

Letter to the Editor June 1, 2010

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Public Comment is Just That!

At the Tuesday, May 18 meeting of the DuPage County Forest Preserve Board, President Pierotti interrupted speakers during the public comment section of the meeting. Again.

Interrupting people during public comment at Board meetings is a habit of Pierotti's. He often has something to say and rarely waits until the speaker has finished to say it.

When the speaker has something flattering to say, Pierotti alternately jokes, asks questions, or thanks them. But when the speaker comments on a problem or concern, Pierotti often interrupts to berate, challenge, or talk over the person speaking. Anyone attending Forest Preserve Board meetings has witnessed these interruptions many times.

This behavior is rude, of course. Further, the right to free speech and public comment is legally protected. Interruptions by the president of a County-wide board violate this right, and give a subtle yet powerful message to the public: "Say what we want to hear or you will be silenced."

I know people who have something to say but who will not approach the Forest Preserve Board because they have seen Pierotti berate other speakers. I have witnessed citizens attempt to speak despite Pierotti's interruptions, only to find their topic lost in the President's tirade."

Public Board Meetings are not reality TV shows. Citizens in DuPage County ought to be able to exercise their legally protected right to make comment without being interrupted or challenged. Is it too much to expect that an elected official can listen thoughtfully to concerns of the citizens he serves? Apparently, for Forest Preserve President Pierotti, it is!"

Dr. Shannon M Burns
Candidate, District 6
Forest Preserve Commissioner

1S. 726 Bender Lane
West Chicago, IL 60185