

Honorable John Clarkson, Supervisor
Honorable Joann Dawson, Town Board Member
Honorable Kyle Kotary, Town Board Member
Honorable Jeffrey Kuhn, Town Board Member

January 5, 2012

Re: Interim Board Appointment

Dear Mr. Clarkson, Ms. Dawson, Mr. Kotary and Mr. Kuhn,

We write as town residents to share our recommendations with respect to making an interim appointment to the Town Board seat vacated by Mark Jordan. We urge you to make this appointment on the basis of qualifications and experience, as well as a willingness to work collaboratively with others on the board to achieve consensus on Town issues.

Few would argue that in the year ahead, Bethlehem faces unprecedented challenges. The need to increase our economic development efforts, address infrastructure needs, and support needed services will not be easy against the backdrop of diminished resources.

In this context, the choice to fill this vacancy is extremely important. We recommend the following process and criteria for your consideration:

- Select an individual with strong general knowledge, qualifications, experience and character, so as to reassure all residents that they will be fairly represented, even though they have not had a chance to choose a candidate through election.
- We encourage you to select someone who is knowledgeable about town government and its services, and prepared to help you make group decisions on the significant issues you will need to address. Carefully consider the professional or volunteer expertise and background potential candidates would bring to Board discussions and what their general approach to reaching consensus on Town issues would be.
- We support selection of an individual who will serve for the remainder of this year only, and agree not to seek election this coming November. Why? Serving for a year via appointment creates an overwhelming advantage for the incumbent, making it more difficult and possibly discouraging others to run. This could result in Bethlehem voters being denied a choice among

candidates competing on a level playing field this November.

Because you will also be evaluating candidates using other criteria such as their knowledge, background, ideas and other qualifications, you (and town residents) can also be assured that this individual indeed will have a strong stake in the results of their votes and other actions. There is no reason to think that such an interim appointee who is otherwise qualified by these criteria, would not also be committed to working with other board members to move forward with long-term sustainable solutions.

- We do not support appointment of an officer of a political party committee. Town board members should represent all the citizens of Bethlehem, not just those enrolled in their party and the presence of a political party leader on the Board conflicts with that expectation. In addition, the appointment of a party officer also creates the potential for pressure and undue influence, because other Board members will eventually need to seek his or her endorsement for any future run for office.
- Similarly we are concerned about the potential conflict of interest in appointing someone who holds a top position in a neighboring municipality, one that could compete with Bethlehem for economic development investment as well as state and federal grants.

Lastly we urge you to arrange for a public forum to vet candidates with respect to their background, qualifications, and ideas, which would also allow the public to hear from those wishing to be considered for this interim appointment. Such an open and transparent process would be an excellent way to begin your work together as a new board.

Achieving success for our town's residents will necessitate each of you to work together based on principles of mutual respect, cooperation and collaboration. Filling this board vacancy provides an opportunity to put those principles into practice right from the start. With that accomplished we have confidence that you can continue to move forward operating within this framework, resulting in many positive outcomes in 2012.

Sincerely,

Keith W. Bennett

Delmar

Patrick J. Bulgaro
Slingerlands

Robert P. Miller
Delmar

Paul and Maureen Cagino
Glenmont

Terry Moskowitz
Delmar

Lisa Callahan and Mark Bryant
Delmar

Chan Noether
Delmar

Lois Dorman
Slingerlands

Ellie Prakken and John Smolinsky
Delmar

Lisa and Bruce Finkle
Delmar

Ross and Marge Prinzo
Glenmont

John Guastella
Delmar

Joseph P. Richardson
Slingerlands

Susan and Tom Hager
Glenmont

Pam and Don Robbins
Slingerlands

Linda Jasinski
Selkirk

William Seyler
Delmar

Judi E. Kehoe
Delmar

Hank and Carolyn Steadman
Delmar

Mark Joseph Kelly
Delmar

Judy Thompson
Delmar

Jean Kerr
Delmar

Keith Wiggand
Glenmont

Kathleen L. Martens
Glenmont

Lois Wilson
Glenmont

Maureen McLeod
Delmar

Barbara Zaron
Slingerlands

Jan and Sam Messina
Delmar