

Bertram To Face Hollister For Supervisor

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BY MATT MCALLISTER

HAMMOND - Ron Bertram feels that his questions concerning wind energy haven't been answered by the Hammond Town Board, and after being approached by several members of a community who he says share the feeling, he has decided to run for town supervisor.

"It's been in the back of my mind for 15 years or so," Bertram said Saturday of his candidacy, adding, "And after being approached by these people - I guess I was their choice - I've decided to run for town supervisor."

Bertram says the town board has failed to address the interests of the entire community when it comes to wind energy.

"I'm not against windmills being built in Hammond. That being said, I can't support it unless it's done in a way that I consider a proper way," Bertram said. "I have some concern with the town board and how they are handling things. I don't think everyone's interests are being addressed," he continued.

According to Bertram, everyone in Hammond has a voice. "I don't know the feeling of the majority and I don't know if anyone does," he said, adding, "But anyone who asks a question deserves an answer. I have questions myself that I've asked the town board that haven't been

answered."

With wind energy becoming as big an issue as it has in Hammond, Bertram says, it's the responsibility of the town board to educate itself, and the Hammond community, as to the pros and cons of bringing industrial wind to town.

"The town board, in my opinion, has not made enough efforts to educate the community," Bertram says, adding, "CROH-sponsored meetings have been the only alternative." Bertram says he feels CROH presentations have been very educational.

A Hammond native who spent over 30 years as a full-time farmer (Bright Raven Farms) and now co-owns ACE Contractors, Bertram said he thinks his experiences in other elected offices will serve him well if elected town supervisor.

"I may become a newcomer to the town board, but not to holding office," Bertram says, explaining that he has previously served on the town of Hammond's Planning Board, worked for Hammond Code Enforcement for several years, and been the Hammond Fire Chief (seven years), as well as the Chairman of the Board of the St. Lawrence County Fire Training Facility. "I was on the planning board during the development of the town's site plan review and subdivision

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laws," Bertram pointed out, adding, "I think all of this experience combines to give me the tools necessary to serve in the capacity of town supervisor."

Complacency from the town board, Bertram says, has led to the current "status quo" feelings being experienced by the Hammond community concerning economic development opportunities. He shared that he felt that during these tough economic times, solutions should be sought for, rather than expected to "come down the line" as others have suggested that the proposed wind project may be doing.

"Hammond needs to capitalize on the opportunities offered by its environmental location, and the river is our biggest asset," he said. "There is a void to be filled here and the town board needs to be the lead agency on this, so to speak. We're currently underutilizing out assets and the town board needs to be more proactive."

"We need to devote time and tax dollars to bring some new economic development to Hammond. Opportunity doesn't always present itself," he said.