

# Public meeting set for proposed road tax

■ Residents can share their opinions on a planned special assessment at a session Sept. 9.

**BY JAY HATHAWAY**

For The Monroe News

**BEDFORD TOWNSHIP** — The Bedford Township Board approved a preliminary plan to create a special assessment to fund road repairs.

The board voted 6-1 Aug. 12 to host public meetings to get input for using a special assessment to fund road projects. Trustee Nancy Tienvieri voted against the item.

The first public meeting is scheduled for Sept. 9 at the Bedford Junior High School cafeteria.

A special assessment does not require a public vote for approval like a tax request does. Instead, the township would collect about \$75 a year for at least five years for each parcel of property. It would generate about \$900,000 a year, Treasurer Paul Francis said.

Mr. Francis said a spe-

cial assessment is a way for Bedford residents to control road repairs instead of waiting for state money.

"If we're going to fix our roads, we're going to have to do it ourselves," he said. "In my opinion, the way to do it would be through a special assessment."

Engineering firm Mannik and Smith helped the township plan projects and estimate costs.

"We can't just build a road and not touch it for 20 years," Mr. Francis said. "We're trying to take a proactive approach, not a reactive approach."

He expressed frustration with the state for its inability to maintain and repair roads.

Trustee Larry O' Dell also questioned the state's response to area roads.

"I don't really believe there is the political will in Lansing to change the system so that we get the roads fixed," he said.

Though she voted for the item, Clerk Trudy Hershberger is hesitant about imposing a tax.

"As a lifelong resident, I personally would not

like the government to impose a tax on my property without at least me having input..." she said.

Mrs. Tienvieri wanted the public's input before the board voted. She also said the township should use some of its surplus funds — about \$3 million — to fund road projects.

"I just think we should spend down our budget balance before we ask the people for money," Mrs. Tienvieri said.

Board members noted voters' unwillingness to pass tax increases.

Supervisor Greg Stewart said this vote helps begin the conversation to solve the road problem.

"We have to have that discussion (with citizens)...looking for ideas," Mr. Stewart said. "If residents can see the value of that \$75 per lot, then we can move forward."