

Former NRA president John Sigler promises leadership for Levy Court

By Ian Gronau

Delaware State News

DOVER — John Sigler, running as a Republican, announced his candidacy for the 5th District Levy Court seat currently held by Democrat Commissioner George “Jody” Sweeney in late August.

During his campaign he has rested on his experience, education and skills as the most important qualities that he’ll bring to the office.

He has served in the U.S. Navy aboard both conventional and nuclear submarines, was a captain for the Dover Police Department, became a lawyer and spent time teaching at Wilmington University. **I Respect Mr. Sigler’s time in the Navy and as a Police Officer. Kent County has taken great measures to show gratitude to veterans through our support of the Chapter #850 Vietnam Veterans, and our changes to tax laws relieving our active military members of their property tax burden when they are serving for long periods in war zones.**

Mr. Sigler has served as the chairman of both the Kent County Republican Committee and Delaware’s Republican State Committee and he has also served two terms as the president of the National Rifle Association of America. After serving in the Navy during the Vietnam era from 1967 until 1971, he returned to Delaware and joined the Dover Police Department where he retired as a captain — his last posting being as the administrative division commander. Mr. Sigler then practiced law as a private attorney in the Dover firm that was then known as Twilley, Street, Rich & Braverman, PA. He also served as general counsel and chief legal officer with a multi- state firm engaged in the delivery of community-based mental and behavioral health services pursuant to government contract in Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., Georgia and Florida.

He holds a bachelor of science in criminal justice from Wilmington College, a master of arts in business management-personnel management and supervision from Central Michigan University, and a juris doctor degree, cum laude, from the Delaware Law School of Widener University. Mr. Sigler has also been a member of the adjunct faculty of Wilmington University where he has taught at both the graduate and undergraduate levels since 1982.

During a question and answer session, Mr. Sigler cited what he thinks makes him an good candidate for the Levy Court seat: Q: Why are you running for the 5th District Levy Court Seat? A: “To be very blunt, Kent County needs leadership. It’s pretty obvious that we have some issues that need to be dealt with in the near and far term. I feel that I am uniquely qualified based upon my education, training and experience to be part of the solution. For instance, I think we can tell from the Superior Court decision in the Pizzadili case that the county’s zoning and comprehensive plan is going to need some relatively quick attention and I think that is something I can help with. I am admitted to practice law in the states of Delaware and Maryland, I am a senior member of the Kent County legal community so I think I am uniquely qualified to help deal with those issues. We’ve also got a number of other issues we need to deal with. I am a retired police captain and as such I have perspective on our emergency preparedness (Mr. Sigler’s opinions on Kent County’s emergency preparedness appeared in this paper as a letter to the editor on Sept. 22). All our volunteer fire department and EMT services are very near and dear to my heart and I think I have a unique appreciation of how they fit together with the counties in terms of emergency preparedness and public safety situations.” **Mr. Sigler’ states that Levy Court needs leadership. I am very happy to dispute his claim. The President of Levy Court, P. Brooks Banta, 1st District, has done an excellent job of leading Levy Court and keeping residents’ property taxes some of the lowest in the nation. My leadership as Chair of Community Services has resulted in partnerships with the Delmarva Council of Boy Scouts and the Greater Dover Boys and Girls Clubs, resulting in the Kent County Gymnasium. My participation in the Pizzadili case, meeting with Mr. Pizzadili, owner of Pizzadili Winery, Dave Mensch, owner of Seafood City, and the neighbors. I also went to a public meeting held by Ron Faison, owner of the Silo Raceway. It is not the zoning laws that need to be**

changed, or the upcoming Comprehensive Plan. As is apparent from the court review and decision, the zoning laws are correct. As for his unique appreciation of EMT and volunteer fire departments, why were volunteers at our 19 companies not mentioned in his article? His unique qualifications as lawyer do not relieve the County of having to depend on our CONTRACTED legal services, nor will he be in a position to provide advice on legal opinions that counter that of the assigned CONTRACTED attorneys that represent us.

Q: What important skills will you bring to the Levy Court?

A: "Leadership is the most important quality I can bring to the Levy Court. First I served as a United States Navy Petty Officer, then as a Police Captain and I think my leadership abilities are proven. I was also president of the National Rifle Association of America. The organization has 5 million members and a \$200 million budget. For 10 years, I was the finance chair for the NRA and my job was to draft, approve and administer that budget. I also prepared



John Sigler

and administered the budget in my last year with the police department. I have those skills and that ability which would be very useful to the Levy Court." **Administering a budget for a PAC that hands out money to legislators for votes is not managing operations and capital improvements for the Government.**

Q: What issues facing Kent County need the attention of the Levy Court?

A: "Being one of seven commissioners is the closest that government gets to the people. It's a unique opportunity and it's certainly not as partisan as the state legislature or congress. As a matter of fact, it's almost non-partisan in operation. Not quite, but almost. With my experience and leadership skills I think would bring an awful lot to the table during a time when we're about to face the cost of healthcare for the county employees going up and the costs of doing business continuing to go up. The question is how do we deal with those costs in an innovative fashion without further burdening the people of Kent County with more taxes and fees? The answer to that is looking at the way the county is managed and finding things that other people haven't seen before. A fresh set of eyes, at this particular time, especially a set of eyes with my experience and background, is something that will be very important as we try to balance the budget while costs across the board are going up. This is something my opponent can't offer. I doubt very seriously that he has my business and public service background." **The Levy Court Commissioners are very close to the people. It is non-partisan, in every aspect, not almost, but completely. As for healthcare costs, it was my "fresh eyes" that brought the idea of a Health Savings Account to the County, saving employees, and the County, thereby the residents of the County, 100's of thousands of dollars. It was my idea to introduce a Wellness Plan to the County, currently being developed by an internal County Committee, also to save 10's of thousands of dollars. So it is not only that I could offer new ideas, in fact, I already have.**

Q: During your professional and public service career, what are the accomplishments of which you are most proud?

A: "I was proud to command the various units within the Dover Police Department, certainly proud to be administrative division commander prior to that and commander of the criminal investigation unit. I was very proud to be the chair of the finance committee of the NRA for 10 years and help to bring its finances back to where they needed to be the president of that 5 million member national organization. I was the first person from Delaware ever to hold that post. I think I'm most proud of being a member of the Delaware State Bar Association. I am proud to be an attorney who loves his country, loves his state, loves his county and wants to serve it. **Again, I respect his time on the Dover Police Department, but the other aspects of his career have no place on Kent County Levy Court.**

Staff writer Ian Gronau can be reached at 741-8272 or igronau@newszap.com.