

WHY SHOULD I VOTE FOR YOU?

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 ____ Improving police protection
 - b ____ Improving fire protection
 - c ____ Improving parks and recreation
 - d 4 Promoting economic development
 - e ____ Reducing the size of Township government
 - f 1 Full Disclosure of Township financial records (publish on Township web site)
 - g 5 Maintaining and improving infrastructure (roads, water, sewer)
 - h ____ Reducing litigation against the Township
 - i 3 Up-dating Planning, zoning and land use
 - j 2 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 feel that these issues are all very important, but I feel the most important one is full disclosure of the Township’s financial records. Financial records and the way in which the Township spends its money should be available to the public. The financial records should be posted on the Bedford Township website, as well as the budgets. The Township needs to be good stewards of the money of the taxpayers and this is a good way to be held accountable.

Secondly, I feel it is necessary to promote fiscal responsibility and lower taxes. No one wants to pay any unnecessary taxes, and the proper planning has to be in place in order for this to succeed. The budget should be reviewed at least quarterly, and adjustments need to be in place if necessary. As Treasurer, I would be open to any suggestions and ideas. I assisted in the audit of Bedford Township’s financial statements for five years, along with Erie, Berlin, and Frenchtown Townships. I have a greater understanding of governmental accounting. This experience also allows me to look at the overall structure of Bedford Township and affords me the ability to analyze the spending habits of the Township.

Next, I think that updating the planning, zoning and land use is also very important. Things that were important 20 years ago may not be relevant today. This issue needs to be addressed continually, and updated as necessary. Times and events change in the Township and this needs to be an adaptable, working instrument that does not become stagnant. We have to constantly be looking for ways to improve our community and be open to new ideas and not be afraid of change.

Fourth and fifth, I feel that the economic development needs to be a priority, along with maintaining and improving infrastructure. With a strong vision of economic development in Bedford Township, the community will start to grow and prosper. This will bring additional funds that will help improve and maintain infrastructure.

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

New business activity is the key to sustained development for Bedford Township, especially in the Temperance area. Not only are entrepreneurs responsible for the growth of Temperance, but a majority of the employment they generate remains as new firms grow, which creates a lasting impact on the economy. We need to promote a culture of freedom and innovation in Bedford by reducing overly burdensome regulations and ordinances. We need to promote a more open-minded policy to encourage new business to the area. We can also offer tax abatements in order to encourage new business to the Temperance area.

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?

I think Town Hall Meetings are a great idea!! What a great way for the residents of Bedford Township to express their views, concerns, questions and any ideas that they may have. Residents can attend the board meetings that are held twice a month to express their concerns. But the Town Hall Meetings would be a different way for residents to express their opinions about things. This Township belongs to everyone that lives in it. The residents should be able to have a location where they can be heard when they have a concern. These meetings can be structured in orderly structure, but obviously be less formal than an actual board meeting. And, of course, televise these meetings. This is a great way to get more residents involved in the things that are going on in the township. Elected officials do represent the residents. This is a great way to keep the elected officials and the residents informed of the things that are happening in our community and surrounding areas.

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.

I think this is a great idea as well. We do have use of the audio/visual equipment during that time, so we should make good use of our time and inform the residents. One of the main questions I hear from residents and I go door to door is that they are not informed of what is happening at the Township. Televising informational issues to the residents about various issues, upcoming board meetings and special trash pick up days would be very helpful.

This could also be used a great way to promote Bedford Township. We could perhaps highlight local people that offer services, or highlight people that provide goods or services. We could also highlight if someone is having a special event or if someone had an idea about community services!! This could also be used as an educational tool to promote such things as pool safety, no text driving, times for burning and the types of containers for burning. Basically this way to communicate could grow to an invaluable tool for the public.

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?

I think it is extremely important that all board members should be fully informed before decisions are made at the Township Board Meetings. How can you possibly make any decisions without knowing all the facts and everything that is involved? Therefore, this becomes a very important issue. The Township Board is responsibility for making major decisions concerning the residents and each and every one of them has a duty to be knowledgeable about the things they vote on.

I don't think there is enough discussion on issues by all board members when decisions are made currently, at least not publicly. The board has the advantage of reviewing the issues on the agenda. I think they sometimes forget that the general public is either in the audience or watching the meeting. The average resident may not understand all the legal descriptions and verbiage that goes along with some of the decisions. I think these issues need to be explained to the general public in terms that they can understand. Some of these issues may affect them and if that happens, most people want to understand what is happening and the consequences of the Board's actions.

I also think that copies of ordinances and items that come before the Township Board need to be made available to the general public. This can be done on the website or by having copies available at the Board Meetings instead of being taped to the table and having to read them before the meeting starts.

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

Sometimes this practice of having a township attorney in attendance at the Bedford Township meeting may be necessary. But, in my opinion, this should not become a policy. We could practice an open government and allow the residents to be informed of things that are going on at the Township and allow them to express their opinions on things, perhaps then, having an attorney in attendance most likely would not be necessary.

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?

My role as a member of the Bedford Township Board will be to represent the residents of Bedford Township. I understand that the role of an elected official is to represent the people that have elected her to office. I understand the level of commitment and time that is involved with this office. I will also have a role in establishing policy and formulating the principles that guide the local government. I will also have to manage and be informed about all aspects of this township in order to make uniform decisions.

I believe that all board members should take responsibility for placing topics on the meeting agenda. I believe that direct interaction with residents of this community along with reading and listening to policies that have already been established will lead me to make informed decisions that will promote continued growth of Bedford Township.

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.

Unfortunately, sometimes lawsuits are necessary, but in this case, I feel a few of these lawsuits may not have been necessary. As with most every lawsuit, there has to be some money spent defending them. I think every possible avenue should be explored to resolve the issues, whether it be gathering more information, holding open meetings, and/or talking to all parties involved to resolve the issues. I think that with some of these lawsuits not all residents were well informed about the matters at hand. The Township Board needs to remember that they work for all the citizens of this Township and make their decisions accordingly. Every effort should be made in order to avoid any type of lawsuit. Most often most these lawsuits can be settled with negotiations and discussions in order to save time and money on unnecessary and unfortunate litigation.

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.

With my experience that I gained assisting during the audit the Township's financial books, along with my extensive background in accounting and financial environments, I have the ability to analyze the flow of taxpayers' funds. These may have not been my choices if I had been an elected official of Bedford Township, as the funds may have used for various other things such as road improvements, park maintenance, police and fire protection. I feel that with more public input into the decisions that the Township Board makes, the ability to make better, informed decisions would definitely increase.

c. Construction of a new township hall.

The new Township Hall is a beautiful building and at the time I think something needed to be done with the old building, due to the declining structure and the problem with mold. In my opinion, the functionality of the new building is not the greatest. There should have been more public input into this building, what it needed to contain and the uses for it. It would have been nice to include a community room could have been open to the public to use for meetings and other purposes.

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

I don't agree with the Township Boards way of thinking on this issue. First of all, they improved the Lewis Avenue corridor between Smith and Sterns Roads. That is a good way to start and bring economic development to a depressed area. So this leads me to believe that their vision was different when it started as opposed to the way it turned out. People did exercise their right to be heard by attending Board meetings to express their opinions pertaining to the subject. Perhaps if we had Town Hall Meetings during all this, the outcome may have been different. In a Town Hall Meeting, residents could express their opinions and because the Board works for the best interest of the residents in the Township, perhaps the majority of the residents should have been asked their opinion and the major decisions could be determined from the majority of residents.

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 would implement a policy of transparency within the Township, not only with the finances but with decisions that are made. We should practice a policy of open government, where residents can get involved and provide input on the issues that come before the Township Board. I would also like to implement a policy of full disclosure of Bedford Township finances. The residents of Bedford need to know that we are spending their money properly. This can be done through Town Hall Meetings and also information should be made available on the Township's website informing residents of the issues affecting the township.

I will develop an nepotism policy for workers at Bedford Township. This policy seeks to avoid the perception of favoritism, conflicts in loyalty, discrimination, the appearance of impropriety, and conflicts of interest amongst employees or elected officials with whom they have a personal relationship. Perhaps a husband and wife can work together, as long as they work in different departments, but it becomes a problem when the husband sits on the Township Board and, instead of abstaining, he voted for lifetime health care benefits for his wife who works at the Township. Who in this day and age, grants LIFETIME health care benefits to anyone in their company? You can't tell me this doesn't directly affect and benefit this man. Did he get any personal gain from this? Is this good management of the money of Bedford Township? This, in my opinion, is a poor, poor management of future funds of the Township. **(Please note that Paul Francis has responded with a rebuttal to this statement. A link to his rebuttal is posted under the section "Why should I vote for you" next to Laura Collins' name.)**

I would like to implement an online credit card payment system and place it in service. This would allow residents the ability to pay property taxes, sewer bills, water bills, etc., online.

One more option to explore is the ability of our Township to become a city. We would not have to rely on Monroe for some of our funding. I think the residents would have a tendency to vote for additional revenue if they knew the money would be controlled by Bedford Township and spent in Bedford Township. This would take a little planning and the government may have to be restructured, but I think it's an option that needs to be explored. As a city, the community would be able to set its own rules and regulations and establish and have control of specific services such as fire, police, traffic controls, etc. We could establish a tax program to go specifically for roads or other needs to continually occur within the Township. We could qualify for various grants from state or federal agencies.

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

The public should hold me accountable as an elected official for my campaign promises and my votes by exercising their right to vote either for me or against me in the next election. This is a very important right given to all United States citizens and it is a good way to have your voice heard.

Board Members work for the people in the community. They have been elected to uphold the rights and values of the residents of the township. This doesn't mean that they should stop asking the people that elected them for input. The decisions that are made in at the Township Board meetings affect all the residents in the Township, the people that have elected these Board members, the residents have invaluable information and they have a right to be heard. I am more than happy to listen to any thoughts, concerns, questions, and/or ideas that anyone may have. One of my biggest advantages is that I offer a fresh perspective with new ideas and I have the ability to evaluate everything with an open mind.

