

**‘We’re all in this together’**

**Chris Dwyer**

**Bald Eagle Township, Clinton County**

**28 years of service**

**BY BRENDA WILT / ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Chris Dwyer knows a thing or two about cooperating to get things done.

As chairman of the board of supervisors for Bald Eagle Township for 27 of his 28 years in office, he has spearheaded joint paving and intersection improvement projects with neighboring Mill Hall Borough. Recently, he helped develop a multimunicipal comprehensive plan with the Central Clinton County Council of Governments, which he also chairs. Now, Dwyer is working with his fellow supervisors to update the township zoning ordinance so it is consistent with the new plan.

Such progressive activities should be par for the course in townships, Dwyer believes. “Township officials, if they’re doing their job correctly, will make sure the doors for progress open easily,” he says. “Don’t throw up roadblocks when people want to change things and move forward. Work together and compromise, because we’re all in this together.”

That spirit of cooperation also came in handy when Wal-Mart wanted to build a store in the township. “There were a lot of difficulties finding a suitable location,” Dwyer says. “Talks fell through at one point, but I was able to bring everyone back to the table.”

Now, the superstore anchors one of three shopping plazas in what has become known as the “Golden Strip,” the township’s business district. The community is also home to two Fortune 500 companies: Avery Dennison, the familiar name in mailing labels, and Croda, a chemical manufacturing company.

Not a bad legacy for a guy whose career in local government almost ended after just a year.

### **Doing what is best**

Dwyer’s public service began when he was asked to fill a vacancy on the board of supervisors. “Then I ran in the primary and was defeated, 59 votes to 58,” he recalls. “People encouraged me to run a write-in campaign in the general election, so I did, and won with a 3-1 ratio. I’ve been in office ever since.”

A retired school teacher and principal, Dwyer also serves on the operating board of the Clinton County Economic Partnerships, as a trustee at Lock Haven University, and as second vice president of the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees. He is also a member of the PSATS Nominations Committee.

“He is very involved with the public,” township secretary Michelle Walizer says. “Everything he does on these other boards benefits the township in some way.”

Dwyer learned early on that doing what is best for the township is not always the most popular thing to do, however. Shortly after he gained a seat on the board, public sewer was installed in the township and a sewer authority was created.

“Bringing in sewage was a major accomplishment and a controversial one,” he says. “It was very expensive, the authority floated some large bonds, and the cost continues to rise.”

Still, he believes it was the right decision for the township. “I had lived here since 1965, and I knew the ground could only take so much more sewage,” he says. “The longer we waited, the more expensive it would get. I knew it was best for the township.”

The key, he says, is for supervisors to look at such issues in the long term and have a good vision for where they want the township to go. “We do what we feel is best for the community and its future,” he says.

Walizer defends that assertion wholeheartedly. “Chris does what will make the most people happy in the safest way possible,” she says.

### **‘One big family’**

It’s not only the public that benefits from Dwyer’s cooperative spirit, but also his fellow supervisors and the township staff.

“We have always had a good working relationship among the supervisors and with all the boards, auditors, zoning officer, and so on,” he says. “We’re all one big family.”

After 40 years of marriage and nearly three decades of public service, Dwyer says he’s not planning to slow down anytime soon.

“My wife, Sherri, has been very faithful, putting up with all the meetings,” he says. The couple’s three children are grown, so the supervisor has plenty of time to devote to the many organizations he participates in.

“I really enjoy working with the people, so I’m not planning on retiring,” he says.

As for his accomplishments while in office, perhaps the ball caps the supervisors sport from time to time tell the true tale. “Bald Eagle Township,” they read, “A Nice Place to Live.”

**PHOTO OUTLINE:**

Throughout his 28 years as a supervisor for Bald Eagle Township in Clinton County, Chris Dwyer has stood by his convictions. He says he learned early on that the best decisions for the community are not always the most popular.