

Bedford officials approve pay raises for elected officials

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BEDFORD TOWNSHIP – Despite concerns over reductions in money coming from the state revenue-sharing system next year and possibly in years to follow, the township board approved a pay raise recommendation for itself.

Tuesday, the board approved a 2.4 percent annual increase for the next two years of the salaries for the supervisor, clerk and treasurer, as well as an increase of annual trustee stipends, based on a recommendation from the township's compensation committee.

According to Supervisor R. LaMar Frederick, the 2.4 percent figure came from the bureau of labor statistics and represented a calculation of a cost-of-living increase, a figure used by the compensation committee as a focal point to look at in its determination.

He added that the percentage mirrors an earlier contractual salary increase approved by township officials for its union-based employees.

On Tuesday Mr. Frederick said that in the budget, "as of today," there were avail-

able funds to pay for the increases.

Effective July 1, the supervisor's position will receive an annual salary of \$59,484, \$55,296 will be paid to the clerk and treasurer, and \$10,740 annually for each trustee. A year later, the supervisor's position will pay \$60,912, while the clerk and treasurer will pay \$56,616. Trustees in July of 2004 will see \$11,004 each year, or \$917 a month.

The board also approved new policies regarding the parks commission. The chairman of the parks commission will receive \$55 a meeting and other members will be paid \$50 a meeting. Parks board members together also now are allowed to attend no more than 100 total meetings outside of the regular township park meetings and be paid \$50 a function.

Despite a unanimous approval by the township board, Trustee Dennis Steinman questioned the prudence of giving raises based on the economic condition of federal and state economies, which are projecting operating deficits. Bedford alone stands to lose more than \$125,000 in revenue sharing from the state, while the county itself is projected to lose nearly \$2 million.

"In light of everything here going on, I wonder if we could be elevating our

salaries up here with the \$135,000 that we are getting cut in this fiscal year and whatever will be cut next year," he said. "What happens if we get into a state in the next couple of years, despite our current fund balance, if we get in a crunch in the next couple of years and the sales tax is not there and other means of revenue? ...I'm leery about what is going to happen."

Mr. Steinman asked whether the board could table the recommendation, but according to Mr. Frederick, the law stipulates that the board either approve the increase recommendation or deny it. The compensation committee meets not more than 15 times, and during the period of deliberations must present a report to the board within 45 days of its first meeting.

Mr. Frederick added that he believes that once a salary of an elected official was established it could not be reduced during the term.

"Pursuant to the law as I understand it, we have two choices," Mr. Frederick told the board. "We can accept it as it is, or upon two-thirds vote of the board reject it and nothing happens. We would stay for two more years where we are. You have to act on this this evening."

Mosquito control to increase

BEDFORD TOWNSHIP - The Bedford Township Board approved a budget increase for mosquito abatement products in light of concerns over the West Nile virus.

The \$1,200 increase will be tacked on to the estimated \$35,000 spent yearly to control the mosquito population through the application of abatement pellets in the catch basins around the township and the spreading of other abatement products in low, marshy areas during the summer months, according to a memo from Supervisor R. LaMar Frederick.

The township also pays for trucks to spread

mosquito spray through the township on section line and subdivision roads.

Mr. Frederick said the increase is necessary to take preventative measures against an increased number of West Nile cases occurring in last year.

The township will again pass out to residents abatement "doughnuts," a product Mr. Frederick listed in his memo as being safe to handle and that can be placed in marshy areas on residential property. He recommended that four doughnuts will be passed out to Bedford residents, each which include a slow release of mosquito larvae abatement and last about 30 to 45 days.

2/19/03