



— Monroe News photo by PAULA WETHINGTON

Greg Stewart, shown here at the Bedford Government Center, lost his supervisor seat in the election but still aspires to continue his work in public service. He is one of four candidates to be interviewed for a vacancy on the Monroe County Road Commission.

LOOKING TO FUTURE

Ex-supervisor Greg Stewart hopes to continue public service

BY PAULA WETHINGTON
pwethington@monroenews.com

Former Bedford Township Supervisor Greg Stewart has cleared out his office at the Bedford Government Center, but he hopes it's not the end of his public service to the community he calls home.

Mr. Stewart, a Republican who lost his seat in the August primary election, attended his last township board meeting Nov. 15. The new board, including incoming Supervisor Paul Pirrone, took office Sunday. The supervisor's job is one of three full-time elected positions in the community and is part of the seven-member township board that handles local government matters.

On Dec. 6, he will be one of the four candidates slated for interviews for a vacancy on the Monroe County Road Commission board.

"I have things to offer," he said of his experiences that could transfer well to that role.

And while the road commission position is part time, he said that schedule would suit him.

Mr. Stewart and his family moved to Bedford Township in 1988 and the quality of Bedford Public Schools was a huge factor, he said.

While he was pleased with seeing what his daughter experienced as she went through the school system, he was even more impressed after she went to college and he realized that she was well prepared.

"I can verify that Bedford Schools is a great place to be educated," he said.

At the time, Mr. Stewart still was firmly planted in his business career. He's worked in retail, services, manufacturing, even technology incubation. He also served on the Bedford Township Planning Commission for a time. Then in 2008, he started full-time government work as city administrator for Luna Pier.

"I brought that business attitude to this," he said about that step.

The Luna Pier job ended in 2012 when he was elected to a four-year term as Bedford Township's supervisor.

Mr. Stewart said accomplishments are valued in the business world, and he brought that perspective to government work.

The accomplishments he cited as township supervisor included setting up a long-range road plan. Residents found it less frustrating to learn what year their roads would be repaired — even if the timing was not immediate — than to have no answer at all, he said.

Another effort was converting the ordinance department investigations to a complaint-based system and away from an inspection-based one.

"We took away the idea we were picking on people," he said about the ordinance enforcement matters. Since neighbors are the ones typically contacting the township about property matters, this stance also encourages residents to work out concerns among themselves.

For a few weeks in spring, 2014, Mr. Stewart was on medical leave as he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and underwent treatment. Even while in the hospital, he handled some conference calls and paperwork.

Mr. Stewart later participated in a survivor lap at Bedford's American Cancer Society Relay for Life.

In a farewell to township residents in the township's fall newsletter, he thanked the community for reaching out during his illness.

"I now understand the importance of visiting the sick. I am still in awe of the volunteer emergency team that came to my rescue. Thanks again," he wrote.

In summer, 2014, the township faced one of its biggest community emergencies in years. The City of Toledo issued an emergency notice Aug. 2 asking everyone on its municipal network to not drink the water for almost three days.

That allowed time for the city crews to investigate and clear up toxic water conditions resulting from algae blooms near the Lake Erie intake.

Bedford Township residents were among the 30,000 Michigan residents affected, as the South County

Water District's water supply comes from City of Toledo.

Mr. Stewart said he was startled by Toledo news reports that morning as he was drinking a cup of coffee made with the tainted water. Quickly, he along with other local officials and volunteers got to work.

He praised the response seen in Monroe County, particularly with how fast bottled water deliveries were made available to residents.

Other township matters are not quite as significant but still of high interest. In 2013, heavy rains and nasty weather encouraged municipalities in northwest Ohio to postpone and reschedule neighborhood trick-or-treat times. Mr. Stewart was monitoring the forecasts and concluded the worst weather would remain on the Ohio side of the state line.

He took quite a bit of criticism for insisting Bedford Township's trick-or-treat would remain on Oct. 31, adding that he personally would hand out candy in front of his home that night.

Sure enough, the rain stayed away from Temperance and Lambertville until just about the time the children were done seeking candy.

Another topic where he initially was at odds with others was mentioned in his farewell letter.

"I am proud of those that fought for a more sensitive approach to our environmental issues," he said. "It is no secret that I was reluctant to make this commitment, but thanks to my administrative assistant (Kim Pollins), we have begun to make a difference. Recycling and burning alternatives are issued that many in the community worked hard to establish in order to make a positive impact on Bedford."

Overall, he hoped that he made an impact toward making Bedford Township more a part of the Michigan community and specifically Monroe County as a whole. And that's still his wish.

"Hopefully, I can do it by being a team player at the county level," he said while waiting for a decision on road commission appointment.