



FMAA NEWS

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Anne Dalton Resigns from Town

By Jean Matthew

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Of all the people we interview, there is no one more congenial, jovial, intelligent, and witty than our Town Attorney, Anne Dalton. She is calm, even-tempered, and even shock-resistant. Anne seems to have a way of negotiating the mercurial modes of the Town Council with unanimity and grace, and she's never afraid to say, "I don't know; let me research that for you."

Anne has resigned and expects to leave by the 1st of July, although she didn't put a hard date in her resignation. She may find that she has to go back and do that because she is so valuable and well-liked that it's going to be difficult to find someone to replace her. It brings the Town to the end of an era of sorts, because when she started working here Marsha Segal-George was still the Town Manager. Anne has been here five years as of Easter, and has seen a lot of changes. She is the Town Council Attorney, the LPA Attorney, and gives advices to all of the committees when they need it. She is always glad to be available and never complains that there is too much work and too little time to do it in.

Having covered both the Council and the LPA for years, we have had plenty of time to observe and study Anne at the job. She is one of those rare people who always has a smile and never reacts when there is a dust-up between members of committees. She keeps her feelings to herself and does not comment on where she agrees or disagrees with a decision. We started this Town with a strong mayor and a strong Town Manager, who managed to make her feelings known very clearly and showed her approval and disapproval in meetings as well as getting into verbal disagreements with people on committees, so Anne has been a breath of fresh air to the Town for the last five years. She has served seven Councils, from Bill Van Duzer to Larry Kiker. She talked a little bit yesterday about the fact that people who serve on the Town Council don't typically come back and serve on other committees. Bill Van Duzer is an exception to that. He has been a Council member and Mayor and now serves on the LPA. She told us how much she appreciates that.

Anne came here from Pennsylvania, although she spent her college years in Manhattan. She got her B.A. in Political Science from New York University and went to Law School at Fordham. Her parents moved down here in 1979, and her father was very active in the county and was at one time a nominee for the Paulette Burton Award, won this year by Roxie Smith. Like many folks, she and her husband moved here to be closer to her parents in their later years, and they are both deceased now.

In addition to her duties as Town Attorney, she serves on the Water Corporation, gives legal advice to committees, and once a year gives a pro bono talk to the committees about sunshine and ethics laws. We asked her what she

had learned most in her work with the Town and she said, "I have learned to talk less, and my desire for perfection has gone when I realized everything didn't have to be perfect."

She says, "A Town Attorney is like a marriage. You have to get to know them, their ideas, their culture, and the environment around them." She has discovered that it is best to "give options to committees. You say, 'Here is this option, and if you choose it, this is what will happen.'" She calls it, "giving the Council a structure for discussion." In addition, she says, "Every member of the committee brings different strengths to the table." It is interesting to watch the jostling and moving around that each one does to fit into the whole. We talked about how some people change when they move from LPA to the Town Council. She doesn't think that people actually change; the environment with new people and new needs brings out different strengths in people who have served on both committees.

Anne has had a varied background. When she was at New York University, she worked in the crisis center, and has never given up her desire to help people in trouble. While she was in law school she became the first woman broadcasting engineer worldwide when she worked for ABC. She worked for Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs on the 20/20 show, and then she became the first woman supervisor for broadcast engineering. It's a wonder that it didn't derail her pursuit of a law degree. She just didn't get any sleep for three years. She had dinner every Thursday with Barbara Walters and Barbara had her favorite Chinese place, where Barbara insisted that everyone use chop sticks. There Anne answered legal questions about the show: what you can ask, and what you can't ask, and what are the consequences. She learned a great deal from that experience.

How does her husband deal with such a busy lady? She says, "He is a really cool guy." He teaches Math out at Lehigh and seems as happy at his job as she is with hers.

The easiest thing about her job is working with the wonderful staff. They are eager to do the Council's directions. "This is one of the best staffs I have ever worked with," she says. "Even though the staff members have changed from time to time, they seem to hire the best people." She adds, "Every government has its own rhythm, culture, and demographics, and you have to study all of it in order to understand how to best serve the Council." On the other hand, the hardest thing about the job is "when the Council is not clear in its directions - you have to try to figure out what they need to do. It takes a lot of research and I try to give real answers. It's important to get back to them quickly."

Anne added, "The biggest problem is the relationship between the Town and other Towns."

She feels that she has learned so much in her position that she is a better attorney than she was before.

"It's like being the only doctor in Town; you have to be able to work with everybody." She also observes,

"Lots of people used to come to the meetings and we had good public input; now nobody comes and I miss that."

What's she going to do in her next life? She wants to do "mediation for family businesses, estate planning, especially portable estate planning, creative art law, small business work, work for small middle class people, volunteer for beach things, do wills, powers-of-attorney, living wills, and work with Dennis Wiemer on SCORE, which is a volunteer organization of retired business executives, and just answer people who call in and say 'I just want to start a business.'" She wants to have more day-to-day control over her life.

We are certainly going to miss her but she assures us that she will be around and we will see her here and there. We wish her well and good sailing.