter was the more qualified candidate. Several of the Republican supervisors vigorously objected to the notion the appointment was political in any way. In the end, Whalen's nomination passed 5-2 along party lines (minutes of this meeting are available on the township web site, www.tredyffrin.org).

The Planning Commission is authorized by the Board of Supervisors "to prepare, update and oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance and to review land development and subdivision applications. Land development decisions by the Planning Commission are final, while the Board of Supervisors has final approval authority on all subdivision applications." (Tredyffrin Township web site, www.tredyffrin.org). Clearly, this group of citizens has very critical responsibilities that affect all township residents. This event led the Tredyffrin Democrats to examine the

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makeup of the Planning Commission more carefully. Despite the fact that the Township's official position that no information about the commission members will be made public other than their names and terms (according to Michael Fahey, Director of Building and Zoning, phone conversation 7/9/07) we were able to find the following information about the current Planning Commission members via public sources:

- ❖ Libby Brinton – Republican. Has been active in Chesterbrook and other Chester County Republican activities & is the current precinct leader for precinct 647.
- ❖ J. Thomas Cooper - Republican
- ❖ Giovanni D'Amato – Electrician. Republican. Current precinct leader for precinct 640..
- ❖ Sean N. McCauley, Chair – Real Estate Developer, Brandolini Companies. Republican.
- ❖ Robert J. O'Leary, Vice Chair – Real Estate Developer. Republican.
- ❖ Victoria Snyder – Only Democrat on the Commission. Originally appointed in March, 2002 by Supervisors Kreek & DeFilippo, but vote failed 3-3. Appointed unanimously 2004.
- ❖ Edward C. Sweeney – Lawyer concentrating in “Medical Malpractice, Serious Personal Injury, and Workers Compensation” (from firm web site), Wusinich, Brogan & Stanzione. Republican. Current precinct leader for precinct 616.
- ❖ Michael Tierney – Corporate Law Partner, Dilworth Paxon. Republican
- ❖ Robert Whalen – Real Estate Developer. Republican.
- ❖ Breakdown:
 - 8 Republicans (3 are Republican precinct leaders), 1 Democrat
 - 3 Developers, 2 lawyers, 4 other/unknown

If you have any questions or comments about this issue, please contact Maria Micolucci, Chair, Tredyffrin Township Democratic Committee (info@tt Dems.com) . Specific references for any of the information contained in this white paper are available on request.