

SUPERVISOR

HALLOFFAME

Over the course of 30 years, **Patrick Couturiaux** has been a primary force in shaping Rush Township, Centre County, into what it is today. He helped get the township back on a sound financial track and has kept it there — all while ensuring that residents receive the services they need. He describes himself as a “jack of all trades,” but the main one seems to be helping others.

‘I stayed in to help’

Patrick Couturiaux
 Rush Township, Centre County
 30 years of service

BY JENNIFER L. FLORER

Ask Patrick Couturiaux what’s right about Rush Township, Centre County, and he will offer a list that just keeps growing. However, he remembers a day when that wasn’t the case.

When this supervisor first took office 30 years ago, he was in for a surprise — so much so that he was tempted to cut what he thought would be a one-term commitment to the township even shorter.

“I got a shock when I found we didn’t have any money in the bank,” Couturiaux says. “I thought, ‘My oh my, what did I get myself into? I’m about ready to resign.’”

The fact that he stayed likely went a long way to making Rush Township what it is today: a community that offers plenty to draw in residents and visitors and can be proud of a healthy budget reserve.

“Now, our township is in as good a shape as any in Pennsylvania,” Couturiaux says. “We just tightened our belts and did what needed to be done. You



Patrick Couturiaux is retiring from his post as township supervisor but still plans to stay active. “I’ll always be busy, and I’ll always be trying to accomplish something,” he says.

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Cost-cutting was essential, and one of the ways the supervisors did that was by handling vehicle maintenance on their own. Couturiaux, whose background includes trucking and membership in the operating engineers union (*meaning he knows his way around heavy equipment*), was perfect for the job.

Every once in a while, the township had to spend money to save money. For instance, Couturiaux says, “We cut our fuel bill in half by putting a gas furnace in.”

The belt-tightening paid off, and the township has been able to do plenty with the funds saved.

“We dropped our tax millage to zero,” Couturiaux says. “Our sewer rates are low. We’ve put up a new salt shed, and we added onto our office.”

Adapting to change

The township has also stayed strong while other changes have come and gone, such as the presence of a National Guard unit and a state-run hospital that closed, reopened under private ownership, and eventually closed for good. Now the land is prepped for a future use.

Rush Township also added several hundred residents in 2007 when South Philipsburg Borough became part of the township. That was, in essence, an extension of the supervisors’ “neighbors helping neighbors” philosophy.

“We work together with the other municipalities and help each other all the time,” Couturiaux says. “We share equipment, we share material, and we help each other when anything comes up.”

For this life-long Rush Township

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resident, that’s what local government service is all about.

“That’s why I stayed in office,” he says. “I stayed in to help.”

His wife, Kathryn, who passed away in February, was similarly community-minded. She was an active member

of the Moshannon Valley Joint Sewer Authority, as well as the township planning commission and the election board. The two raised five children together while still dedicating a lot of time to the township.

And while Couturiaux will be hang-

ing up his supervisor hat at the beginning of the new year, he isn’t planning an idle retirement.

“I love to be doing things,” he says. “I’ll always be busy, and I’ll always be trying to accomplish something.” ♦