



Higgins to challenge Tackett for seat on CPC

By BILL HALL, Associate Editor
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SWANSEA — Incumbent Helen Tackett is facing opposition from Harold Higgins for a three-year seat on the Community Preservation Committee in the April 8 election.

Ms. Tackett and Mr. Higgins served together on the Recreation Commission which has become defunct as an elected board after much turmoil.

The Community Preservation Committee makes recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for the spending of money collected through the Community Preservation Act. The selectmen then decide if the recommendation will go to the Town Meeting for a vote.



HELEN TACKETT

Ms. Tackett was one of three elected to the Community Preservation Committee in its first year, 2009. She finished third among five candidates with 740 votes when Pamela Kirkpatrick was the top vote getter with 972, followed by Brian Lowney with 953. As the third highest vote getter, Ms. Tackett held a one-year seat and ran unopposed in 2010, receiving 1,420 votes.

"I was on the Preservation Committee before I ran for the CPC," said Ms. Tackett, referring to the committee that had been formed to promote the Community Preservation Act that passed a town vote.

"I have enjoyed my four years on the CPC," she said. "They are so professional and wonderful to work with. They want to do what is best for the community."

Ms. Tackett noted that the purchase of the 85 acre Baker Farm (Ray Wood Farm) took the most effort. She pointed out that the surveys had shown that keeping the rural character of the town was a priority and preserving farm land was a start.

"Mr. (Selectman Robert) Marquis was a big help with that," Ms. Tackett noted. "He was the liaison between us."

The CPC has also received approval on the purchase of 19.5 acres off Stevens Road that abuts other town land and now includes the entire Abram's Rock. The committee has also recommended and received approval of the Town Meeting voters for \$10,000 towards the Veterans Park on Gardner Neck Road as well as property near Peter's Pond.

"The Luther Museum people would like some assistance," said Ms.

Tackett, "Our committee is supposed to meet on March 21." She is also interested in the Gardner House on Milford Road.

"If we don't do something, a lot can just fade away and not much would be left for today's children and grandchildren to see in the future," she said. "We are looking for input and information on projects the public would like to see. We need particulars."

Ms. Tackett noted that she has lived in Swansea for 39 years after having grown up in Portland, Maine. She worked for AT&T, including a period of time in Washington, D.C. as the communication company's representative in the Pentagon building.

Along with the Recreation Commission, Ms Tackett also served with the Friends of the Bluffs, Friends of the Charter Commission and presently with the Waterfront Revitalization Committee.



HAROLD HIGGINS

Mr. Higgins has held an office on an elected or appointed board since 1968 when he started by serving on the Town Dump Committee. He has since been elected to the School Committee, Housing Authority, Planning Board, Board of Assessors, Charter Commission and Recreation Commission and was appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation Commission.

"Anyone who knows me, knows I have been concerned about the expenditures," said Mr. Higgins. "This board is responsible for overseeing over \$300,000 a year. I would like to have a voice on where that goes."

Mr. Higgins noted that, at Town Meeting, he voted in favor of the expenditure of \$1 million for the Baker (Wood) Farm as well as the most recent purchase of over 19 acres of land off Stevens Road. He would like to spend money on the present Town Hall and Town Hall Annex, before going forward with a new Town Hall.

"I would like to see if we can refinish the Town Hall and the Annex," said Mr. Higgins. "A new Town Hall would cost millions. Maybe we can spend less and use CPA money on the Town Hall and build an elevator in the back to get to the second floor."

"There is storage and a bathroom up there," he added.

"Ideally, I would like to fix things before going ahead and spending a lot of money," he said. "We should be keeping our historic buildings." He would also suggest having the elevator at the Community Center be extended to the top floor.

"There is space up there that is not being utilized," he said. "The elevator goes to the basement and first floor."

He would agree with allocating funds to the Luther Museum, whose representatives have noted it is in need of repairs.

He would like to see the Cummings Estate (Gardner House) on Milford Road repaired.

"It is an eyesore now and is an historic building," Mr. Higgins said. "It should be brought up to date and be utilized."

He would also like to see decisions on the Louis Street building (former Ambulance Corps) and the former fire station on Wilbur Avenue now used for storage.

"The old fire station is being used for storage by the Recreation Commission and it has a leaking roof," Mr.Higgins said.

Mr. Higgins summed up his run by his concern for where the money goes.