

## MIDDLETOWN

## Supervisors question hiring of consultant

*The board chairman said the recent departures of the township's top two administrators and other special circumstances justified the hiring.*

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Two Middletown supervisors are questioning why the township needs a \$75-an-hour financial consultant when it already has a finance director.

Jasper Caro and George Leonhauser asked at a recent meeting why consultant Kim Kleinguenther was needed and why she already had started work before the board voted to approve her appointment.

Caro and Leonhauser voted against the appointment at the July 8 meeting, while board Chairman Robert McMonagle, Chuck Thompson and Kathy Heuer voted to approve. Kleinguenther had started work days earlier, helping out new finance director Donna Caracappa and doing other finance-related work for the township.

While conceding that Kleinguenther's appointment probably should have come before the supervisors earlier, McMonagle defended her initial hiring by former township manager Richard Gestrich. "It's within the township manager's purview to hire contractors to perform work for the township," said McMonagle.

Special circumstances justified Kleinguenther's appointment, McMonagle added.

Caracappa, the former tax collector in Penndel, was hired April 20 for \$56,575. She replaced Betsy Reukauf, who left to become finance director in Falls.

Reukauf was going to work on a consultant basis in her off hours to help Caracappa, but then had to withdraw from that arrangement. Assistant Township Manager Frank Farry resigned, and Gestrich left to take a job in Florida.

So, Caracappa's support network for getting fully trained in the Middletown position has rapidly dwindled, McMonagle pointed out. "She was put in a rather precarious position," McMonagle said.

Kleinguenther is the former finance director in Newtown Township. Among her duties in Middletown is helping finish a township audit that is past due, township solicitor Mike Savona said.

There is \$11,000 allotted in Middletown's budget for Kleinguenther's work, but her services might not end up costing that much, McMonagle said.

"Kim will spend some of her time in training [Caracappa] but will also take up some of the other workload," he said. "Kim is very up to the job. Her work product is impeccable, and I think this will be very short term."

Leonhauser said Kleinguenther shouldn't do any work connected to the township-owned Middletown Country Club because she was the financial consultant for the country club's former operating company, Mitchland Inc.

She then was part of a team that submitted a proposal to run the country club. Her team lost out to another company formed by Rick Begley, general manager at the country club under Mitchland Inc. After repeated questioning from Thompson, Leonhauser was unable to explain exactly how Kleinguenther's past history with the country club would be a conflict.