

# Wrightsville man gives people's touch to drafts of House GOP's legislation

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A Wrightsville resident is helping the state House Republican caucus shape legislation aimed at solving problems in local government and cities.

Effective governmental solutions to people's problems require the opinions of those affected, said Jeri Stumpf, executive director of the Local Government and Urban Affairs committees for the GOP caucus.

People should have more say on what happens within their municipalities much as they determine who will represent them, he



recently said.

Stumpf said he used his grassroots approach to government in a 1968 interview with then York Mayor John L. Snyder for the city planning director's position.

"Snyder had refused to hire a planner for six years," he said. "He was very conservative; he didn't like planners or planning."

Snyder opposed the concept of planners because he associated them with living in an ivory tower instead of in the real world where people's incomes are involved, Stumpf said.

Stumpf was offered the job during the interview and served as director for five years.

His reliance on comment from the public was reflected in his design of what is now Martin Luther King Park and West Hope Avenue Park, he said. Even though the National Guard was called in during the city's racial

problems in 1968, the neighborhood youth protected the park's construction equipment from vandalism, he said.

Stumpf, 46, was born in Dover, graduated from Central High School in 1962 and graduated from Dickinson College in Carlisle in 1966 with a bachelor's degree in political science.

Before his current position, he supervised planning contracts in eastern Pennsylvania with a Harrisburg consulting firm, Clifton E. Rogers and Associates.

Now he drafts original legislation at the request of Republican representatives. He also researches and gives advice on legal issues concerning what a municipality can and cannot do and why.

The legislation and advice revolve around municipal and planning codes, local taxation, property assessment, housing and

redevelopment issues, economic development, and how to finance street, sewer and water projects.

"If it happens in a municipali-

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ty, we deal with it," he said.

He began working for the caucus in 1973 after the Pennsylvania Economy League did a study of the state Legislature and recommended a professional staff be hired to draft legislation.

Stumpf said he was excited about being involved in passing good state laws from the beginning, rather than correcting the problems caused by poor legislation.

One of the issues his committee has been involved with is the lack of affordable housing.

Ever since Stumpf began the job, every governor has had a blue ribbon committee on housing, he said. Recommendations were made, but the reports sat on shelves and nothing happened, he said.

Stumpf said the people who know best about the issue are those who suffer from the problem and investment bankers, mortgage underwriters and executive directors of housing redevelopment authorities.

"These people never get plugged into the system where it has impact," he said. "Whenever there is a blue ribbon panel, these are not the people appointed."

Letters were mailed to 1,500 bankers, underwriters and housing authority officials seeking their ideas for new legislation. The letters said the Pennsylvania Legislature can only do so much on housing.

"We can't do much on the price of land or interest rates or labor costs, and we can't do much about material costs," Stumpf said. "What can we do to make housing more affordable in Pennsylvania?" he asked in the letters.

At an affordable housing forum at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Pittsburgh, he heard testimony based on recommendations submitted by some of the 1,500 contacted. With that information in mind, he drafted a 14 bill affordable housing package. It recently was introduced in the House and is in committee.