

In Neptune

Candidates Call for Nonpartisan Commission to Review Police

Neptune Township Committee Candidates Mike Fornino and Candy Storey are calling for an outside, nonpartisan commission to find out and review actions of the police department including what the candidates say were failures to take the proper steps to prevent the Seidel shooting, lawsuits over sexual harassment and excessive force, as well as the recent plan by township officials to fire a police officer.

During the Township Committee meeting on July 25, supporters of Police Officer Kyheem Davis was being fired in retaliation for testifying for the victims during an investigation of sexual harassment in the police department. The township eventually reached a \$330,000 settlement with the two female police officers and both were promoted after their case was settled. Davis gave a deposition in the lawsuit. At that July meeting the committee tabled the plan to fire Davis.

Mike Fornino commented that "If the Township Committee is going to form a panel to study parking in Ocean Grove, shouldn't we take a larger and more important step to find out the

facts about what's happening in our police department and fix the problems? That panel should include people and professionals outside of Neptune in order to present a non-biased view. A friend of mine likes to say that there's two sides to a story as well as what really happened. We need to find out what is going on because the perception is that for a long time there is something wrong at the Neptune Police Department."

He disagreed with a statement by Committeeman Randy Bishop, a Democrat, that the issue was a political one.

"What's right and correct is not political," Fornino said. "We need to find out the facts now before more good officers leave. This affects the whole town no matter one's political label."

Candy Storey, Mr. Fornino's running mate continued, "as to the matter regarding Officer Davis, we don't know all of the facts, but Neptune's residents deserve to know what's going on in order to be able to place their full faith in the Police Department and it's leadership. We fully support our police offi-

cers, but right now, there's too much smoke considering what has been happening. Morale is at an all-time low and too many officers are leaving; some soon after being hired. Losing officers at this rate means excessive training costs which Neptune taxpayers can ill afford. Too many female officers seem to be concerned about their treatment as well, and with the sexual harassment suits, one can easily believe there are serious problems. One can only imagine the amount of taxpayer money that has been spent on lawyers and higher insurance costs because of these problems."

Candidate Fornino closed with "This is not meant to be an indictment of any one person or the leadership of the Department. What's important is that we find out all of the facts, know what the problems are and work together to find ways to fix the problems. Let the chips fall where they may, but we need to fix the problems. Our rank and file and residents deserve that."

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