

From the Mayor...

December 4, 2015

Twenty years ago, I received a call from Mayor Jeff Plank asking me to consider an appointment as a citizen representative to the Warsaw Plan Commission. I was extremely busy with an active family of four children, my full time optometry practice, and a multitude of local boards and organizations that I was already involved with. Jeff was very convincing. He told me I should consider giving back to this great community and that it was only one meeting a month.

I accepted his appointment and now, twenty years later, I find myself making those same calls. Fortunately, I remember what it was like to be on the other end of the call and I am most appreciative when good citizens consider my request but even more appreciative when they accept! As most terms generally expire at the end of the year, the search for good board members is a high priority in December.

Our local municipal boards regulate the departments they serve and make ordinance and budget recommendations to the city council. Finding citizens to serve on these boards is often challenging. When I interview candidates, I only ask three things: Are they are willing to serve for the good of the entire community, will they prepare for meetings, and will they keep an open mind. Because state statutes dictate the makeup and function of municipal boards that oversee taxpayer-funded functions, other restrictions may also apply. Political party balance or the imposition of residency restrictions may also limit who may serve.

The three-member Board of Public Works is an administrative board that executes the business of the city. The Advisory Plan Commission, which will expand to nine members this year, uses the Comprehensive Master Plan to guide local municipal planning and zoning requests. The Board of Zoning Appeals is a quasi-judicial board that renders decisions when requests are made for exceptions from current planning standards.

The Parks and Recreation Board, Oakwood Cemetery Board, the Board of Aviation Commissioners, and the Warsaw-Wayne Township Fire Territory Board make budget and purchasing recommendations, regulate, and advise the council on affairs of their respective departments. The Redevelopment Commission oversees economic development activity, tax increment finance districts, and makes recommendations to the Council on specific projects.

In addition to the municipal boards, there are also many local community boards, state government agencies, regional transportation councils, and regional economic development organizations that all require board participation from local government. These boards all have very specific requirements that are dictated by their organizational bylaws.

When Mayor Plank first called, I never realized the critical importance these boards played in the growth and development of our City. This year I will oversee the appointment of over 40 individuals to about half as many boards. Despite the myriad of restrictions and limitations, the goal is to identify new leaders who are willing to get involved and provide fresh new ideas to move our community forward.

I hope if you are called to serve, you will accept the invitation. I know you will enjoy the experience and benefit from your service.

Sometimes all it takes is a little nudge to get involved. Thanks, Jeff!