

IN MY OPINION**Caroline Porter****Enough already with the Hallberg affair**

When the Knox County Board decided not to renew county administrator Alan Hallberg's contract, ending November 30, we all promised not to make any personal remarks about Hallberg. He expressed concern about this when he was informed of our decision. The county board has kept its promise, and Hallberg has thanked us by bashing the board in the daily papers. His latest quote in the Peoria Journal Star was that his office was created in chaos, existed in chaos and ended in chaos.

I take exception to that, especially how it ended. We tried to be professional and keep our mouths shut. Hallberg chose the other route. Compare his complaining to the attitude of the first Woodford County Administrator, in the job for 13 months, who is terminated as of November 19. He said that when he took the job he knew there would be a "high mortality rate." The Woodford County board had voted 8-7 for the county administrator position - hardly a ringing endorsement for the idea. But Greg Seefeldt went on to say that keeping the job through November would allow him to "finish what he started," including the county 2006 Budget.

"It's in the taxpayers interest for a smooth transition and to finish up the budget process," said Seefeldt. "Between now and my last day at work, I'll be working around the clock to do the best job I can to show the importance of the position."

Now that's professionalism and class. Then there is Hallberg's approach. He refuses to work on the budget or assist with ongoing labor negotiations. He won't return phone calls. I am extremely disappointed in Hallberg's lack of professionalism. It's not easy to fire someone or be fired, but it happens.

The job as the first county administrator would be tough. For background, Hallberg had talked to the Henry County Administrator and others about the job, and when he was hired four years ago, I was not on the board but believe the expectations of the Knox

County Board were made quite clear to him. But in a job like this, one has to win the trust of the county board and administrators. One has to be outgoing, friendly, show a lot of initiative and communicate well. This is not Hallberg's personality. When I was elected last year, I told him I thought he should play a bigger role in county board business than he had been allowed to do and I would support him any way I could. I was pleased that he began to sit in front of the board with the chairman and play a larger role in our meetings.

Hallberg is competent, but never really cut out for this kind of job. He met with department heads once a month, but other than that, didn't have much to do with courthouse employees, elected officials and other administrators. His responsibilities should have increased with the dissolving of county board committees this year. Rather, it mainly increased the responsibilities of the chairman and the

County Clerk who by law is the Secretary of the Board. I supported eliminating committees, but have changed my mind. The current system gives board members too little responsibility and meeting twice a month is an unnecessary workload for the County Clerk and chairman.

I sense that most of the board members want to continue the position of County Administrator. I have been an advocate of the position since the 1980s. When and if we hire another, every board member will have to make a commitment to support and cooperate with him or her. And the new county administrator has to understand that he is operating in a political environment and a complicated county government structure, where his main asset will be his ability to influence and communicate with others.

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