

The first Germantown town board meeting of 2008

Last year, we had a boring town board and lively meetings. This year, in their first meeting, with two new members, we had a lively town board and a boring meeting!

Be careful what you wish for.

Kay Abraham's minutes are an accurate version of the evening's activities. The first thing we learned, thanks to new councilmember Jerry Smith, is that a 'non-meeting' of the board takes place in the half-hour preceding the official meeting. This is the time they review the bills, so that when the supervisor calls for a motion to pay bills, the council members have already gone over them. Hmmm. A member of the audience asked if this wasn't a meeting, since a quorum was present. The view expressed by the supervisor and the attorney was that since they didn't discuss the bills among themselves, it's "OK."

This sounds fishy. On the other hand, if you've watched the board discuss the budget, you would not want to watch the board discuss the bills. One or two of us will wander over to town hall, a half-hour before the next board meeting and report back to you.

Now for the good news, Ellen Epstein has been appointed to chair the planning board. Kerry Abela is a new member interested in civic affairs. No better replacement for Joel Craig could have been found. Ellen is knowledgeable and wise. In her work as a planner and in her home vocation of raising sheep, she embodies all the values we hold dear in Germantown.

On the zoning board, Don Westmore has been appointed a new member. Don comes to Germantown from ten years as head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Tokyo. He was a long-time career officer in the U.S. Foreign Service, mostly stationed in Asia. He is a thoughtful, good humored man and most important, a patient man, a quality he will need on that board. The other new member is William Muirhead, with whom I am not acquainted.

Ellen has also been appointed a member of the rezoning committee. The committee will be chaired by Joel Craig. The other members are Grace Lamberta, Donald Crews, Rao Gaddipati and Tom Bower. The appointment of the rezoning committee begs the issue of the adoption of the comprehensive plan. The plan is the guide to the future of the town; most of it is not about zoning. The comprehensive plan should go on the town board's agenda and be adopted. Neither the plan nor the rezoning effort impede or conflict with each other. About the rezoning committee, we will all be watching with great interest. With Joel at the helm, the process will be reasoned and fair.