



HINGHAM EDITORIAL: Sign of the times

Wicked Local Hingham

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Hingham — Here at the Hingham Journal office we often think about Fred Miller. Mr. Miller was editor and publisher of the paper 100 years ago. He built the Hingham Journal Building here at 73 South St. in 1899 to serve as the Journal offices' home for the press. Up until about 1980 – the Journal was printed upstairs at 73 South St. where our office is now.

Mr. Miller was also the Town Clerk. From our perspective today that seems like a total conflict of interest.

Not long ago when we were trying to find out more about Fred Miller for a Hingham 375th anniversary editorial – we consulted local historian John P. Richardson of Fort Hill Street. We mentioned the conflict of interest in that Mr. Miller served as editor/publisher of the local newspaper and Hingham Town Clerk at the same time.

Mr. Richardson pointed out that conflicts of interest did not really exist back then. The phrase had not yet been coined and a man's word was closely tied to his honor.

Imagine those simpler times well before we became such a litigious society – when bank loans and other agreements were made with a handshake and a promise.

That is not to say there were not problems a hundred years ago. This week in Hingham's Yesterdays we talk about the tuberculosis epidemic – and as late as the 1950s, polio was still a scourge.

But as we ratchet the clock up to 2011, there is no doubt that conflicts of interest exist and despite the best efforts and intentions of those involved – they are best avoided if possible.

Therefore, we think Susan Murphy, an attorney, made the right decision to step down from the Hingham Planning Board to serve as special real estate counsel for the Town of Hingham. While the selectmen and many others felt she could have navigated both roles successfully – her letter this week explains her decision to resign. (*See letter this page, see story on 12*).

"I am saddened to leave a position for which I have much passion but, at the same time, I realize that in navigating both roles I could not give 100 percent to either," she wrote.

She received the support of her colleagues on the Planning Board – where she has served for 11 years – in making the difficult choice.

"It is not too much to say that her service to the town over the last 11 years has made it a much better place to live in, both now and in years to come," said Planning Board Chairman Paul Healey. "We wish her well in her new role and she enjoys our complete support."

We will miss the clarity that Mrs. Murphy brought to so many issues before the board. During her tenure, she was always gracious and fair to those who appeared before the board or those who had questions. She understands complex issues and can explain them in layman's terms.

Mrs. Murphy, who has been nominated for Citizen of the Year several times, is a person of integrity. She would have fit right back in 1911 with editor/publisher/Town Clerk Miller.

We also wish her well in her new role.