

## **Wharton, Keller to seek re-election**

Referendum leader Steve Kennedy and ex-employee also intend to join race

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By *CARLA SMITH*  
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Prairie Township Trustees Teresa Keller and Joe Wharton announced last week that they will run for a second term.

Resident and business owner Steve Kennedy and resident and former township employee John Holderby told ThisWeek that they also intended to run for a trustee seat.

"First and foremost, I feel a sense of responsibility to continue with promoting the sustainability and viability of our township," Keller said.

Keller and Wharton have served as trustees since January 2002.

"We need to follow through with the sewer and water project," Wharton said. "We would really like to see that finished."

Keller said the township currently has what she called top-notch services in the fire department, road department, zoning department and administration.

"It takes work and planning to continue those services to the community," Keller said. "We are in a time when our survival as a township is dependent partly on not allowing Columbus to annex any more of our township.

"My goal is to have the city of Columbus provide the township with sewer and water without annexation to those parts of the township that need it," Keller said.

If Columbus doesn't follow through, the township will attempt to provide its own, she said.

"I and many other citizens feel that as a township we are better able to plan and direct the future of the western part of the county in which we are situated, including protecting the Darby and Hellbranch Creek," she said.

Keller said the township has a plan and she wants to see that plan implemented. It will include the forward thinking of what is known as the Comprehensive Plan Committee, she said, as well as recommendations that could come from the Darby Accord, if those suggestions allow for the township to maintain its boundaries.

"We have much work left to do, which includes revitalization of some of our older areas with sidewalks, stormwater drainage and street-scaping, all of which will enhance property values," Keller said.

The township is currently involved in a combined effort with Doctors Hospital to enhance the look, feel and viability of West Broad Street.

"It is our intent to work with business owners to make everyone aware who passes through the entrance to our community from I 270 that Prairie Township is a wonderful place to do business as well as live," she said. "We all know that fact and we want to communicate that fact."

For Wharton, there is no bigger issue than the water and sewer issue.

"We don't want to be gobbled up like Franklin Township," Wharton said. "Once the foundation is in place, the developers are on board. It would be nice to get that rolling."

Prairie Township resident and business owner Steve Kennedy has attended board meetings regularly for the past few years and has had a say in almost every decision the trustees have made.

"The number one reason why I am running is because the voices of the residents aren't being heard," Kennedy said.

After several heated meetings and public forums on a proposed Property Maintenance Code (PMC), Kennedy initiated a petition for referendum, which will appear on the November ballot, giving residents a chance to vote on whether they want it.

Kennedy said the residents were once again ignored when trustees voted in favor of a franchise agreement between Ohio American Water for water and sewer services. He is currently going through the referendum process again to attempt to overturn the decision.

"I don't like the direction the township is headed," Kennedy said.

He said there is talk of park improvements and pools. The township has already made an investment in establishing a senior center, he said.

"Someone has to pay for that," Kennedy said. "The township should not pay for anything unless it affects equally everybody in the township. They are going through the general fund at an alarming rate."

After two years of attending almost every meeting, Kennedy said he has a good feel about the way the township should be run.

"I'm all for keeping the two key services of this township -- the road department and the fire department," he said. "The road department does as good of job as anybody anywhere. We have an excellent fire department. Those two are key to keep around as long as we can."

John Holderby, zoning department field inspector, resigned his post of more than six years to enter the race for trustee. Holderby announced at the April 27 board of trustees meeting that he would retire at the age of 54. Trustees formally accepted his retirement in a 3-0 vote at the May 11 meeting.

"It felt like the right thing to do," Holderby said. "I am running for trustee because I see there are changes needed. I want to stir the pot and I can't do that in the position I am in. Retiring from my job puts me in a position to help my community."

Holderby said he would like to see more of an emphasis on community and building infrastructure. Getting more for the parks and beautifying the West Broad Street corridor are among his top priorities.

Holderby is president of the Lincoln Village Residents Association and recently started a campaign to unite the Westland community. He is in the process of encouraging residents to create their own residents' associations.

"I want more for Prairie Township," he said. "I want a better community, and being retired it gives me full time to devote to the issues."

Holderby said he wants to run a clean campaign.

"We can accomplish so much if we work together," he said.

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