

Schumaker, Zink added to road board (Monroe Evening News December 12, 2012 by Dean Cousino)

The two contractors were picked from four candidates to expand the panel to five members in an attempt to improve road operations and restore faith in the department.

Joe Schumaker of Ida and Jeff Zink of Bedford Township are the newest members of the Monroe County Board of Road Commissioners.

The Monroe County Board of Commissioners picked the two men Tuesday night by identical 9- 0 votes to expand the road board from three to five members.

Both men will be seated after Jan. 1. They will serve for two years and then can run in an election in 2014 for a four- year and six-year term. The two were among four people interviewed in length by the commissioners. Also interviewed were Charles Londo, a former county administrator for 16 years and the new administrator for the City of Luna Pier, and John Fowler, a former county commissioner who owns an excavating business.

Walt Wilburn, former Bedford Township supervisor, also was slated to be interviewed, but he withdrew his name from contention. After the interviews, R. LaMar Frederick, chairman of the county board, asked each commissioner for his or her first choice among the four candidates. Mr. Schumaker got the most votes with six. On a second poll of their second choices, Mr. Zink, 61, drew the most votes. Mr. Zink stayed and was met afterward by Randy Pierce, interim director, and Cheryl U'ran, administrative assistant and deputy clerk for the road agency.

They must be administered the oath of office and will not officially take office until Jan. 1, Philip Goldsmith, the county's legal adviser, said after the three hour meeting. It marked the final regular meeting for commissioners in 2012.

A contractor all his life, Mr. Schumaker pledged to use his knowledge and experience and put a team together to solve the "monumental task" of restoring faith in the road commission. "The abrasive attitudes are hopefully gone over there," he told commissioners. He said he has retired, but worked extensively with municipalities like the City of Toledo, drain commissioner's office, City of Monroe and Dundee to do underground excavation. He said his son has pretty much taken over his business. Mr. Schumaker said the first thing he would do is meet with the 15 townships in the county to find what their immediate needs are. The public has never been kept up to speed on what's going on," he said, adding he was shocked when he learned the road agency wanted to build a new garage off Ida West Rd.

He suggested the county should have five satellite garages throughout the county instead of three garages for quicker response to storms. "It would be like the sheriff's office," he said. "People can reach them easier" when they have concerns. He said the number of engineers at the road commission has tripled from years ago and their services are sometimes redundant when townships have their own engineers. He also said the county has too much control over construction projects that involve asphalt and concrete. "The road commission needs to be in the maintenance part, not construction," he said. "A private contractor can do that." Mr. Schumaker also said that road board meetings are too early in the day (5: 30 p. m.) and should be pushed back so that more citizens can attend. His firm bids for contracts to stay competitive and the road agency must be frugal with its limited income, he said. " It's almost extortion what these townships have to pay," he said. "A culvert replacement cost \$150,000. We did that for \$60,000."

Mr. Zink retired 3½ years ago as president of Zink/Covell Excavating and vice president of Intec Engineering. He ran unsuccessfully for Bedford Township trustee in the November election but served on an advisory committee in the township to deal with roads. His firm helped build three industrial parks in Bedford Township and ones in Frenchtown Township and Dundee.

An Army veteran, he said he would use his more than 40 years of management experience to deal with personnel, unions, permits, budgets and other issues at the road agency.

He said road commission policies should be changed so that it's not such an ordeal to get a simple driveway permit. Although he joked with commissioners about 40 years of dealing with the road commission, he said he was taking the matter "very seriously" of joining the road board.

"I would hope that with the new board, townships would have more voice on who designs and what roads get worked on," he said. "I plan on being very hands- on and have a reputation for working with anybody." William Sisk, vice chairman of the county board, asked Mr. Zink how he would fund fixing roads, noting the county sends more money to the state than what it receives. "This has been an issue the county has faced for two decades," Mr. Sisk said. "You always have these issues and we can't do all the jobs we've been mandated to do."

When Mr. Frederick learned that Mr. Zink's firm had built an estimated 70 miles of new roads, the chairman said "you know how to build them and fix them." Both men said they would not have any conflicts of interest with their firms holding any current contracts with the county.