



Deb Amery Candidate for Supervisor Town of Spider Lake (TOSL)

As a candidate for Town Supervisor, one of my guiding principles is to encourage a community conversation. I believe this conversation can improve our collective knowledge; which will strengthen our decisions as a community and renew confidence in the future of our town. This will take a lot of hard work. I am committed to a "hands-on" approach as a Town Supervisor; to get involved and gather all the information I can about our town and the people who care about it. To get the ball rolling, the following is a summary of observations on an important issue. My goal is to encourage thought and debate, which I believe can elevate our community conversation. (Contact me at: voicesofspiderlake.com)

Town Clerk and Treasurer: Elected vs. Appointed

Topic:

On April 7th, the Town of Spider Lake will hold a referendum on the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer positions. The question at hand is whether to change these positions from elected; to appointed. A "No" vote means you are against this change – you want to continue voting for your preferred candidate. A "Yes" vote means you are in favor of changing to appointed positions, and putting the TOSL Board in charge of the appointment process. Why this change? A key justification seems to be expanding the geographic area for attracting eligible candidates. With elected officials, the candidate pool is limited to people who actually reside in the TOSL; whereas with appointees there is no residency requirement. A second reason, based solely on a few comments made by Board leadership, is a hope that it will improve teamwork in running the town. Admittedly this isn't much to go on, yet we all must decide: Will this change make the Town better, and if so, is it enough of a benefit to make me want to give up my vote?

Facts:

A summary of outside information on this subject provides the following:

- What other towns are doing: The Wisconsin Towns Association reports that, out of 1,249 towns in Wisconsin, there are currently: 800 elected clerks and 240 appointed clerks; 875 elected treasurers and 165 appointed treasurers; 102 elected clerk-treasurers and 126 appointed clerk-treasurers.
- Job duties and performance: The jobs of elected officials are defined by state law, requiring adherence to highly specific duties and responsibilities. Appointed individuals are basically employees, so their jobs would likely be defined by a job description and/or list of qualifications. Until there is a job description, and perhaps an idea as to how far people are willing to commute, it will be hard to estimate whether this change will yield more or better job applicants. Overall, hiring and firing is a simpler process for appointed officials.
- Estimated Cost: Discussions at the Board meetings imply this change will be cost neutral. Will the compensation package be attractive enough to interest strong candidates? No information has been made available on a compensation package for appointees, which might typically include salary, benefits, vacation and possibly overtime. This information would be useful in assessing compensation relative to the market, and in confirming there will be no cost increase.

Conversation:

We are left with many unanswered questions on this issue. What is clear, to anyone attending the Board meetings, is that we do have a problem with strained relations between certain key players. Given all the changes the Town is facing, maybe this could be expected; but will appointing the Town Clerk and Treasurer make it better? It seems doubtful. It will, however, reshape loyalties. If you are elected, your loyalty is to the voters, because the voters have the power to re-elect you. If appointed, your loyalty will be to the Board of Supervisors, because they can re-appoint, or terminate your appointment. With this added authority to hire and fire, the Board of Supervisors will be given greater power in terms of re-defining the Clerk and Treasurer jobs to their liking, and in enforcing a team effort. Those of us who vote "Yes" will be in favor of giving the Board this added authority. For my part, I will be voting "No." I think our Town Clerk and Treasurer jobs have been done very well by loyal people who care about the Town of Spider Lake, because they live here. I will vote "No" because I'd like to keep it that way. And, I don't want to give up my right to vote.

Paid for by Deb Amery for Town of Spider Lake Supervisor