Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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Name: Jim Melichar
Age: 49
Address: 3990 Willow La.
Family: Married, two children, one grandson.
Occupation: Self-employed dairy farmer.
Education: Port Washington High School Class of 1980; Lakeshore Technical Institute.
Elected offices: Town supervisor since 2001; Town Plan Commission member since 1992.
Organizations: First Congregational Church, Port Washington; vice president Ozaukee County Dairy Promotion; Lake Shore Technical College Advisory Committee for farm business management; board member Kettle Lake Cooperative; member Ozaukee County land Preservation Board advisory committee; president Dairy Herd Information Association board of Ozaukee and Washington counties.

Name: Lee Schlenvogt (Inc.)
Age: 52
Address: 4250 Hwy. H.
Family: Married, two children.
Occupation: Self-employed dairy farmer.
Education: Port Washington High School Class of 1976; Milwaukee Area Technical College.
Elected offices: Town supervisor for six years; appointed town chairman in 1994 and elected ever since; appointed to Ozaukee County Board in 2008 and elected ever since.
Organizations: Member, former president and church council member at Friedens Evangelical Church, Port Washington; president Ozaukee County 4-H Foundation from 2005-2007; board of directors Ozaukee County 4-H Foundation from 2001 to 2007; chairman Ozaukee County Citizens Advisory Committee for Farmland Preservation; member and former board member of Belgium Lions Club; member Ozaukee County Masonic Lodge; member Ozaukee County Farm Bureau; Wisconsin Towns Association.

Melichar calls Schlenvogt's elected posts in Port township, county a

conflict, but Schlenvogt says they benefit community

The similarities between the two candidates for Town of Port Washington chairman are striking — both incumbent Lee Schlenvogt and challenger Jim Melichar, a town supervisor, are dairy farmers and longtime town residents. Preserving the community's rural character is a prime concern for each of them.

Melichar said he decided to seek the chairman's seat after a decade in office in large part because people asked him to.

"With Lee being elected to the County Board and having a lot of other priorities, I thought it would be the right time for me to step up," he said, noting a number of residents have expressed concern about Schlenvogt's dual role as town chairman and county supervisor.

"When you have two commitments, to the town and county, it's difficult. I think the town needs a little separation there to do what's right for the residents."

His son Adam recently bought into the family farm, freeing up time that he can devote to the chairman's job, Melichar added.

Schlenvogt, however, said the two positions complement each other.

"I think it's an asset," he said. "I have access to a lot of information through the county that I use to benefit the town. And it's nice when the (town) board has a question for their county board representative, and the representative is there."

His position on the County Board has given him the chance to hear various opinions and meet other people who can help the township, Schlenvogt said, and allows him to serve as a conduit of information to both his board and community and to other town chairmen.

Schlenvogt, a member of the county's Farmland Preservation Committee, said the town needs to continue working on this initiative, although some proposed changes on the county level may be stymied by the state's financial troubles.

To comply with the proposed county changes, the town needs to "tweak" its ordinance, Schlenvogt said, noting the cluster developments allowed by the town in a conservation zoning subdivision are too dense.

"I don't know how detailed we have to get," he said. "We need to get more information."

Melichar, a member of the county's Land Preservation Board, said the town carefully considered its conservation preservation ordinance before adopting it and shouldn't change it just because the county wants it to.

"We spent seven years working on it because the county wasn't doing anything," he said. "I

don't want to just rewrite it."

Local residents should have input into any changes, Melichar added.

One of the biggest challenges facing local government today is finances. The Town of Port Washington stands to lose 37.4% of its shared revenue and 3% of its transportation aid, a total of $11,841, under Gov. Scott Walker's proposed budget bill.

Dealing with that shortfall will be a focus for the township.

Schlenvogt said the town has few options, noting most of the services it provides — fire protection, a trash and recycling collection site and maintenance of the town hall — are fixed.

"Guess what's left?" he said. "We just won't be able to do as many road projects as before."

There have been suggestions that the town consider privatizing its roadwork, particularly snowplowing. The town currently contracts with the Ozaukee County Highway Department for the work.

It's something the Town Board should study and perhaps put to a referendum vote, Schlenvogt said.

"I really don't feel the board should just make that choice," he said. "There's too much at stake. I'm not saying it's good, and I'm not saying it's bad. It is a big step, and there are a lot of things that need to be researched."

The town will also look at privatizing cutting road ditches, Schlenvogt said.

"We're going to take it slow and easy," he said. "We want to make sure it's right for the town."

Melichar agreed that the town should look into the concept, both for snowplowing and road maintenance, but said it's too early to make a decision.

"That's something that's going to take a lot of thinking and studying," he said. "We should maybe take a look at it."

The town should also work with Ozaukee County to see what its options are and whether it can help the county reduce the cost of the service, Melichar said.

He said he would also like to explore the possibility of allowing town officials who have heavy equipment to provide services to the township, such as brush cutting or removing tree limbs that fall on roads.

This work could be done at what would likely be a reduced cost and perhaps a more timely basis, Melichar said.

"There are a lot of things we should look at," he said. "Privatizing or working with the county or partnering with other townships for services. If you think outside the box, it opens all sorts of things we haven't considered."

Melichar also said the town should make a point of reaching out to businesses, especially those in the Knellsville area, to ensure the community is doing all it can to retain them.

"We've never really sat down with the business owners to see what their needs are," he said. "You'd hate to see them leave. They're a big part of the town tax base."

Both candidates said they are willing to spend the time needed to lead the town into the future without compromising all that residents treasure.

Schlenvogt pointed to his years of leadership in the town, in particular his work leading to a border agreement between the town and city of Port, and his willingness to work with residents as reasons people should vote for him.

"I just love the town," he said. "I love politics. I love the people here. I've seen a lot of change, and I've worked hard to have the town the way it is."

Melichar also cited his years of experience on the Town Board, his desire to take a fresh look at solutions that may not be obvious when dealing with problems and his dedication to the township.

"My focus is on the town," he said. "I'm not looking to be on the County Board or any other political position."