

MIDDLETOWN

Democrat could take vacancy

While two supervisors wanted to interview interested candidates for the board vacancy, the other two said voters made their choice obvious in the election.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

After narrowly missing in his bid for election to the Middletown Board of Supervisors, Democrat Chuck Thompson could wind up there anyway.

Board member Robert McMonagle said Thompson has a good chance of being appointed as the replacement for Bucks County commissioner-elect Diane Marseglia, who resigned as supervisor Nov. 13 to get ready for the county job.

A motion by Republican supervisor Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer to appoint Thompson at that same Nov. 13 meeting failed 2-2, with Pflaumer and Democrat McMonagle voting yes and Republicans Jasper Caro and John J. Kelly III dissenting.

However, when a vacancy board consisting of the four supervisors and vacancy board Chairman Bill Cosen (a Democrat) meets next month in an attempt to break the deadlock, McMonagle believes Thompson will be appointed.

Thompson finished just behind winners McMonagle and Republican George Leonhauser in the Nov. 6 election for two supervisor seats. McMonagle was re-elected with 4,709 votes, Leonhauser had 4,145, Thompson 4,117 and Republican Russ Kavana 3,896.

"I believe we will be able to prevail upon the vacancy chair to appoint Chuck Thompson," said McMonagle. "Appointing a Democrat is not a priority for me at all. Chuck is the best person for the job, based on his volunteerism, community activism and overall intellectual capability."

The Courier Times was unsuccessful in its attempts to reach Cosen for comment. He was appointed to the vacancy chairman position by the supervisors at the beginning of the year.

Kelly and Caro said they would prefer gathering letters of interest and holding interviews for the vacancy. Pflaumer and McMonagle both said they didn't see the need for that since there was just an election for supervisor and Thompson, as the third highest vote getter, is the obvious choice.

"The people have made it easy on us and have spoken through their vote," said Pflaumer. "Who are we to go against the will of the people when they have identified who they want by their vote."

Thompson said he would be happy to sit on the board, however way he got there.

"I think the board is doing a terrific job and I hope to be a part of it," he said.

Thompson, 61, has not held an elective office. He runs a marketing consultant business, C & C Communications, with his wife, Christine, from their home in the Deep Dale West section of Levittown in Middletown.

Before that, Thompson was a Jersey Shore correspondent for the former Philadelphia Bulletin and then editor of the weekly newspaper Sentinel Ledger in Ocean City, N.J. He then went to work writing speeches and position papers for New Jersey state Sen. Jim Hurley before starting his own business.

A runner, Thompson and his wife organize benefit races to help those with disabilities.

Kelly said he didn't think the Nov. 13 vote to appoint Thompson was proper since Marseglia's resignation did not take effect until the end of that meeting. Kelly was up for reelection this year but chose not to run and will not be part of the new board that convenes Jan. 7.

"We should go through the interview process and see who is interested, like we did the last time when Mel Kardos resigned," Kelly said of the process to replace Marseglia. "There is a lot of things going on in the township now that will cost our residents a lot of money, and I just want the most qualified person for the job."

While Kelly said party affiliation would play no role in his choice for a new supervisor, Caro admitted to wanting a Republican. He said Kavana would be a good choice since he made a

respectable showing in the election and also had prior experience as a supervisor, from 1987 to 1995.

"I'd like to see someone with the same basic philosophies I have, and they tend to be Republicans," said Caro. "I don't know much about the guy [Thompson] and I think there are probably people out there who are more qualified, though he has been attending our budget meetings and seems interested and seems like a quality person."

Whoever is appointed to replace Marseglia would serve until the next municipal election in 2009, and would then have to run and win in that year's election to retain the seat.

Marseglia was a supervisor from 1997 to 2003 before losing in the 2003 election. She was elected again in 2005 and had more than four years left on her latest six-year term.

If the vacancy board fails to appoint a replacement, the matter would go to Bucks County Court, said township solicitor Mike Savona.