

HALLOFFAME

For 35-plus years, **Dean Moyer** and **Clyde Deck** have been institutions on the Jackson Township Board of Supervisors. Both men see their long tenure as an opportunity to give back to the community.

Public Servants at Heart

Jackson Township, Lebanon County

Dean Moyer

39 years of service

Clyde Deck

35 years of service

BY AMY BOBB / ASSISTANT EDITOR

After nearly four decades, the leadership face of Jackson Township, Lebanon County, will soon look much different. Over the next couple of years, two long-time supervisors will be winding down their service to the community.

Clyde Deck, 88, will wrap up his tenure as supervisor this year, while Dean Moyer, 91, plans to stick around until his current term expires in 2021.

“Both have spent so many years as supervisors and have done such great things,” secretary Mandy Fidler says. “They will leave the township in an excellent position both financially and as far as programs, roads, and infrastructure.”

Still, she admits that the township will likely feel a bit lost without them. Both men have taken their jobs as public servants to heart, committing themselves to improving the community and doing what’s best for residents.

Deck serves as the long-time board secretary-treasurer and oversees financial and employee operations, while Moyer, who was the chair of the board for many years (*he currently serves as vice*



PHOTO COURTESY OF JACKSON TOWNSHIP

For 35 years, Clyde Deck, left, and Dean Moyer have worked side by side as Jackson Township supervisors. While they don’t agree on everything, they always respect what the other has to say. “Sometimes my ideas are good, and sometimes his are,” Moyer says. “It’s a give and take.” Deck says the secret to getting along with his fellow supervisors is to “remember that you’re just one spoke in the wheel.”

chair), focuses much of his efforts on resolving issues and addressing residents’ concerns.

“They are just so great to work with,” Fidler says. “Both try to keep the residents happy, and the public obviously likes them.”

Their years in office — 39 for Moyer and 35 for Deck — speak to their popularity, she says.

“They usually ran unopposed,” she says. “I have never heard a bad thing said about either one of them.”

From roads to recreation

In 1960, Moyer moved from Schuylkill County to Jackson Township to take a job as a machinist at a local shirt

factory. Following in the footsteps of his politically active mother, he became involved in the local Republican committee and was eventually tagged to fill a vacancy on the township board of supervisors.

Since taking office, Moyer has watched the township grow both in residents — from around 5,000 in 1980 to what will likely be 9,000 in the 2020 Census — and responsibilities, all while keeping its rural character. In the early days, Moyer says, the supervisors’ focus was on maintaining roads.

“When I first started, we were called the road board,” he says. “All we really worried about were the roads.”

Not anymore, he adds. Now, in ad-

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dition to roughly 85 miles of roads, including 25½ that are state turnback roads, the supervisors are responsible for so much more, from fire protection to sewer to recreation, and they accomplish it all with a close eye on the budget.

“We keep our taxes low,” Moyer says. “This is a fabulous township, and we manage it well.”

It’s not always easy, he notes. He recalls a particularly trying period when the township had to work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the cleanup of a Superfund site.

“I attended every meeting, and during the early part of the project, had to fight them on everything,” he recalls.

The effort paid off. By the time the site was cleaned up and given to the township, the property was outfitted with sewage and electricity and ready to be turned into a public park. The Jackson Recreational Park now sports ballfields, a walking path, and a disc golf course, and it serves as the centerpiece of the township’s 50-plus-acre park system that features playgrounds, fields and courts, pavilions, and a lake for fishing and boating.

Recreation has long been a priority of the supervisors, who have obtained grants and used rainy-day funds to develop spaces for residents to relax and play.

“I think it’s fair to say that Jackson Township has more recreational opportunities than any other township our size,” says Moyer, who estimates the township has spent \$3 to 4 million on projects over the years. “We’re at the point now that if we were to spend anymore, we would be redundant.”

A farm boy at heart

Deck credits Moyer with encouraging him to run for township supervisor in 1984.

“Like Dean, I like to give back to my community,” Deck says. “It’s why I decided to become a supervisor. My job is to serve the people and do the best I can.”

A farmer through and through, Deck ran a dairy operation until the late 1970s, and today farms 250 acres of soybeans, corn, and barley while also managing 200 heads of steer.

Going from the farm to public office 35 years ago was an adjustment at first, Deck admits.

“I was a farm boy,” he says. “I had to learn how to work with engineers and attorneys, but I soon found out that they are just like us. Plus, we need them to keep us out of trouble.”

It didn’t take him long to get a handle on the demands of being a supervi-

sor, and he quickly realized his farming background was an asset, providing him with a familiarity of equipment and conservation issues.

“I had been introduced to a lot of the same topics while working with conservation groups as a farmer,” Deck explains.

Since he’s been in office, he has focused much of his time as secretary-treasurer on establishing financial sta-



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bility and accountability.

“We are responsible for public money,” he says, “and it’s our job to make sure we can meet the budget and tax sparingly.”

Not surprisingly, Deck has also been an advocate for agricultural and open space preservation. His farm is enrolled in the state’s Clean and Green program, and he has encouraged others to prioritize conservation. He credits zoning with helping to guide development and protect farmland and open space as over the years, he figures, the rural township has become about 25 percent urbanized.

“Once you put buildings on land, that’s the end of agriculture and green areas,” he says.

Staying active

As his final year as a supervisor winds down, Deck can’t help feeling a little nostalgic about leaving office.

“I’ll miss the township,” he says. “It

How PSATS has helped these Hall of Famers

Both Clyde Deck and Dean Moyer have come to see PSATS as their go-to source for valuable information over the years.

“The staff is always very helpful and congenial if you have a question,” Deck says, adding that he’s a faithful reader of the *Township News*.

“I can’t say enough good things about the Association,” Moyer says. “It serves as a guiding light for every township.”

gets to be a part of you.”

But anyone who knows these two gentlemen doesn’t expect them to ride off into the sunset once they retire as public servants. The fact that they both like to stay active and busy has surely contributed to their life longevity.

“You would never know their age by looking or talking to them,” township secretary Fidler says.

When Deck leaves office later this year, he plans to continue working on his farm and at the small airport he built in 1988 after catching the flying bug. Although he had at one time worked as a charter pilot, he notes, “I

only fly for fun now.”

For his part, Moyer imagines he will keep bowling and golfing as pastimes in addition to tending to his ailing 93-year-old wife. No doubt, he’ll also stay active in the community.

“I’m a busy guy,” he says. “When I tell you what I’m involved in, I wonder myself how I get it all done.”

As they prepare to step aside, both men offer similar advice for the next generation of local leaders: Listen to your constituents, spend money responsibly, and always remember your goal is to serve the public.

“It’s also important to keep learning,” Deck adds. “Go to seminars, work with your solicitor and engineer, and never do anything without consulting the other supervisors.”

Moyer recognizes that being a supervisor today is tougher than it used to be.

“There seems to be more unrest and demands from residents,” he says. “When I was first on the board, people only attended meetings if we didn’t maintain their roads right or if we knocked over a mailbox while plowing.”

These days, he says, the issues tend to be more complicated and at times controversial, such as a recent push by some residents for the township to provide local police protection.

To maintain good relations with residents, Moyer believes it’s important that supervisors are visible. He himself is involved in regional and local organizations, attends meetings of community groups, and listens to what residents are saying.

“Mostly what I hear is keep up the good work,” he says. “Our taxes are practically nothing, our roads are fabulous, our buildings are like brand new, and our staff is great. What more could you ask for?” ♦

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