

Zoning, roads are top issues

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP - The seat for supervisor will be hotly contested in the November 7 election, when Republican Michael Prokopchak and Democrat Martin W. Murray, square off.

Although both are part-time farmers, township natives and don't want to be working supervisors who combine the office with the paid job of the roadmaster, each has a different view of how to run the township.

Murray, 40, isn't worried that Republicans outnumber Democrats two to one. He hopes voters will forget party lines and vote for the person they feel will serve the best interests of the township.

"I don't want any back-room politics in the township," he said. "I want our government to operate strictly by the book for the people's best interests."

He firmly believes in protecting the township's valuable resources - a rural setting and good water supply - through controlled, sensible development.

"I want to prevent problems before they arise," he said. "I favor larger lot sizes to keep houses farther apart so they won't contaminate one another's wells with sewage."

Political affiliations don't matter to Murray, who wants to follow the guidelines to serve as many voters as possible.

"It's time to step forward and try to help the township preserve its resources and look out for everyone," he said. "I believe in open lines of communication between the supervisors and all voters."

He believes his background in

road construction and heavy equipment will help in making decisions on maintaining and improving the roads.

"I know what's needed to keep our roads in good repair," he said.

Murray lives with his wife, Kathy, and son, Marty, who plays mini-football with the Kingston Township Raiders.

Prokopchak, 51, is a retired Pennsylvania state trooper, operates a small fruit stand in Luzerne and works as a private investigator.

A Dallas High School graduate (1962), he served in Korea with the Army and graduated from King's College with a degree in criminal justice. While with the state police, he served in Bethlehem, Wyoming, the bureau of criminal investigation in Harrisburg and the Region 8 Strike Force narcotics investigation unit.

He's a past treasurer of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 43 and past president of the Orange Little League, in which he coached the Orange team and umpired for teenagers' baseball.

He and his wife, Sharon, have a daughter, Sheri Norris, and a son, Mike, Jr.

Prokopchak also believes in maintaining and upgrading the township's roads, efficient management and hands-on government.

"Zoning is a very important issue," he said. "Unfortunately some people believe it's the only important issue."

He prefers a two-acre minimum lot size, which he believes to be more affordable but still capable of preventing contamination of wells by nearby septic systems.

"I have spoken to engineers and professionals with experience

in water and sewage," he said. "Other Back Mountain municipalities have two-acre lots. We work hard to educate our children, many of whom must leave the area to find work. Those who stay often take lower-paying jobs and can't afford to buy and build homes on larger lots. How will young couples just starting out or couples with average wages be able to afford to buy and build?"

He said he refused to sign a petition to keep the minimum lot size at three acres, which residents are circulating in the township. He isn't sure it would stand up in court if challenged in a lawsuit.

"The concept of three-acre lots is fine, but its unreasonable and ineffective without proper justification," he said. "I wouldn't like to see the township brought into a lawsuit with its high legal fees which it couldn't afford."

Prokopchak wants to dispel any rumors that he would never consider reappointing the township's two planning commission members who were recently deposed by the supervisors.

"This is untrue," he said. "I never said anything about appointing or reappointing any planning commission members."

He promises to weigh all sides of any issues which come before him and vote accordingly.

"I hope the voters make their decision with intelligence and common sense," he said. "I am an independent person and not related to or affiliated with any of the other supervisors. I am able to show total impartiality in my decisions and will be honored to serve the township where I was raised and where I raised my family."



Gate of Heaven School to hold auction

The Gate of Heaven Parent/Teacher Guild will hold the 10th annual Fall Auction Saturday, October 21, at 7 p.m. in the Gate of Heaven School gym. It is the biggest fund raiser of the year for the PTG. Money raised goes towards improvements of the academic programs at the school as well as maintenance of the building and grounds. Most of the businesses and merchants in the Back Mountain contribute items or services for the event. Last year, hundreds of items were auctioned, including books and tapes, clothing and shoes, jewelry, paintings, hardware, household goods, toys, sporting goods, gift certificates, and filled baskets from each GOH class. Pictured above are Gate of Heaven students with some of the items that will be on sale. From left, front row, Devin Carey, Nora Stepanitis, Kim Durr. Back row, Morgan Carey, Jill Durr, Tara Stepanitis. Admission is \$5.00 per person and includes coffee, tea, soda, beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres and desserts.

McAvoy plot given special status

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FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP - Steuben Granger, hastily appointed October 9 to the planning commission in case he was needed to break a tie vote, wasn't needed at the October 10 meeting.

Granger holds the seat formerly held by chairman Ed Dorrance, who resigned September 25 "for the good of the township" at the request of the supervisors.

The supervisors said Granger was needed because Roger Bellas had told them and the other two commission members, Hank Psolka and chairman Mark Millington, that he would abstain from voting on any decisions on the rezoning request by the Reese family because he works for them.

Approximately 30 residents filled the basement of the Orange Methodist Church to hear the planning commission's decisions on three rezoning requests. Several came armed with questions.

Jay Futch wanted to know why the meeting was allowed to take place. "I doubt Mr. Granger had adequate time to review all three cases," he said. "There were two vacant seats and the supervisors appointed only one person."

"It was too late to cancel it," Millington responded. "Besides, Granger didn't vote on anything."

Granger said he had spent two hours reviewing the Reese rezoning request and was prepared to vote if he was needed.

Ray Rybka said he was concerned about the minimum lot sizes, which have been a bone of contention between the supervisors and the planning commission.

"Can you make enough restrictions so we don't end up with another Crown Hill?" he said, referring to a development on

"This is an unusual situation."

Mark Millington
Zoning board chairman

Eighth Street with small lots. "We don't need another one."

He also suggested the planning commission require developers to do water and sewage studies before any subdivision plans are approved.

The planning commission made the following decisions:

- Ann Marie McAvoy wanted two parcels of land on Coon Road totaling 150 acres rezoned from agricultural and conservation to residential. A portion of her Chadsford Estates I and II subdivisions is located at this site, which protrudes into Kingston Township.

Before making a decision, the planning commission had asked her to give information proving she had spent a significant amount of money preparing her subdivision plan for Chadsford Estates I and II.

"This is an unusual situation," said chairman Mark Millington. "The zoning ordinance has been sent to the board of supervisors for approval. I don't want to assign this acreage a specific zone because I don't know how the minimum lot sizes will end up."

The commission voted to limit the lot size in McAvoy's proposed subdivisions to no more and no less than two acres, with Millington and Hank Psolka voting for the measure, Bellas voting against it and Granger abstaining.

If the supervisors pass the new zoning ordinance, the minimum lot size in residential districts will be two acres, while it will be three acres in agricultural areas and four acres in conservation areas.

- Attorney Ted Krohn, representing David and Charles Hilstolsky, asked the planning commission to defer action on rezoning the Hilstolskys' land on Coon Road from agricultural to residential until the supervisors adopt the new zoning ordinance and set the minimum lot sizes. The Hilstolskys' land adjoins McAvoy's.

"We may end up withdrawing our request, depending on what the supervisors decide," Krohn said.

Their brother, Frank, was removed from the planning commission in September because the supervisors said he might not render unbiased decisions against any requests or applications which McAvoy might submit to the planning commission.

- The commission postponed a decision on rezoning land on Orange Road owned by the Reese family from agricultural to mining.

Reese Excavating has removed topsoil from the land under a Department of Environmental Protection permit since 1972 and hasn't logged any violations with the DEP, according to attorney Frank Hoegen.

"The use of the land predates all township zoning ordinances," Hoegen said. "We want to be sure the zoning designation reflects the use of the property."

Reese Excavating mines topsoil from an acre of land at a time and completely reclaims it before moving on to the next acre, he added.

The supervisors plan to take formal action on the proposed zoning ordinance at a special meeting October 26.

Regular planning commission meetings are scheduled for November 21 and December 19.



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