

Woman on Council a first for Kenbridge

By Susan Smyth
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Kenbridge Town Council will welcome newly-elected members this coming July. For the first time in Town history, one of those members is a woman.

"I did not run on a gender issue," says Karen Scales, who did not become a citizen of Kenbridge until last year's annexation. "I ran for Town Council [because] if I am now a part of the Town, then I'd like to be a positive part of the Town."

Mrs. Scales moved to the area only two years ago after living 23 years in Katy, Texas, a small town outside of Houston. She and her husband John opposed annexation last year. Part of their reason for moving to the area involved wanting to live in the county.

"John and I made up a list of things we wanted when we retired. We wanted to be away from the masses, away from crime, and in a place where we had some acreage, where I could have the window open to hear the birds and feel the breeze."

After annexation, which took effect December 31st, residents of the newly-annexed area felt that they deserved representation on Town Council, and approached Mrs. Scales with the matter. She insists, however, that she is not a protest candidate.

"I did not run because I was opposed," says Mrs. Scales. "We are newly-annexed and should be represented. Taxation without representation goes back to the Boston Tea Party, and hopefully some of our talents and experiences will be an aide to Town Council."

Karen Scales is the proud mother of three working professionals. Her daughter is a board-certified radiologist, her oldest son oversees all major computer information systems in the State of Mississippi, and her youngest son is a mechanical engineer.

Mrs. Scales recently retired

from UNOCAL Corporation, where she oversaw all federal and state audits. While with the corporation, she was the first woman and accountant to win the Chairman's Award for outstanding accomplishments. She previously worked for Coastal Corporation, now El Paso Energy, where she directed the Department of Regulatory Reporting, helped write several laws, and won several Federal awards for accurate reporting.

Mrs. Scales is hoping that her business experience will be a positive contribution to Town Council.

"You have politics in Corporate that are entirely different from town politics," Mrs. Scales admits. "But I am not a political person. I research an issue, I read all regulations and laws pertaining to an issue, I put all my facts together, and I end up with a conclusion as a result of my research."

Despite her fairly new arrival to Southside Virginia and her connections with the corporate world, Mrs. Scales still managed to connect with Kenbridge voters. She collected the 6th highest vote total in the field of 8 candidates, capturing the 6th and final seat on Council.

Mrs. Scales took the opportunity to visit many Kenbridge citizens and ask them not only for their support, but also for their suggestions and thoughts about the Town itself. Although many were enthusiastic about the revitalization of Downtown, some expressed concerns.

"I went door-to-door because I thought that I could not ask people to vote for me if I didn't ask them," says Mrs. Scales. "A lot of constituents are concerned about not knowing what's going on in town, and I think part of that is a lack of communication. I don't think every little hiccup should be reported, but I do think that decisions, as well as the positive, should be relayed to people."

Born and raised in Charleston, WVA, and having lived all over the United States, Mrs. Scales has had

the opportunity to see how things are done elsewhere and feels she can offer some fresh ideas, especially concerning the Downtown revitalization project and future business opportunities.

Mrs. Scales is particularly concerned with the numerous "no loitering" signs in the windows of businesses Downtown. She fears those signs give visitors and prospective merchants a bad first impression.

"Why do we not have police walking the streets? I think that would deter any of the loitering problems the businesses might have."

Scales feels that businesses are not only entitled to the E-911 system and immediate attention in case of an emergency, but also the peace of mind in feeling secure and protected.

She does not, however, plan to run the Town herself.

"I have no intention of going in there as a barn-burner," she says smiling. "I am one of seven." (Six Council members and a Mayor.)

Mrs. Scales responds honestly to those who question her motive for running for Town Council after she opposed being annexed last year.

"I believe I made the comment, 'Make sure you know what you're wishing for, you may get it,'" she says, recalling Council meetings last year. "Now, due to the fact that we're part of the city, we have a right to say what we would like to have or give ideas for improvement."

Karen Scales is looking forward to working with other members of Town Council as well as citizens of the Town itself. She and her husband John, who will be married 40 years in August, have nothing but praise for the place in which they have decided to retire.

"As a whole, the community is just very delightful," says Mrs. Scales. "We love it and have been welcomed with open arms. This is going to be home for us forever."