

HIGHLAND LAKE RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS TO AVON TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR CANDIDATES MICHELE BAUMAN AND TERRY WILKE

Highland Lake - Several residents admitted they didn't know what the Township does.

How does the Township communicate it's work to the people? Can we improve on this communication, and how?

Mr. Wilke - It is a vexing problem because Avon has such a small tax base and budget compared to other townships. News letters are extraordinary expensive, somewhere between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per year, and something like what the Forest Preserve does costs over \$100,000. But we all understand that there are folks out there in need and they simply don't know we are here. Taxes, roads, and financial assistance are all within the wheelhouse of the Township and more people should know that. So we do try, with a web page and a Facebook page but many people just don't necessarily look in these places to find help. 211 has been a big help in this regard but even so, there is a need for something like an email or texting app where we could get out information on Township services, emergencies and even events like Touch-A-Truck.

Ms. Bauman - Under the current Supervisor, the Township communicates to our residents on Facebook page and a website with very limited information. Under my leadership, I intend to bring back the electronic newsletter for all residents with updated community information, Township events, a column dedicated to the Assessor's office for updates on how to access information as well as how to apply for any senior freezes and property assessment calendars. The Highway department will also have the availability to use the newsletter to inform residents of road improvements and construction areas. We will also address services available from the General Assistance and Emergency Assistance including other supports in our community. In addition, we will develop a system for feedback and questions that can be addressed by those specifically responsible for that information.

Also, we are planning to change the hours to assure availability for working families. This would be an addition of weekend times and evenings. We will be taping all of our meetings even after in-person meetings return. In addition to the meeting agendas and minutes, we will video all meetings and post them for public review. All open meeting documents provided for the Board during public meetings will also be posted for public review.

To further help our community, we plan on reaching out to the municipalities and homeowners associations to offer to speak to their residents on any issues or concerns they may have. Communication should not just be citizens contacting the Township. We need to be proactive to find out the concerns before they turn into problems.

Highland Lake - Several others expressed concern about the termination of the Township Highway Commissioner and giving our roads jobs to the County. **In general, how do you plan to spend funds allocated to the Township for roads? And, how will you oversee the substance and quality of the County's work regarding stormwater drainage, snow plowing, road maintenance and the monitoring/cleaning of the lake outlet?**

Ms. Bauman - Every member of the Avon Focused Slate is committed to maintain our incredible highway department. Commissioner Bob Kula will be offered an appointed position with the same oversight for the budget, hiring, and maintenance of the roads. We also intend to continue the intergovernmental agreements with the surrounding villages to assure the smooth clearing, salting, and plowing of the roads. Bob Kula has served Avon Township well and we are encouraged to have his

continued work and expertise. That includes the oversight and maintenance of the lake outlets. We do not intend to give any roads to the county.

Mr. Wilke - It has not been determined who will take over the Township road responsibilities. For now, Bob Kula, the existing road commissioner has verbally told me he would like to stay on and that makes the most sense to me at this time.

Highland Lake - Our neighborhood has a 200' path connecting Lake and Lakeside Avenues that is badly in need of repair. Would the Township consider giving our Property Owner's Association a grant for repair and maintenance of this and/or other common areas?

Mr. Wilke - If it is in the unincorporated area the answer is, yes of course. Currently the Township's commitment to improving the look and feel of our area is absolute and extends not just to open areas but also abandoned buildings, and the Millennium Trail which has presently stalled out at the Round Lake Area but we hope to rekindle that this year if all goes well.

Ms. Bauman - We are certainly prepared to discuss the problems and needs of the path's maintenance. One member of my slate has grant writing experience and the Township will work with the Homeowners Association to explore grant options. It will take all of us to look for options and find a solution that allows the path to be a useful and beautiful part of the community. The Highway Department is already planning the routine maintenance and repairs of the Rain Garden on North Circle Drive.

Highland Lake - We had some questions/comments about the Township Assessor's office. One resident shared their frustration with what they perceived to be poor customer service in that office, and another expressed a desire for better education and outreach from the Assessor. **What traits & skills make up a good Township Assessor, and how does your choice for Assessor measure up to these ideals?**

Ms. Bauman - Beyond the legal qualifications required to be an assessor, I believe that an assessor with experience in the community is essential. An assessor needs to work and live in our community with a varied background experiencing public and business venues with an eye for real estate, not just crunching assessment numbers. Our Assessor has a multifaceted experience from working as a firefighter, a real estate attorney and a resident. He has been limited in what he can do these last four years and we are excited about the work to come.

Assessor Chris Ditton has not been allowed access to the Township website and he is very excited to be able to add information to the website and in our electronic newsletter to help our property owners understand and learn about programs that could help them. Our residents need to know about how programs work, who is eligible and how to access programs such as Veteran Exemptions, Senior Freeze, and Senior Exemptions. He would also like to explain how every homeowner can do a comparison analysis so they can understand the potential for property appeals. Assessor Ditton wants to work with Property Attorneys and real estate agents to work together so homeowners can get realistic information and appraisals.

Mr. Wilke - Customer service and outreach are exactly the platform that Josh Cohen is running on. And I couldn't agree more, people understand that they have to pay taxes they just want them to be fair.

Highland Lake - Both candidates have talked about being environmentally friendly. How would each of you go about that? One resident was interested in the Township's electric car and wondered why a Township needs a car, electric or otherwise.

Mr. Wilke - The Township needs a car because there are meetings, diaper pickups, food pickups, general assistance travel, wellbeing checks, food deliveries etc. The important thing here is that we can use less fossil fuels (because electric cars are more efficient no matter where the power comes from) and cost the Township taxpayers much, much less. Electric cars need less maintenance, consume less energy and they can also get their energy from the sun via solar panels.

Ms. Bauman - Being "Environmentally friendly" is so much more than what we do to the Township Building. It is more about how we assist all our residents on knowing what services exist to be more environmentally friendly such as recycling, environmental programs with our garbage disposal company, and providing community wide service projects to help the clean-up and maintenance of our green spaces. In addition, the Township can reach out to other agencies to assist homeowners to learn about programs that already exist and help them access those programs. A good example are the biking clubs and bike share programs that would allow access to our open areas and enhancing the public use of those spaces. Our newsletter will be promoting those activities and areas that encourage the experience of the open spaces. Any service the Township uses will be reviewed with the critical eye of enhancing and protecting our environment. Another example is the work to eliminate the Zebra Mussel infestation. Our efforts will be steeped in the intentional preservation of our natural waterways and surrounding natural plants. We also intend to use the Avon Township's annual Service Fee from our Disposal Contracts to address the environmental issues within our community.

When Supervisor Wilke purchased the car for his use, I did some research. None of the Township Supervisors around us have vehicles that they drive and are owned by the Township. The only vehicles the Township should own would be vehicles for road work and for property inspections. None of these functions are performed by the Supervisor. I am going to drive my own car.

Highland Lake - As a Township leader over the last few years, what specific action are you most proud of - and - if you could have a "do-over", what would you have done differently?

Ms. Bauman - I think one of the things I am most proud of is how I have educated myself by paying and attending several workshops and classes on Open Meetings, budgeting, Township statutes and protocols. I faced a person that told us there was no money for training and decided it was my responsibility to the people I serve to make sure I knew what I was to do and could do to serve my community.

I am proud that I called for a complete review of the policies, insisted on a Finance Committee with members of the community, insisting on evidence and answers before a project was started or approved. I am proud that I was a part of a team that insisted on doing the will of the electors regarding the illegally purchased property. Making sure the evidence was available for the public to review and following through with potential litigation to protect the taxpayers' dollars.

What I wish I had done is relatively simple. I wish I didn't trust even in the face of conflicting evidence. I wish I wouldn't have given the Supervisor so many opportunities to do the right thing or make things right. Finally, I wish I would have sought a legal solution much earlier in the process. But even with what I wish I had of done, I am thankful for what this experience has taught me. If you make a mistake, own it and improve from it. In order to solve problems, you have to put in the work. It is critically important to listen and work with your board and the community. Together, solutions are possible.

Mr. Wilke - I am most proud of our volunteers at the Avon Cares Food Panty. Literally blood, sweat and tears have been shed to get us where we are now, 17,000 people served last year. I know there are people in need, that do not know we are here to help, and that is what bothers me the most. Honestly, I believe my biggest mistake was the people I ran with last time were simply not in it for the right reasons. I am not trying to be cute here, but this new group (Avon Community Engaged) is genuinely committed to making Avon a better place to live, and not just in it for themselves. They have got tough skin, and they aren't about to let themselves be bullied by the previous board, which was a real problem for the previous Supervisor, Lisa Rusch.