

Trustees sidestep a difficult choice

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Despite getting three applicants, board agrees to leave vacancy open

Faced with some tough personal choices, members of the Fredonia Village Board decided last week to leave a vacant trustee seat open.

The board vacancy was created in spring when former trustee Chuck Lapicola was elected village president.

After Lapicola took office, the village advertised the available board position, which expires in April 2012.

A May 19 deadline for applications drew three candidates, although two had complications. That field included Joe Short, who was unseated by Lapicola, and Lisa

Dohrwardt, the wife of Trustee Don Dohrwardt, in addition to Kim Crowley, 534 Fir St.

Another candidate applied for the post after the stated deadline

At last week's board meeting, village officials expressed reluctance to act on the appointment for varying reasons.

"When I was campaigning for village president, I heard from residents saying they didn't want to see me appointing someone they just voted out of office," Lapicola said of the prospect of appointing Short.

"I wouldn't have a problem with Joe serving on the board if the public voted him in."

Don Dohrwardt said such appointments run contrary to the democratic process.

"This is always a tricky situation for an elected body, to choose its own members. If people are truly interested in an office, they should take out nomination papers and get elected," Don Dohrwardt said.

"For us to put a man back in office just because he filled out an application may not be the right thing to do."

On a more personal level, Dohrwardt said he would not feel right about voting to appoint his wife to the position. He said he would abstain from a vote that involved the possible appointment of his wife.

Trustee Mark Edbauer agreed that appointing trustees is not well-received by the public.

"It seems like we are sidestepping the will of the public," Edbauer said.

He suggested the board position be left vacant until the next village election.

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At that, Trustee Scott Ehaney asked whether it would seem “disengenuous” to seek names from potential candidates, then not appoint anyone.

“I’ve applied to many jobs where they called me back and said they’ve decided not to fill the position at this time,” Edbauer said.

A motion to hold the position open indefinitely failed on a 4-2 vote. The board then decided to leave the seat unfilled until spring, with Ehaney opposed.