Erie County Legislature
c/o Robert Graber
92 Franklin St.
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Legislators: 11/12/2013

My name is Robert (Bob) J. Lohr, I'm a lifelong resident of Erie County who would like to be interviewed for the open position of Commissioner on the Erie County Water Authority Board.

My knowledge of the Water Authority's system is intimate and in depth as I was an employee for thirty-two years. How many other candidates can say that they've been under some of the finest lawns in the county?

In short, I've been on well over ten thousand water main repairs, repaired or replaced hundreds of valves and fire hydrants and over saw the installation of thousands of services. My certification from New York State allows me to operate a small water system (up to three thousand customers).

I have served on public boards and so I'm familiar with budgeting and other necessary procedures.

Should I be appointed there are three areas of interest that will bear my attention: 1) fire protection.

The Water Authority has two main mandates: deliver safe quality potable water to

it's customers and to have adequate fire protection within it's boundaries. They (the Authority) take their responsibilities seriously and do a good job meeting their customers' demands.

The problem is that several manufacturers of fire hydrants within the system have been out of business for so long that parts are no longer available. So when these older models start to leak they'll freeze in the winter and be useless in the event of an emergency.

While still an employee management gave me permission to start replacing the obsolete models before they start leaking because of the sheer number of them. Over five years my crew and I replaced over three hundred hydrants, mostly in the town of Cheektowaga.

My goal is to see that all the obsolete hydrants within the system be replaced. While the Authority allowed me to be proactive in the towns that I was responsible for (Cheektowaga, Lancaster and Alden, which also included the villages of Sloan, Depew and Lancaster), most of the areas serviced by the Authority are lease-management. The Authority can not on its own replace a hydrant if the town or water district doesn't want to foot the bill. (A fire hydrant replacement is considered a capital improvement and unlike a routine repair, the town/district would get a bill.)

My aim is to educate the town engineers and boards of the potential of loss of fire protection due to large numbers of hydrants being

put out of service simultaneously. Each town/district would be given a report of how many hydrants exist in their particular District that are no longer repairable. This way they can budget their replacement in a timely fashion.

My second goal is to eliminate bonuses for management. When I started at the Authority in 1980 they did not exist. Upper management stated from time to time that 'we are a public employer, we can't give bonuses'.

Also, management never got a raise or a benefit that wasn't negotiated with the two unions at the Authority. They would cherry pick from the two contracts, but never take more.

In this way, while you had the usual division of labor-management the Authority was still a cohesive workforce. During the last seventeen years upper management has formed a chasm between itself and the rest of the employees. They would give themselves bonuses on top of raises in years when at least one of the unions would get nothing.

This is not leading by example, this is feudalism. And I'm not telling tales out of school because I've told some members of management the same thing and more.

The third area of interest is insurance. Not that I know of any faults on the Authority's part, but because when I've served on boards it's an area of cost savings I

investigate.

As a councilman I spearheaded the City of Lackawanna's self-insured workmen's compensation program. We saved significant amounts of money. Also, we were able to borrow from ourselves when the city would have a cash flow problem, which is typical at the end of a tax cycle. (State law states that insurance funds are not to be comingled, but state auditors said that as long as it's short term and saves the taxpayers money then the 'spirit' of the law is intact.)

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours truly,

Robert J. Lohr

Resume

Robert J. Lohr
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Boston, NY 14075

(716) 649-9039 HOME PHONE
(716) 345-5097 CELL

Employment

Dec. 1980 – Mar. 2013 Erie Co. Water Auth.
26 years as a foreman

Jan. 1990 - Dec. 1997 Councilman
City of Lackawanna

July 1999 - June 2001 Trustee
Lackawanna School Board

Licenses and Certifications

Class D Chlorinators License
Operations and Maintenance Asbestos Certificate
Class A Commercial Drivers License