

January 15, 2008

Dear Editor,

For the last three years I was a member of the Environmental Commission in Wyckoff. Often during my tenure the seats on the commission were vacant as appointments to fill them were not made. Those who were appointed often did not attend meetings. Generally I was the only commissioner other than the chairman who regularly attended our monthly meetings. One commissioner was reappointed even though he hadn't attended a meeting in seven years! The Township Committee rarely asked for the commission's opinion on any of the many environmental issues in town.

Last year two residents, trained and certified by the New Jersey Association of Environmental Commissions, volunteered to sit on the Environmental Commission. Their letters of inquiry never received any response, not even a "thanks but no thanks." Right after they showed their interest the vacant seats were filled. One new appointee is the husband of Township Committeeman Galenkamp's niece. He also now sits on the Shade Tree Commission.

I continued to hope that as a commissioner I might effect some positive changes in the environment in Wyckoff. For example, I proposed instituting collection of computers, televisions, and other electronic devices at our recycling center. In addition to reducing pollution and the cost of municipal garbage collection, Ridgewood does such collections at a profit to the town. I was informed that we don't have room at our large open recycling center. In another instance, I suggested more public environmental education such as a float in our Memorial Day Parade. I was told if I wanted to do it go ahead but I would do so alone. The first year I did it on my own as a commissioner. The following year no one on the Environmental Commission volunteered to help so I went looking for support and found it in the volunteers of the Friends of Wyckoff. They found a trailer and a truck to pull it, helped organized the design and construction of the float, and helped me distribute more than 300 saplings during the last two parades (there were about 20 volunteers in all).

Still having hope to work within and with the elected township officials, I always kept the team spirit and sought to keep the lines of communication open. With all the challenges our environment is facing, I felt it was important to keep trying.

Just before New Years I was called to be advised that my term was expiring and I would not be reappointed. When I asked why I was being let go, it was only repeated that my term was expiring, period.

It's a shame really. Personally I am not interested in politics. I am a doer and I want to do for Wyckoff's environment. I guess that is the reason I was let go. Perhaps I should have been complacent and not shown up at all so I could have been reappointed for years.

If the Township Committee had more of an inclusive attitude it could easily have found a way to use me as a volunteer for the benefit of Wyckoff. Instead I was used as a pawn in the township committee's political games.

I still hope. I hope our elected officials all have a change in attitude and realize that many citizens of Wyckoff, from many walks of life, have a very valuable contribution to make to our town. I hope they reach out and include representation from ALL of them, including the ones who don't think lockstep in line with their opinions.

Sincerely,

Andrea Mateo