

Bedford residents must demand that board kill road assessment plan now

The Bedford Township Board announced Sept. 9 that it wants to implement, without permission from voters, a special assessment district for road maintenance and improvements, which are supposed to be the fiscal responsibility of the county road commission. Every parcel in Bedford Township would be assessed \$75 for five years to raise \$925,000 a year to pay for a Pavement Asset Management Plan for primary and local roads exclusive of subdivision streets.

Supervisor Greg Stewart said the board was tired of waiting for legislators. Dale Zorn refuted this reasoning by stating that legislation is ready right now to create funding for road repairs in Michigan, so what's the rush? Treasurer Paul Francis admitted he recommended the assessment for the 2014 winter tax bill.

I agree with Dale Zorn that the board may be trying to rush this

through when it is not necessary. The road commission has a \$2 million surplus. Bedford is holding \$4 million. The state has released \$215 million for road repairs, of which Bedford got \$5 million.

An effort to get the board to rescind its plan at its Sept. 16 meeting was turned down 5-2. Board members defended their actions by citing "disenfranchisement" of 12,314 property owners who would be denied a first public hearing Tuesday.

I want to know why already-strapped Bedford parcel owners should be asked to pay another assessment when other funds are available? Act 51 states the board "may" request funds for drastic circumstances, but it is apparent this assessment cannot be considered "drastic circumstance." The board was accused of using "arbitrary use of power and control" to obtain funds for a repair plan the

parcel owners do not want (1995 and 2012). Mr. Stewart and other board members admitted fears that a 1-mill levy would be turned down. Trustee Nancy Tienvieri confirmed these fears by stating Sept. 16 that the board did not make any effort to put this issue up for a vote in November.

This is taxation without representation and residents should do everything to stop this assessment in order to protect their rights as citizens. Forcibly assessing Bedford parcel owners without their permission flies in the face of every principle of democracy. Board members should go back to the drawing board and get their funds for road repairs and maintenance from funding already available. I demand the board kill this assessment at the public hearing Tuesday.

**Mary Pagels
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