

## Wimpy County Board tosses political hot potato to new nursing home administrator

And what a dirty trick it is. As if Marianne Wiesen, beginning her job as nursing home administrator on January 1, hasn't enough on her plate to solve financial problems of the nursing home, the county board at its last meeting, tries to place her into a lose-lose situation. The board abdicated its responsibility by refusing to decide whether to dissolve the ad hoc nursing home referendum advisory committee, magnanimously leaving that decision to Mrs. Weisen.

That committee was formed by the Knox County Board, with the recommendation of the former nursing home committee chair, Bill Abel, and it is an advisory committee to the board, not the nursing home administrator. My advice to Mrs. Wiesen is to throw the potato right back to the board. She should not be put in that position.

The nursing home referendum advisory committee is a group of citizens, residents and nursing home employees, who no doubt have the best interests of the nursing home at heart, but really have no authority or background to be so involved in the finances and development of the nursing home. The authority of nursing home business, finances and development has been confusing and the results have been viewed as largely unsuccessful, as evidenced by the firing of nursing home director Ben Perkins and Dr. Abel not being re-elected to the board.

I made the motion to dissolve the committee. A motion to postpone the decision won 8-7. My reasons are: 1) we have just eliminated all the county board committees in order to streamline authority and county business and we should view this committee in the same light.

2) The nursing home administrator, county administrator and the board should be capable of deciding how to spend the nursing home referendum money. In fact, I imagine the voters counted on that. Mrs. Wiesen has directed this kind of nursing home renovation and has many ideas of what can and should be done. She should be handed a clean slate by this board and not have to deal with anyone but the county administrator and the county board. In the future, she may want to form her own advisory committee which could assist her in her duties but have no official capacity with the county board.

3) The referendum committee has worked long and hard, but it's my opinion (note the



title of this column) they have proposed some extravagant and impractical ideas, such as an additional \$5 million dollar bond issue and tearing down the entire nursing home in order to get extra funds.

During my term on the county board twelve years ago I mentioned the words "sell" and "nursing home" in the same sentence and was immediately pounced upon by the nursing home union, county board committee and others. I believe the nursing home must be self-supporting and have said so for years. However, I did vote for the referendum four years ago and was most interested to see that 60 per cent of voters are willing to support the nursing home with our tax dollars. In my recent campaign for the county board I made a commitment to keeping the nursing home open and successful. I believe the hiring of Marianne Wiesen is a terrific beginning.

New board members were allowed to sit in on the executive meeting of the former county board when they heard Mrs. Wiesen speak and voted unanimously to hire her. Her background and personality are impressive and she is eager to try out new ideas. She should have nothing standing in her way to do just that. At this point, I believe the ad hoc advisory committee would be more of a hindrance than a help to her.

Our new nursing home administrator should toss that hot potato right back to the county board.

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