Written by Carol Pomeday
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Howells says he wants to be accessible, but move sparks debate at meeting

“Do not tell me what you think I want to hear, tell me exactly the way it is, no twists, spins or lies,” Village President Richard Howells told the Village Board and a handful of residents at his first meeting Tuesday.

His appointments to various committees and commissions were unanimously approved. He appointed himself as chairman of the Finance and Personnel Committee Former chairman Trustee Vickie Boehnlein was appointed pro-tem and remains a member of the committee.

The board also approved advertising for a village clerk to replace Jamie Cecil, whose resignation is effective April 26. The deadline for applicants is Friday, April 29.

The opening will also be listed with on-line job boards and the village’s Web site. Previous applicants for the job will also be contacted.

Treasurer Kelli Romanini, who was hired in February, will assume Cecil’s duties along with her own until a new clerk is hired. Two part-time office employees will be allowed to work up to 30 hours, the board decided.

But it was Howells’ desk in the northwest corner of the main room in Village Hall that prompted the most discussion. He brought the desk and chair from his home that day.

Gail Kowalkowski, wife of the former village president, questioned why the office was set up without approval by the board, adding his presence and the discussions could disrupt the office.

Village Atty. Gerald Antoine said Howells has the right to do that, noting other villages in the area have an office for the president.

“I’m not here to interfere with anybody’s job,” Howells said. “If anyone has an objection, all they have to do is tell me and I’m out of here.

“I think this would be a step forward to get things done instead of delaying and delaying. For instance, one person came in today and wants to start a village garden. I can check if there is any village property that could be used and refer it to a committee.”

Boehnlein said some employees may be uncomfortable approaching Howells with concerns. It was suggested a trustee be appointed who employees can go to with concerns.