

Petitioner fails to appear at meeting

By Edward Lewis
Staff Writer

WILKES-BARRE — Luzerne County Commissioner Todd Vonderheid may consider using subpoenas to force a Wilkes-Barre advocate and her lawyer to appear at a county Board of Elections meeting.

Denise Carey and her lawyer, Lisa Welkey, were requested by Solicitor Neik O'Donnell last week to attend Wednesday's board of elections meeting to explain a letter written by Carey.

Welkey told Wilkes-Barre City Solicitor William Vinsko on Nov. 3 the letter was written on board of elections' letterhead. It was suppose to serve as Carey's formal withdrawal of petitions she circulated in an attempt to change the city's charter.

Carey and Welkey did not attend the meeting. They could not be reached for comment.

Vonderheid said a second request will be made. If Carey and Welkey fail to show, he may issue them subpoenas that will force their appearance.

"We will ask her one more time for her to come," Vonderheid said. "If she chooses not to attend the next meeting, we will entertain the board's powers. I prefer not to use subpoenas though."

The next board meeting has not been set.

O'Donnell said the board only wants Carey or Welkey to clarify the letter.

Carey spreadheaded a petition drive during the summer to change the city's charter that would have given residents a greater voice in legislative affairs pertaining to city government. Her goal was to get a referendum on the ballot to give voters a say about the East Northampton Street fire station which was closed by Mayor Tom Leighton.

After the petition was submitted, Vinsko and his staff compared the signatures to a list of registered voters in the city.

Carey withdrew her petition prior to an Aug. 24 hearing before county Judge Michael Conahan. In turn, Judge Conahan ordered Carey to reimburse the city \$11,056 for legal expenses.

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