

WHY SHOULD I VOTE FOR YOU? (Rick Steiner)

A Tool to Help Question and Evaluate Candidates for Bedford Township Office

1) **Priorities** – What should be the top five priorities of Township Hall over the next four (4) years? (1 = most important) Why do you feel these are the top five?

- a 3 Improving police protection
- b 3 Improving fire protection
- c _____ Improving parks and recreation
- d 2 Promoting economic development
- e _____ Reducing the size of Township government
- f 5 Full Disclosure of Township financial records (publish on Township web site)
- g 1 Maintaining and improving infrastructure (roads, water, sewer)
- h _____ Reducing litigation against the Township
- i _____ Up-dating Planning, zoning and land use
- j 4 Promoting greater fiscal responsibility and lower taxes
- k _____ Improving services for citizens and being more customer friendly
- l _____ Improving the use of the Township Public Access Station on Buckeye Cable.
- m _____ Making better, bold and courageous decisions that benefit the entire township long term in spite of intense written and vocal pressure from special interest groups.
- n _____ Recognizing and protecting the property rights of all citizens
- o _____ Improving the use of the Township web site to communicate with residents.

Why do you feel that “Your top Five Priorities” are the most important?

I believe all of the items listed are of high priority and should all be of a high focus by the Township Board, but I have selected accordingly –

1. I believe our infrastructure needs to be maintained / improved, and every viable option available should be researched to determine the best plan of action. Roads are in drastic need of repair or replacement. Due to the current funding levels by the state and county, we need to search for and identify other funding opportunities. I would also investigate the option of creating preventive maintenance programs that citizen could utilize “special assessment” to set up maintenance programs well ahead of repair and replace. We do this for our cars and homes, why not our roads. Water and sewer should be part of the capital improvement plan process to ensure the sustainability of the current systems and what will be needed in the future, especially with growth and development.

2. We must begin promoting Bedford and not just wait for the next business to show up on our doorstep. If we bring in the right professionals with the appropriate experience, we can promote and attract new businesses accordingly. Further detail to follow in response to question #2.

3. I have combined police and fire as one item as these are two vital agencies that work hand in hand. These are also part of our infrastructure and are considered to be major pillars of a strong and safe community. People want to feel safe and secure where they live and play. They also want to live where they can receive the most services possible at the lowest cost to the community.

4. Fiscal responsibility is required as part of our fiduciary responsibility. We must meet and work with the “Finance Committee” on a regular basis to have constant awareness of the Township / taxpayer funds. Spending must be restrained when possible while spending when absolutely necessary to perform the functions required by the township.

5. I believe financial disclosure is necessary for the citizens to be fully informed of how their tax dollars are collected, invested, and spent. We must also clearly define how the revenue sharing process works from the state level and how the funds are returned to the township via the "Revenue Sharing" process. We should also create and provide interactive tools on the Bedford Township website that allows the taxpayer to see the financial transactions. Potential investors for future growth and development can also view the financial stability of the community.

2. What is your position on economic development for Bedford Township, especially the Temperance area? What is your plan to encourage economic development?

Economic Development is necessary to maintain and improve the stability and viability of the township. We must take a new approach by seeking out people with professional experience in the areas of economic development, planning, zoning, etc. to serve on the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). We also need to work more closely to create strategic alliances with surrounding townships to think about not only local growth but regional growth as well. We must promote and encourage, not discourage economic growth.

There is a current perception that Bedford is not business friendly. Our goal must be to change that perception as quickly as possible. (Note: I have talked to a few business owners that state that they have had no problems working with the township. They were advised what they needed submit to the township for their business needs, worked closely with the township departments, and they were very pleased with the process and outcome).

We should schedule meetings with the local business community to discuss what things have worked for their business, and what obstacles they have faced, if any. Collectively we can put together a lessons learned program, then work together to promote the right kind of business climate to encourage local businesses to expand or out of town businesses to establish in Bedford.

The EDC should also create an informational and interactive page on the Bedford Township website. This should be developed to promote Bedford and our state. We are "Where Michigan Begins."

3. What is your position on "Town Hall Meetings" where township officials can meet with residents to discuss their concerns and to keep them informed of what is going on in the township? Would you be willing to have these on a monthly basis and also have them televised?

Town Hall Meetings can be a useful tool and promote healthy dialogue that can be used to benefit the township. However, the meetings must be well attended and productive. Attendance must be more than special interest groups, activists, etc. A few options to hold Town Hall Meetings as follows –

- Instead of holding special or separate meetings, the Town Hall Meetings could be conducted on a quarterly basis immediately following the second scheduled monthly board meeting. (allow for special extensions to be scheduled if major impact issues cannot wait until the next quarterly meeting). This option would be a smart use of facilities, resources, accommodate board members and citizens by not having to plan for extra meetings in their busy schedules.
- A second option would be to schedule quarterly meetings with agendas planned by the seven-member board, and citizen input. Again, the meetings must be well attended and productive.

4. What is your position on using the Township Access TV Channel on Buckeye Cable to communicate with the public? For example, a monthly one-hour TV show hosted by the Supervisor or Clerk to get current information out to residents about various issues, township boards and up-coming meetings. Since most Township Board meetings do not last the full 3 hours that is allotted, this show could be broadcasted at the end of one of the meetings each month with the public in attendance.

My response to the previous question also flows into this question. Another alternative action for the local access channel would be to begin providing a 10-15 minute video recording from the clerks department, outlining the board meeting agendas, three to four days prior to the regularly scheduled board meetings. (I selected this to be the responsibility of the clerks department since that office is responsible for keeping the meeting minutes and recordings.)

By providing information in advance to the citizens via the local channel, we can potentially increase attendance and participation at Bedford Township Board and Town Hall Meetings.

5. What is your position concerning having all board members being fully informed before decisions are made at Township Board Meetings? Do you think that there is enough discussion on issues by all board members when decisions are made currently?

Board members should be fully informed in advance of the meetings. I would propose that we establish a secure site to be utilized by the board members. Items to be placed on future agendas can be uploaded well in advance of upcoming meetings and not wait for the final approved agenda to be distributed (Friday before a Tuesday meeting). This process would allow board members more time for review, research, and request more data if necessary prior to the meetings.

Final approved agenda and documents should be placed on the site where board members can download meeting documents for printing instead of having township personnel making home delivery of the meeting packets.

Not only should the board members be informed, the citizens should be informed too. During board meetings, the agendas and documents can be displayed by using an overhead projector or a laptop computer and LCD projector. The supervisor or clerk could operate the display so the public can be following the same information simultaneously with the board members.

6. Do you feel that the current practice of having a township attorney in attendance at all Bedford Township meetings is necessary?

I do not believe it is necessary for the township attorney to attend every meeting. If meeting agendas are screened and it is determined there are agenda items that will require an attorney, the attorney's office shall be notified that their attendance will be required. If a meeting takes place without an attorney present and a legal issue arises, no action will be taken and the agenda item will be postponed to the next meeting where an attorney will be scheduled to attend. The same policy should be applied whenever any paid representation or attendance is required from an outside company or agency.

7. What do you see is your role as a member the Bedford Township Board? Do you think that all board members should take the responsibility for placing topics on the meeting agenda?

The trustees currently serving on the board already have the capability to place topics on the meeting agendas. Nevertheless, I believe trustees should get more involved with bringing issues forward to be placed on the agenda. By holding Town Hall Meetings and having two-way conversations with citizen input, more topics will be generated. Suggested topics will be reviewed and it must be determined that the topic will create productive dialogue prior to being placed on the agenda. The topics must be considered to be a benefit to the community when they make it to the township board agenda.

8. Over the past 8 years the current Bedford Township Board has made a number of important decisions. Do you agree with their decision on the following matters? If not, what is your opinion on these decisions?

a. Bedford Township was involved in 3 major lawsuits in the past 4 years which cost residents thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of lost time by Township officials.

Board members need to perform due diligence to determine if all avenues of negotiating an agreement have been exhausted. Unfortunately, there are times when a situation arises where an amicable agreement cannot be reached between the parties, and a lawsuit is then pursued against the township. During the decision making process, factors including but not limited to the following should be used to determine the best approach for Bedford - fiscal responsibility, tax implications, general fund expenses, revenues, long-term growth and development, environmental impact, infrastructure, fire and law enforcement requirements, etc. Common sense and sound judgment shall be considered before making the final decision to discontinue negotiations when a lawsuit may be imminent.

b. Continued the previous township board's practice of salting away taxpayers' funds (over 1 million dollars) to be used for the construction of a new township hall, even though these funds could have been used for such things as road improvements, park maintenance, police and fire protection.

Long term planning for township expenditures and capital improvement is a necessity. We should not " earmark " funds but rather plan and save with the intention of investing in future growth and development. Well thought out planning should limit the impact to the township's general fund balance. Project funding and investment should be capped based on a percentage of the township budget.

c. Construction of a new township hall.

There were many factors considered to determine whether the old township hall should be renovated or to construct a new township hall. Some of the factors / problems analyzed that impacted the decision to build a new structure were – the old facility was built in the 1960's and planned to be a 40 year structure, 1960's building codes and standards, water issues, leaking roof, leaking windows, extreme condensation due to lack of insulation, mold, potential asbestos concerns. etc. The new structure was planned to last a minimum of 75 or more years.

Bedford Township has tried to collaborate with other government or state agencies to lease out space. There was interest in leasing but those agencies chose not to pursue any lease agreements. Not to be discouraged, we should continue to pursue these agencies or look into other potential tenant opportunities.

d. Denial of bringing a major retailer to Bedford on the Whitman property.

One of the problems during the Whitman issue was that many people in the community did not understand what was really happening. A very high percentage of our citizens thought the sole issue was a Wal-Mart issue. In fact, the underlying issue was a zoning issue, not whether we should or should not allow a Wal-Mart to be built. The step-down or transitional zoning process utilized would have been in compliance with the Bedford Township Master Plan. Unfortunately, the lack of a final agreement resulted in a lawsuit. The long drawn out litigation process has created an "anti-business" stigma for Bedford and we must change that. New leadership and direction will push us to new levels of working with businesses, and create the right perception and image for Bedford.

9. What are some new ideas that you would recommend if elected? What is your "Vision" for Bedford Township in the next 4 years?

I have many ideas to bring to the table but I would begin with some of the following -

- **Immediately improve lines of communication between the governmental body and our citizens.**
- **Set up a scorecard process to measure departments, boards and commissions**
 - **perform reviews to determine if these departments are meeting or exceeding objectives**
- **Schedule regular meetings between the Finance Committee and the Board to review finances and determine if the expenditures are at or below budgets.**
- **Establish an interview process for Boards and Commissions applicants prior to being recommended by the supervisor for appointment.**
- **Require EDC to submit a Goals and Objectives Plan to the Township Board**
 - **Work more aggressively to market Bedford – “We Are Open for Business”**
- **Make recommendations to the Compensation Committee to set equal salaries for the Supervisor, Clerk, and Treasurer offices.**
- **Develop a trash collection program that will reduce the amount of heavy weight truck traffic on our roadways and also reduce other environmental impacts.**
- **Conduct semi-annual Meetings of the Whole – Include ALL Boards and Commissions to be involved in the process.**
- **Work with the Bedford Fire Department, Monroe County Sheriff, and Certified Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T.) to review Township disaster plans and hold mock drills that will include the elected Bedford Township Board members.**

10. How should the public hold you as an elected official accountable for your campaign promises and your votes?

As an elected official, I should be measured and held accountable the same way as I am in the private sector. We should operate township government like a business that has fiduciary responsibility, profit & loss statements, full disclosure, shareholders (the tax payer), and pays out dividends (benefits and services). If an elected official does not perform to the expectation of their employer (the taxpayer), they should be removed from office at the next election.

My functions as trustee include statutory requirements such as fiduciary responsibility, setting policies and procedures, vote on all issues brought before the board, and perform other duties as assigned by the board.

My decisions as a trustee shall not, and will not be driven by special interests, personal opinion, or biases. Decisions will be made based on laws, ordinances, and governmental rules and regulations, and what I believe to be in the best interest of the entire community.

Submitted by Rick Steiner July 22, 2012 rev