

SUPERVISOR

HALLOFFAME

Thurman “Tom” Nesbitt III’s family has deep ties to Ayr Township. His grandparents made a home out the community’s first post office, his parents were involved in local politics, and Nesbitt himself has spent the past 30 years as a supervisor, nurturing his home sweet home.

Home Sweet Home

Thurman “Tom” Nesbitt III
Ayr Township,
Fulton County
30 years of service

BY JILL ERCOLINO / MANAGING EDITOR

From a major ice storm on his first day in office to an election race that earned him the nickname “Squeaky,” Thurman “Tom” Nesbitt III has seen and been involved in a lot in his three decades as an Ayr Township supervisor.

And just as farming is in his blood, so is public service, a path he started down in his early 20s. While many of his peers were pursuing a good time, Nesbitt was doing more responsible things like helping his dad manage a herd of dairy cows and leading a community of around 1,900 residents.

“I guess I didn’t get off the farm much,” he says with a laugh.

But the truth is, Nesbitt’s attachment to the township where he was born and raised has had a significant



impact. It’s helped the community stay true to its roots while making room for growth.

Welcome to the penthouse

A turning point for the township came in 1996 at the end of Nesbitt’s first term in office. For years, the three supervisors had met in an old dairy

Public service has been part of Thurman “Tom” Nesbitt’s life since he was in his early 20s. During his three decades as a township supervisor, he has seen his community get its first municipal building, repeal taxes, and pave all its roads thanks to shrewd fiscal oversight by previous supervisors that the current board has continued.

building, which was about the size of a one-room school building.

But because previous supervisors had made shrewd financial decisions, Nesbitt and his colleagues were able to use the savings to pay cash for nearly two acres of land, where they built the township’s first office with plenty of meeting and garage space.

To some, that might not sound like a huge accomplishment, but for a small, rural community with only one claim to fame — it’s home to JLG Industries, a global lift manufacturer — it was a big deal.

“The way one local newspaper put it, ‘We moved out of the outhouse and into the penthouse,’” says Nesbitt, president of the Fulton County Association

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of Township Officials. "But say what you will, we started growing after that."

In addition to expanding its equipment fleet, the township supervisors repealed the local real estate, per capita, and occupation taxes, paved all of the municipality's roads, initiated an annual Bulk Waste Day, and helped the local fire department improve its facilities and buy a ladder truck.

The supervisor attributes the township's success to the solid working relationship between the board members and the secretary, Denise Mellott, who has been with the township since 1985.

"We may not always agree," Nesbitt says, "but we work well together to find solutions."

Despite the community's progress, Nesbitt nearly lost his seat on the board in 2013. Defeated in the primary, the supervisor and his family launched an aggressive write-in campaign during the general election, which he managed to win by one vote.

"My nickname is 'Tommy,' but another supervisor in the county gave me a new one after that: 'Squeaky,'" he says. "That's why I'm such a firm believer that every vote counts." ♦

How PSATS has helped this Hall of Famer

Although he's been in office three decades, Thurman "Tom" Nesbitt III says he continues to learn new things each spring at PSATS' Annual Conference and Exhibit Show in Hershey.

"You've got everything in one place," he says, "which makes it really easy to meet with vendors while getting an education at all of the workshops."

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