

Stewart gets nod for road commissioner

■ He was one of four candidates interviewed for the part-time, six-year post prior to being appointed.

BY DEAN COUSINO

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Greg Stewart, former Bedford Township supervisor and a former administrator for the City of Luna Pier, has been tabbed as the newest member of the Board of County Road Commissioners.

The 66-year-old Stewart was named to a six-year term on the road board by county commissioners Tuesday night. He was one of four candidates interviewed by commissioners prior to the 7-0 vote.

"I'd like to see the south county represented," Commissioner David Hoffman said about the Lambertville resident. "We need the voice and teamwork of the south county... he'll fit in well with the other four board members."

Mr. Stewart will replace Bob Stammer on the five-member, part-time body when his term ends Dec. 31. The new term runs through Dec. 31, 2022.

Mr. Stewart will be given the oath of office at the road board's first meeting in the new year (Jan. 9), said Randy Pierce, man-

aging director of the road commission who attends most of the county board meetings as well. Mr. Stammer, also a Bedford resident, is finishing a six-year term and served two years as chairman.

Mr. Stewart cited Mr. Stammer's leaving as the impetus for his run because it would leave a void of representation from the south-county area.

"If south county wants to be included we need to be involved," he told commissioners. "The main reason I put my hat in the ring was to take that first step and hopefully inspire others to get more involved at the county level."

J. Henry Lievens, chairman of the county board, called the selection of a road commissioner "the most important appointment of our tenure. He's got a big job ahead of him."

Also interviewed for the position were Larry Rutledge, a former supervisor, clerk, treasurer and trustee for LaSalle Township; Marvin Hicks, a retired Monroe firefighter and former member of the Ida Schools Board of Education for a dozen years, and

Edward (Ned) O'Loughlin.

Commissioner Jason Turner commended all the candidates for taking tough questions.

"It's not easy to go up there and take these questions," Mr. Turner said.

Commissioner Al Potratz, vice chairman of the board, said the road commission has performed well in recent years and "will get better with Mr. Stewart on board."

Mr. Stewart said his top priorities include "building a cohesive board and work force," advocacy and fiscal responsibility in spending money. He said among his strengths are his abilities, experience and knowledge learned over years of public service.

"I've worked with a lot of government agencies in the last 20 years," the new commissioner said. "We need to (seek out) new ideas and other ideas and work within a framework of the budget."

One of the biggest challenges, he said during the interview, was resolving loopholes in Act 51, the state's formula for distributing road improvement funds.

"Act 51 does not serve Southeast Michigan at all," he stressed.

Mr. Rutledge cited his experience and

familiarity with the road board and employees as reasons for naming him to the post.

"I really believe I'd be an asset," the LaSalle resident said. "Public relations is an important aspect. You need the support of the people to make it happen."

Both Mr. Rutledge and Mr. Hicks have applied for the road seat three times. Mr. Hicks, who had a long history of public service as well, said he had no agenda in running, but was concerned about the community.

"It's always about funding," Mr. Hicks said about the road agency's biggest challenges. "I'm a quick learner and very familiar with budgets and giving direction."

Mr. O'Loughlin, a geo-tech engineer on landfills, said he would push for better maintenance, improved funding and quality assurance for road operations.

"We know our roads are not up to par," he said. "It's up to the board to fix these issues. There's too much that's rubber stamped by the road commission. On the positive side, we are able to successfully drive on our roads. We need to expand on that and do outreach to meet our goals."



GREG
STEWART