

STATEMENT FOR BEDFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING JANUARY 17, 2006

**PREPARED BY: STEVEN R. LENNEX, FORMER CHAIRMAN AND TWELVE-YEAR MEMBER,
BEDFORD TOWNSHIP CABLE COMMITTEE**

-Steve Lennex; 7261 Forest Valley Road; Lambertville, MI 48144

-Before I begin, I just want to say to Walt that no matter what has transpired in the past or what is said tonight, you can count on my continued best wishes and prayers for a complete and speedy recovery.

-I am addressing you tonight as a private citizen and most recently the chairman of the Bedford Township Cable Committee, on which I served for 12 years and from which I, and others, were unexpectedly and abruptly removed on December 31, 2005.

-I'll get right to the point of my remarks which concerns the cable agreement and the Township's unilateral decision to stop making payments due the schools for funding a local origination studio.

-You are wrong on this issue and I say that with 120 % confidence. Sure you can make arguments (like the students stopped taping your meetings) or your attorneys may find subtle loopholes in the cable contract to justify not paying the schools, but you're still wrong. The facts of this matter are crystal clear and they point in the opposite direction. The facts prove that you not only understood your financial obligations to the schools, but you also paid the schools for a number of years, even before the students voluntarily started taping your meetings. So, clearly you knew that wasn't a condition for payments.

-What facts am I talking about? You already know because we gave you documentation weeks ago. The facts concern (among other things) the contract itself, the documented words and actions of Township officials, and the documentation of payments made by the Township to the schools.

-Facts (Review only if time permits)

1. Contract

- a. No language anywhere requiring students to tape meetings to get payments.
- b. Buckeye is faithfully paying their share (intended for the schools) as part of the franchise fee paid to the Township. Why are you withholding the payment of their share?

2. Words/Actions

- a. Med Barr: Voted “NO” in August 2002.
- b. LaMar Frederick’s comments: Indicate clearly he understood there were still obligations to the schools.

3. Documented Payments

- a. Payments go back before 1998 and before the students started taping the meetings.
- b. The original deal was for the studio and equipment only. Student labor was never part of the agreement. The Township even paid the schools for extra student work done in 1997.

-It saddens me to say that a few of you are even more wrong and, in fact, downright shameful, in the way you have chosen to handle this matter. You seemingly acted out of spite and did unthinkable things to bury the truth, stifle discussion, and obscure public awareness of this issue. In the process, you not only disgraced yourselves but also the principles of good government and democracy in our community.

-You did it by deliberately breaking up the cable committee and removing people (effective Dec. 31, 2005) who knew the facts and the truth but were apparently saying things you didn’t want to hear. Then you got mad that the press got word of this issue (not from me by the way). Well, frankly, people have a right to know and understand this issue, especially cable subscribers who are paying the franchise fee which you are now pocketing in its entirety in your General Fund to the detriment of the schools.

- You did it again by denying the Cable Committee the right to meet on December 27 while everybody was still on the Committee and after the Clerk had already authorized the posting.

Apparently a few of you just removed the posting and nixed the meeting! Everybody that has heard this story has gasped in horror. I, frankly, question the legality and the authority of the individuals that made this decision by themselves. But, even if you have the authority, what a shameful abuse of power that is! How dare you deny private citizens (volunteers no less) the right to assemble! How dare you disenfranchise one of your own committees, negate its hard work and loyal service and, more or less throw it under the bus!

- You did it yet again by refusing to put the cable issue on the agenda for tonight's meeting even though your representative to the Cable Committee agreed to it at our November meeting and even though we gave all of you a packet of materials on December 29, well in advance of this meeting.

-I am not comfortable with any of these questionable actions nor am I comfortable with the Township's decision not to pay anything to the schools. It just seems like you're determined to stonewall the prompt resolution of this matter and justify your position. And, frankly, we're all puzzled by that position. What exactly is the strategy or the upside to what you're doing? To save money? At what expense? At the expense of kids? At the expense of good relationships with the schools? As a citizen, that's not acceptable to me. The Township and the schools have historically had a great relationship and that's the way it should be because all citizens benefit when the Township and the schools work well together.

-In closing, I'd like to make a couple of recommendations. The first is for the Township Board. Please stop playing word games with the cable contract and mind games with the Cable Committee and do the right thing. Restore the cable payments to the schools and reimburse them the money you wrongly withheld from them for the past 3 years.

-Secondly, and this is for both the Township and what's left of the Cable Committee. **Throw out the existing cable contract and start over.** I have read it and re-read it and I am convinced that both the Township and Buckeye have breached that agreement to the detriment of not only the schools but also cable subscribers. I think the Township and Buckeye are both vulnerable. Rewrite the contract and make sure there is no more room for misinterpretation. Make sure the 3 way local origination partnership with the Township, Buckeye, and the schools remains intact because it is certainly beneficial to the entire community. Make it crystal clear that the Township and Buckeye will pay not less than \$10,000 each per year to the schools as long as the local origination studio and equipment remain intact and available for community use. And make absolutely sure that the schools are not required to provide labor to get those funds.

-I hope you will seriously consider these recommendations and act on them promptly so, regarding the cable issue, the Township can move forward on solid legal, moral and ethical footing.

Thank you!