

Editorial

Ease off a bit, Mr. Orloff: Richland Twp. needs sagacity

We must excuse Richland Township supervisor-elect Richard W. Orloff, flush from an impressive victory in the November election, for his gaffe at this week's board meeting when he tried to push his own hand-picked committee to take over the hiring process for a new township manager. While still lacking any legal responsibility for local governmental affairs, he not only undertook unauthorized township business in selecting the people he thinks should serve on the search panel, but went so far as to publicly announce their names.

That supervisor chairman Thomas Glackin was "offended" and shut off Orloff's presentation before it got out of hand is no surprise. The supervisor-elect was acting prematurely.

Orloff, who will take office in January, is on firm ground when he supports a prompt start on the often time-consuming process of hiring a professional administrator. We hope that he presses ahead on that goal when he is sworn in as a supervisor. That is just five weeks away.

Only the advertising for the job was to be placed in December. He could have waited until Glackin and Supervisor Earl Kline came up with a list of candidates they believed might contribute to the selection process. Then a final selection of interested citizens agreeable to all of the supervisors (or the majority if an acrimonious relationship is to continue) could be made at a meeting of record.

We see several flaws in Orloff's logic. If he personally had selected the five search committee members, it seems reasonable that people might think they would be overly receptive to his input.

It also appears that his nomination of Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority executive director Benjamin Jones to screen applicants and resume, creates the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Orloff is a member of the authority's board of directors and in that role is Jones' "boss" because he votes on Jones' salary and benefits. Jones might tend to place more weight on Orloff's preferences than those of the other two supervisors.

Also, the manager hired with Jones' good graces, will be expected to be a member of the team that will negotiate the price the township must pay for the proposed purchase of the water system from the authority. He will be expected to drive a hard bargain for the township, but then he'll see Jones on the other side of the negotiating table.

Township residents might also be disturbed by Orloff's comment to Glackin that "if this is how it's going to be it ought to be a fun two years." Fun! For whom and for what?

The supervisor-elect was acting with good intentions but was out of order. Senseless animosity will not serve the best interests of the taxpayers. Cooperation will.

We would hope that Orloff, as the newcomer, offers the olive branch of peace when he takes his oath next month. And that Glackin, who has pretty much dominated the board for the last several years, accepts it with sincerity. He must realize that Orloff intends to be a strong supervisor as he promised the electorate.