

Outgoing Grafton mayor happy to end term on a positive note, despite a few bumps

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GRAFTON - Never in the history of the Village of Grafton have five board members not attended a meeting - until the April 18, 2017, meeting.

Outgoing Grafton Mayor Tom Thompson, whose term ends on May 2, 2017, said the lack of a quorum was unprecedented. Because of that lack of a quorum, the village could not take any action requiring a vote of the board. Thompson was able to use his authority to do some things, however. He scheduled a special board meeting for his last day of office (on May 2 at 7 p.m.). He also vetoed a measure from the board to spend \$200,000 on heated bathrooms at Grove Park in Grafton.

Thompson said the five board members who did not attend the meeting - Steve Hayes, Jerry Bauersach, Roger Crone, Sarah Carey and Flo Rowlings - did not follow the village's protocol. He said he was not completely sure their lack of attendance was related, but said he suspected as such.

"Each one had an excuse for not being there," Thompson said. "They said they had everything ranging from a headache to not feeling well to running late after visiting their mother. None of them called the village hall to say they were not going to be there, which is the usual protocol for the village. Sarah Carey said she called the village attorney, and I don't know why she did that instead of calling the village hall."

Hayes, however, did tender his resignation from the board that day at 1 p.m., which may have been a sufficient excuse for his lack of attendance. He had two more years to serve on the board, and his position will be filled by an appointment from incoming Grafton Mayor Rick Eberlin.

Thompson himself campaigned for Eberlin as well as the three new board members who were elected in the April 4, 2017, elections. He said those elections may have caused the absence of the four remaining board members, after Hayes tendered his resignation. Both Rowlings and Bauersach are ending their terms on May 2, and will be replaced by board members Thompson described as "more friendly" to his view of the village.

"Eberlin will be coming into a super majority," Thompson said. "There was just a lot of spending with the old board. Some would be acceptable, like new playground equipment in the park, but these items should be reviewed by taxpayers. The new board will call in a cross section of citizens to find out what the priorities will be when spending hundreds of thousands of dollars. Something like that should have been done by the old board, but it wasn't."

Newly-elected members of the Grafton Board include Dennis Day, Linda Tolle and Donna Smith, as well as whomever Eberlin appoints to replace Hayes. Thompson described the newly-elected representatives of the Village of Grafton as the "good guys," showcasing their acceptance of Grafton's tourism-based economy. He said the former board majority worked against Grafton's best interests.

"These are the people who tried to cut the number of liquor licenses and stop having outdoor music in Grafton," Thompson said. "They also didn't like the Grafton ferry for some reason, and voted against Grafton being a part of the port district. Thankfully, Grafton is currently in the port district."

That designation as part of the port district comes as a result of a referendum chosen by the people of Grafton. In many situations requiring a board vote, however, Thompson

said the majority of that mindset would win, considering their former five to one majority. That majority has dramatically shifted because of the April election, and Thompson believes that is the major reason why five board members did not attend the April 18 meeting.



Shifting majorities are also contributing to Thompson's positive outlook for the village he is leaving. He said sales taxes and overnight stay taxes compose as much as 60 percent of Grafton's revenue. He directly related that revenue with tourism and warned the policies of his former opponents would affect that tourism, and therefore cause revenue to have to be taken from other sources - including increased property taxes. Thompson did not raise property tax rates in Grafton during his eight years serving as its mayor.

"I'm sure that's part of the reason the good guys won the election," Thompson said of his former opponents' policies. "People looked at some of the things going on and thought enough was enough. Now they have the majority vote, and can do research into what we're doing with the money and why. Many citizens complained about irrational spending in Grafton. There seemed to be a lot of decisions made, which, in my opinion, favored certain individuals and businesses."

That special board meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on May 2, 2017, at the Grafton Village Hall. Thompson said he will deliver a "very positive" farewell address before giving the town to the new administration of Eberlin.