

SUPERVISOR

HALLOFFAME

Jack Shannon's profession, teaching, has meshed well with his township service. This supervisor for Rush Township, Centre County, has spent several terms of office learning how to make the community the best it can be while sharing what he learns with others. Those traits, and his propensity for planning, are helping the township prepare for the future.

A student and a teacher

Jack Shannon

Rush Township, Centre County
28 years of service

BY JENNIFER L. FLORER

When Jack Shannon became a teacher, he probably didn't realize that it was a good training ground for local government service. As it turns out, much of his 28 years as a township supervisor have also been spent learning and teaching.

Shannon won his first term as supervisor when another resident urged him to run as a write-in candidate. He agreed, thinking it was time to give back to the community where he had moved and was raising a family. After winning, he was determined to learn as much about local government as he could.

"I'd go into the township office after my regular shift with the school system and go through ordinances and minutes — I think the earliest I came across was 1907," he says. "I spent many an hour and late night there, but I think you need to know the history to know where you're going."

In fact, even after 28 years, Shannon continues his quest to learn about local government.

"I still go to the PSATS Confer-



Jack Shannon's time as a township supervisor has been an ongoing lesson in local government. Others reap the benefit of his quest for knowledge as he continues to share with them what he learns.

ence," he says. "I wouldn't miss it. If somebody is there in one of the sessions and had the same problem you had, you can learn from what they did. I've found the conference is very enlightening for me."

In turn, Shannon tries to share information with others, too — especially newly elected township supervisors.

"This probably goes back to my occupation," he says, "but you need

to teach anybody new coming on the board what has happened before."

Changing times

As any long-serving supervisor knows, the range of township responsibilities has grown exponentially over the years. When he first took office, Shannon says, a supervisor's main activities were plowing the roads and keeping the ditches clean. Those things still need to be done but not necessarily by the supervisors. They now manage others and keep on top of federal, state, and county requirements.

"Townships aren't really independent anymore," he says. "It's taking a great deal of time just staying abreast of the different regulations."

The supervisors also need to keep up with a changing population. Residents are drawn to what Shannon says is the second-largest township in the state (*just under 150 square miles*) because it's relatively rural but still close to more heavily populated areas.

"The cost of the real estate is considerably less here, and yet they are looking for streetlights, police, public sewer — things we don't have across the entire township," he says.

Planning for the future

The best way to meet current and future needs, he adds, is through planning. He's been active on the Centre



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NEWSWORTHY

County Planning Commission and the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization and has made sure the township is focused on the "P" word, too.

For instance, he has instituted an equipment purchasing program, setting aside a certain amount of money every year just for that, as well as a road maintenance program.

"It all comes down to planning, planning, planning," Shannon says. "You must have an idea of what you're going to need down the road, not just today."

Shannon's own plan is to keep serving the township as long as he feels he can do the job well.

"I like the way the township is going, and I want to take part in that," he says.

He has succeeded this long, he adds, thanks to the support of his wife and two sons and the help of dedicated township staff. He wants others considering a run for township supervisor to know exactly what it takes.

"This is not simply a title," he says. "It entails effort and the ability and the desire to make a difference. There is time invested in this position, and you either commit to that or you don't run." ♦

"I think you need to know the history to know where you're going."

Would you like to nominate someone for the PSATS Supervisor or Secretary Hall of Fame?

First, make sure the person has served as supervisor for at least 24 years or secretary for 20 or more years. Then, contact Township News Editor Ginni Linn at glinn@psats.org or (717) 763-0930, ext. 127. Include the person's name, township, county, position, and a contact number.