

Town Topics

by Richard Craft, Supervisor, Town of Wawarsing

The Last Hurrah

Everyone, at some time in their life, has said, "If I were in charge, I'd do such-and-such." Well, I took this statement one step further and, when I was asked in 1999 to run for Supervisor, I took the plunge. To the surprise of many, I won and have willingly served as your CEO for four years. I must have done something right because I was unopposed in 2002. Now it is time to say goodbye.

I brought to this office my life-long residence, a long history of family involvement in community affairs, leadership demonstrated in the organizations I belonged to, a successful business track record, a knowledge of community affairs, a personal relationship with many of our residents from all parts of our town, and a commitment to a successful future knowing that economic growth is just around the corner.

I have dined at the Governor's mansion, church suppers, and countless chicken barbecues – listening, learning, and looking for ways to improve our town. I have resurrected projects that have been dormant, in some cases for over a decade. I saw to improving the working conditions at **Town Hall**, strengthened many inadequate regulations, helped in the completion of a new personnel policy, a project that had been stalled for many years. I recognized the importance of future growth at the **LHJ Airport** and took this project from an overgrown hayfield to an income-producing town asset. I supervised the complete renovation of the former *Napanoch Elementary School* and turned it into a modern day care center. This, too, will bring income into the town in 2004. I personally have supervised the completion of the *Napanoch Sidewalk Project*, with construction to begin in the early spring of 2004. I was instrumental in encouraging the residents of Napanoch to develop their own public interest group, a movement that has already contributed in the upgrading of that community's spirit and influence. I supervised the improvement of services at **Lippman Park** in the form of new bathrooms, playground equipment, and acquiring additional donated land. Working conditions at the transfer station were also improved during the last two years.

Working together with our grant writer, Mark Blauer, we were able to secure grants of over \$3 million for our local industry and hospital. In addition, several large grants have been given to the Airport for upgrading its services. As a member of the Kingston Ulster Empire Zone, I was able to secure certification for *Ellenville Vending*, *Gillette Creamery*, three projects at *JM Originals*, the *Creative Stages Day Care Center*, and *Optimum Windows*.

And, finally, I tackled the biggest and toughest project of all, namely the *Napanoch Water District*. The project was almost in limbo when I came on board and had progressed too far to turn back. At one time, the entire project was closed down, but gradually, through hard work, it took new life with new engineers and better control, and today people can now drink from their own system.

In all, over sixty projects have been completed during my four years as Supervisor. The reason for all this activity is to prepare our town for future industrial growth. With services such as water and sewer in place, we can now expect inquiries to be made by those wishing to enter into what is called a "shovel ready" situation.

President Harry Truman's famous saying, "The buck stops here," can also be applied to the Supervisor's office. The Supervisors office can also be designated as the place

where the "flak" stops. I've experienced all kinds of human emotion from vulgarity to claims of financial impropriety. There have even been demands that I ignore the law in favor of the demands of an angry few. And yet, there are times when kindness is shown in a note or personal word of thanks, which makes it all seem worthwhile.

Unfortunately for the Supervisor, tough decisions have to be made which inevitably will not satisfy everyone. The Supervisor tries to be sensitive to the needs of the individual, but also must keep the needs of the entire township in focus and make his or her decisions based on the overall good. Every person, including the Supervisor, will make unintentional mistakes and try to correct them. It has always been my desire to do the best job I could, and I suppose I speak for many others who have occupied my position. Please give your new Supervisor a little slack; he needs it.

I will miss being Supervisor. I believe my leadership has brought much needed direction to our community. The new Board needs time to settle in because they still face many tough decisions. I wish them well.

I am deeply honored by the trust you put in me during these past four years. It has been quite a trip. Whether I return to the political arena is uncertain at this time. I may find I am having too much fun being semi-retired. In any case, my family will be pleased to see more of me, as will my patients. Even my flowers will benefit from greater personal care.

In closing, I would like to thank my wife of fifty years for her constant support and love especially during these past four years. I would also like to thank my Councilpersons, Department heads, and the employees at **Town Hall** for their support. And finally, I'd like to thank each and every one of our residents for paying me the ultimate compliment in being your Supervisor. I have been blessed.

To our new administration may I say...

"Keep Wawarsing Rising." Bye for Now. 

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