

More convenience and more time for comment

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Regarding the Jan. 8 "Thumbs Down" editorial about Middletown meetings: I have the utmost respect for former Supervisor Chuck Thompson, but his accusation that the new board is attempting to discourage residents from expressing their concerns or opinions is entirely without merit.

The reason the board changed the start time to 7:30 was to allow more residents to attend, not fewer. Feedback that I have received from many residents was that the previous starting time of 6:30 p.m. did not allow many of them to attend because of work schedules.

I think it's important for Mr. Thompson and others to realize that the days of 8-4 or even 9-5 jobs are over. Many of our residents' work schedules extend well past 5 p.m. and in some cases past 6 p.m. In addition many of our residents have significant commutes to their offices in areas such as New York City, Philadelphia and King of Prussia which then makes a 6:30 p.m. start time untenable.

As far as the comment about "staying late into the night to be allowed to speak" again I would disagree. First, public comment is allowed all throughout the meeting during the discussion of agenda items. So residents can comment on any agenda item that is discussed before it is voted on and approved or rejected. In addition, many times individuals are required to appear before the board in support of these agenda items sometimes on an overtime basis and sometimes at taxpayers' expense.

Finally, if you looked at the average amount of time needed to conduct the "business portion" of the supervisors meeting it would be approximately 60 to 90 minutes at most. So the latest public comment for non-agenda items would be scheduled for is 8:30-9 p.m. Is that really to be considered "late into the night"?

I will add that if the scheduled time designated for public comment becomes problematic for our residents due to the length of the meetings, I am confident that the board would take the necessary steps to address this concern.

Supervisor Pat Mallon

Middletown

Editor's note: The board has clarified its policy, allowing 30 minutes of public comment on non-agenda items at the beginning of meetings and, if necessary, again at the end.

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