

Quakers Weighing One-City Decision After Debate

By EMORY DANIELS
Some 75 Quakers gathered in the First Presbyterian Church of Farmington Monday night.

The occasion was to discuss the pros and cons of consolidation and what it can and cannot do for Quakertown.

The meeting, sponsored by

the Joint Study Committee, featured a debate between Gerald Ellsworth and Richard Habicht with Village President Bob Orans moderating.

Ellsworth and Ellsworth are Quakertown's two candidates for the consolidation charter commission. Ellsworth is in favor of consolidation, and Habicht is opposed.

ELLSWORTH BEGAN with a historical sketch pointing out Quakertown was incorporated as a village in 1959. The village is now a 1.5 square mile area and is part of the township from which it was created, he said.

It is not necessarily true that taxes will go up with a new city. "Taxes are a result of service requirements," he explained. "It is possible the charter could find efficiency in a combined government unit so there could be some savings."

But, he cautioned, 90 percent of the villagers' tax bills go to the school district. "Your tax budget will not be less at any time. But taxes would go up just because we change form of government."

ELLSWORTH THEN told the audience about the incorporation and annexation petitions that had been filed that morning. If a negative vote results Nov. 4, he explained, immediately the incorporation petitions will come into being. "You will have to face up to a city vote whether you like it or not."

Under incorporation proceedings, he added, the village vote would not be counted separately; under consolidation, the village has a veto over both the question and the charter.

If the township incorporates without the villages, he said, Quakertown would have to assume the burdens of a township government. It would cost Quakertown 10 mills only to provide 24-hour police protection compared to the 2.5 mills villagers pay to the township for police protection, he said.

"That's just one example of the high cost of going it alone. Another problem where would we get the people to run our village?"

"Consolidation gives us a chance to preserve what we have. If we don't consolidate, the township will incorporate and we'll have competition between two neighboring cities. We could lose a lot of things."

"We register and vote in the township, pay taxes to the township and receive township and county services."

"For the past 10 years, the village has served a useful purpose. It's a small, rural community, and it's too bad we can't keep it that way. But there are too many forces working against us to maintain the status quo."

He reminded his listeners that both the MSU study and Donald Kiser's study recommended that the village should be a part in the incorporation of the township, be it through consolidation or incorporation.

AS PART of a new city, Ellsworth said, the village will gain the advantage of a better tax base upon which to build services.

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nine on the charter commission plus the veto power on the charter. "Since we have no veto under incorporation, we can play a much larger role in molding the future under consolidation. If we vote 'no' now, we lose that chance."

Ellsworth said he would like the charter to protect the village's zoning. It might be possible, he said: "At least we can try."

Ellsworth concluded by asking two questions: How can we deny our neighbors the possibility of seeing what the charter might say? And: If we vote "no" how can the village pay for its services it has to go it alone?

HABICHT BEGAN by saying: "We can keep the village just like it is, and the way to do that is to vote 'no.'"

The village has an important function in controlling its roads, he said. There may be a need for road improvement in the township, he added, but the village has good roads.

Special assessments is the way to improve roads and not by spreading the cost to people who have good roads."

Habicht claimed both Brittany Drive and Quaker Valley Rd. could be opened for through traffic under a new city. "But that won't happen if we remain a village. Our voice will be pretty small as part of a 36-square mile city."

He pointed out that apartments are being built right up to the village limits even though the village has consistently denied multiple zoning.

"I think the people in the township have a different viewpoint than we do because they sure have zoning for a lot of apartments. I don't think we want apartments."

Habicht said the village has existed for 10 years in a spirit of harmony, without politicking, pettiness and devious maneuvers.

Incorporation of the township was voted upon twice and defeated both times, he said. "It can be defeated again."

"Annexation is no threat at all to Quakertown. We would all like it. He pointed out that 90 per cent of the taxes go to the school district and county. Even if the city annexes the township's industrial area, he said, the industrial areas will still be in the school district and county."

HABICHT THEN turned to the question of how much it would cost the village to go it alone. Quakertown has an income of \$18,000 a year from the state, he said, of which \$7,000 goes for roads and \$11,000 for the general fund. After the 1970 census, this amount will increase.

If the village levied the 4.2 mills it now pays to the township, Quakertown would have another \$20,000 without any additional tax. Habicht added to this \$3,000 for a one per cent collection fee on taxes.

"That's over \$40,000 a year without any change in taxes," Habicht said. Millage could be added if needed, he said. One mill levied in the village would raise \$6,000. Or for the resident with a \$40,000 home, one mill would cost \$20 a year.

"For 10 years, we have used road money at the most localized level," he concluded. "If we consolidate, we give up that privilege."

IN REBUTTAL, Ellsworth said: "I try to be a realist. There are some things we must face we don't like. We don't have control over so many things that happen around us."

Ellsworth said villagers drive on more roads than just subdivision roads in the village. "We need a total view of the entire area working together."

He admitted Brittany Dr. and Quaker Valley Rds. were

a problem. "It's a legitimate point, but that is why it is important for the village to have a say in the charter drawing."

"If you vote 'no,' the village won't get a chance to say 'boo.'"

With or without consolidation, he added, the county or state could open both roads through the power of eminent domain.

Speaking on apartments, Ellsworth said: "I don't want any more either, and I'm tired of political back answers we are getting from you-know-where."

"You can't stick your head in the sand and think you can live happily ever after. There

is too much petty politics outside of our community, and I'm tired too."

"I want our voice heard, and this is the way to get it heard."

IN REBUTTAL, Habicht said: "You say we shouldn't vote 'no' and deny our neighbors the chance to see a charter. Well, a 'yes' vote Nov. 4 is just one step closer. A rumor or panic the day before the charter election might force us to adopt a charter."

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