

Prenzler endorses Hawkins for Metro East Sanitary District Commissioner

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EDWARDSVILLE — Treasurer Kurt Prenzler would like to see Madison County Board member Helen Hawkins become the next commissioner with the Metro East Sanitary District.

“Helen cares about the people in the American Bottoms and has been active with the flood protection area since the 1960s,” Prenzler said. “I think she would best serve the people and do what’s best to protect them.

Prenzler said that Hawkins, D-Granite City, would be a good representative to fill the board vacancy left open by Andy Economy. Economy resigned last month amid allegations he failed to properly disclose financial interests with the MESD on his economic interest statement.

Hawkins has served on the county board since 2000. Her district is in Nameoki Township, which stretches from northern Granite City to Hartford.

Prenzler said in 2008 Hawkins was snubbed by the county board chairman for the position left open following the death of long-time MESD board member James Costello. The county board chairman named Frank J. Laub, who resigned from the county board after serving 22 years to take the position.

Prenzler said he's not the only one recommending Hawkins, but so is State Senator William Haine, D-Alton.

"The senator submitted a letter recommending Mrs. Hawkins due to her knowledge of the flooding in the region," Prenzler said. "He said 'she is a person whose honesty and work ethics is without question' and I would most certainly agree with that statement."

He said Hawkins is also receiving bipartisan support from Republican county board members as well as U.S. Congressman John Shimkus, R-Collinsville.

In 1972, Hawkins was praised by the governor for her work with the drainage and flooding in the American Bottoms. In 1974, she helped to dissolve the East Side Levee District and establish the Metro East Sanitary District Act.

Prenzler said he hopes the chairman will pick someone who is qualified for the job and not just someone who gives him campaign contributions. If appointed, Hawkins would no longer serve as a county board member as state law prohibits county board members from serving on more than one legislative board.

"I think Helen would do an outstanding job," he said.