

Judge listens to voters

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Injunction properly stops police chief vote.

At least a judge listened to the voters. That's something the lame duck majority on the Middletown Board of Supervisors refused to do, what with their plans to make a major change in township government by appointing a police chief in place of a public safety director. The vote was to have taken Tuesday, with a subsequent vote to name acting public safety director Patrick McGinty the new chief.

Bucks County Judge Clyde Waite put a stop to that when he issued an 11th-hour injunction ordering the supervisors to delay a vote on a proposed ordinance until the issue is debated in court. The proposal, if approved, would change the township from a public safety director system back to a police chief.

The injunction delaying a vote was requested by supervisors-elect Patrick Mallon and Drew Kreiling, who - along with Republicans Tom Gallagher and Supervisor George Leonhauser - will form a new Republican majority on the board. The incoming majority is not opposed to resurrecting a police chief system, but wants to decide who gets the job.

It's a reasonable desire and a logical position, considering voters elected the new majority. Why should the outgoing board make one of the most important decisions local officials can make when citizens essentially have issued a vote of no confidence to the current board?

"The voters elected us by a good majority," Mallon said, "and it's not right for the present board to usurp the authority voters placed in us by making the most important hire a township can make before we take office."

Said outgoing Supervisor Chuck Thompson, "We have a job to do until we leave office."

That's true. But that job should include abiding by voters' wishes, which they've made very clear.

Caught in the middle of all this is Lt. McGinty, the department's most seasoned officer, with 35 years. McGinty is a viable candidate for the job, if not an outstanding candidate. But his credentials aren't the issue. The issue is this: the voters have spoken.

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