

SUPERVISOR

HALLOFFAME

At 36 years, **William “Woody” Ertwine** has served as a supervisor for Benton Township, Columbia County, for more years than he hasn’t. Little wonder the township is always on his mind.

A township-centric life

William “Woody” Ertwine
 Benton Township, Columbia County
 36 years of service

BY AMY BOBB /
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER, PSATS

When you have been a township supervisor as long as William “Woody” Ertwine has been, it seems only natural that thoughts of the township consume his waking moments.

“He’s really very dedicated and is constantly thinking about the township,” says Terri Adams, the secretary and Ertwine’s fellow supervisor in Benton Township, Columbia County. “He’ll come in here and say, ‘I was thinking last night, and I may have a solution for that bridge problem or whatever the issue may be.’”

First elected in 1979, Ertwine has been a township supervisor for more years of his life than not. He was 29 years old and working as a member of the township road crew when he first ran for the office of supervisor.

“I decided I wanted to get more involved in the township,” he says.



Benton Township supervisor William “Woody” Ertwine ran for office when he was 29 years old because he wanted to get more involved in the township. Today, 36 years later, his dedicated involvement consumes his thoughts and actions on a daily basis.

Now, at the age of 65, Ertwine recognizes this involvement has become an integral part of who he is and is the logical reason why township affairs

have consumed his thoughts over a 36-year span of service.

“I often can’t sleep because something is on my mind,” he says, “and it will stick with me until I resolve it. It’s been like that now for years.”

As the chair of the board of supervisors and the township’s roadmaster, he is on the front line of every issue or problem the township has to deal with. For Benton Township, a rural community of 1,280 residents, most of those issues center on the nearly 46 miles of roads the township maintains.

“We have become blacktop-poor,” he says, referring to how about half of the township’s roads are now blacktop, which requires a costlier tar-and-chip repair than the dirt and gravel roads that made up the bulk of the local road system when he first began working for the township. “When I first started, there were all kinds of grants available to us, but money is harder to come by now to do projects.”

Residents don’t always understand this, and Ertwine will hear complaints about the condition of a road or questions on why certain roads are repaired before others. Over the decades, he has had to learn how to handle these and other issues affecting the township, including zoning, flooding, stormwater, unfunded mandates, and the move from a one-man police force to State Police coverage.

When it comes to public service, Ertwine says his philosophy is to maintain the status quo whenever possible and keep things simple for residents. “I never want to go overboard with

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regulations and ordinances,” he says. “It makes it easier for the residents.”

As an example, he cites a phone call he received from a lady who wanted the township to enact a barking-dog ordinance to try to get her neighbor’s dog to stop barking. “I told her we couldn’t do that,” he says. “Almost everybody has a dog, and if we put that in effect for her, everyone else would have to abide by it, too.”

Trying to make decisions for the common good can be a tough task, especially in a rural community where everyone seems to know each other.

“Serving the township has really been the commitment of Woody,” says secretary Adams, who herself has been a township supervisor since 2009. “As a supervisor, you get phone calls at all hours, and because we’re a small community, everyone knows your phone number and how to reach you.”

What has helped Ertwine throughout the years is the camaraderie and networking he has developed with other municipal officials. Benton Township is a member of the Tri-County Council of Governments to provide building inspections and bid on bulk materials, and the township frequently cooperates with neighboring Sugarloaf, Jackson, North Centre, and Fishing Creek townships and Benton Borough on road projects and equipment sharing.

“I’ve worked with a lot of good people over the years, and I have learned a lot from other municipal officials,” he says. And, his own longevity has served the region well since he can provide history and answer questions about what and why something has occurred.

As a devoted attendee at the PSATS Annual Educational Conference and Trade Show for the past 30-some years, Ertwine says he is always sure to learn something new there.

“I’ve met a lot of great people at the conferences, and I’ve learned a lot from them and their experiences,” he says. Recently re-elected to his seventh term as township supervisor, Ertwine has no exit strategy in mind for wrapping up his long tenure of service.

“I’ll continue as long as the residents want me and re-elect me,” he says, before adding with a chuckle, “but ask me again in six years.” ♦



COUNTY ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY

February 5: Lehigh County

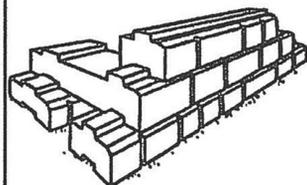
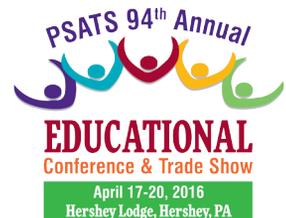
February 27: Bucks and Perry Counties

PLEASE NOTE: The counties listed had confirmed the date for their conventions when the News went to press. For the most current list and the contact person for each county convention, call PSATS at (717) 763-0930 or visit www.psats.org (choose the “Links” tab and click on “County Associations of Township Officials”). Please be sure to confirm the details with PSATS or the county’s contact person.

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