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# Citizen boards obligated to the people, not O'Rourke

Westchester has about 50 citizen advisory boards on topics ranging from the airport, minorities, health, consumers, mental health, criminal justice, traffic, planning, parks and recreation, women and youth.

So when Westchester County Executive Andrew P. O'Rourke literally tells the Hospital Advisory Board to "take it or leave it," he is really sending messages to hundreds of people who put in long hours without pay that he considers them merely window-dressing for his administration. Their views don't count.

O'Rourke this week invited the remaining 13 members of the Westchester Hospital Board to resign after they sent a two-page letter to the Westchester Board of Legislators disagreeing with O'Rourke's choice of a new hospital commissioner.

O'Rourke sent each member a two-paragraph statement saying he would welcome their resignations and included a form resignation letter and a postpaid return envelope.

We urge the members of the hospital board to remain in their positions and not be bamboozled by O'Rourke. But at the same time they have to understand that their views may be considered suspect because they originally endorsed Acting Commissioner Edward Stolzenberg for the appointment, and therefore may not be the most independent body to pass judgment on Mack L. Carter Jr., O'Rourke's choice.

And we would caution that once a commissioner is in place, the board does have an obligation and responsibility to support and work with that appointee.

It is the board's position that Carter doesn't have the experience to

set policy, handle finances, labor relations, affiliation contracts, staffing and planning duties at a quarter-billion-dollar facility. The hospital board contends that Carter was only a third-tier administrator whose duties were limited to daily operating and housekeeping needs of the patient services at Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center in the Bronx.

Carter will have an opportunity to respond publicly to those charges when he goes before the Officers and Departments Committee of the Board of Legislators. And those confirmation hearings should begin at once, not two months from now, as proposed by committee Chairman Steve Tenore, R-New Rochelle. Carter should have an immediate opportunity to tell the legislators why he should be commissioner and what he can bring to the office.

As for the members of the hospital board and all the other advisory boards in county government, remember this: Westchester's greatness as a county can be traced in part to citizen boards. The Westchester Park Commission planned and built our parkway system in the 1920s and 1930s, and established a county park system that is one of Westchester's treasures. It built the Playland Amusement Park. A Recreation Commission built the County Center, and the Westchester Community College Board played a strong role in the development of that college.

So advisers, stay on your unpaid, volunteer jobs and do what you can to help Westchester establish policy. You have a role to play, and it is appreciated by the citizens of Westchester. Yet you have to acknowledge that the ultimate decisions are made by the county executive and the county board.

EX "II"