

Chief objection

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New board should make new appointments.

We hope Middletown citizens didn't awaken to potentially bad news today. The ruling majority on the township's Board of Supervisors was given the green light Monday by a Bucks County judge to change the way the police department is administered. A vote changing back to a police chief from a public safety director was expected to be taken at Tuesday night's meeting.

But that's not what should concern citizens.

The board's three Democrats, two of whom will soon be replaced by Republicans, said they also intended to appoint Acting Public Safety Director Patrick McGinty as the new chief. The incoming Republican majority naturally wants to make the appointment and McGinty isn't necessarily their man. They want to do the sensible thing - advertise and interview.

They argue, also sensibly, that they won the right to make such a big decision by virtue of voters' decision to throw out the Democrats. To that end, the Republicans stopped a vote on the issue last week via a court injunction. Having pondered the issue, Judge Clyde Waite Monday said the current board has the right to change back to a police chief system and also to appoint a new chief - but he cautioned that making the appointment could be legally perilous and personally expensive.

"Doing so could be viewed as an unauthorized attempt to bind a future board," Waite said, adding that it could be open to a legal challenge for which the Democrats could be personally liable.

Hopefully, that was enough to scare off the soon-to-be ex-supervisors. Either way, we implore the incoming Republicans to let it rest. There's enough work to do for the future without getting mired in the past.

McGinty has a long and honorable history with the police department, and he's been running the place on an interim basis. There's no reason to believe that he won't continue to do a good job.

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