

One reason we gave up on Bedford is real estate taxes are grossly unfair to business. Many properties sell for less than the tax values and they refuse to lower the tax values. [To verify this go to bedfordmi.org, property/tax info, land search, parcel number; Masserant #02-020-096-00, Northtowne #02-026-058-10, ours 02-027-059-10 and body shop was #02-630-001-00 and #02-014-051-00 (2 parcels) Their "taxable value" has been reduced by 50% so you need to double that amount to get tax values] All parcels have C-3 zoning.

Our body shop sold for \$135,000. We had a tax value of \$270,000. All parties agreed on this price. Our body shop has 2.4 acres, a 5900 square foot building, 3 steel storage containers, and painting equipment attached to the building that new cost \$100,000. For taxes we compared our site to the parcel that is Masserant's store on Secor. They have 2.8 acres, 5500 square foot building, and 4 storage sheds. They have no expensive equipment added to their building. Tax value of the Masserant parcel is \$345,000. This is 2.55 times more than our land sold for and the parcels are very, very similar. (\$135,000 times 2.55) Our sale price will be used by bank appraisers for comparables and essentially ignored by Bedford. This situation is common in Bedford

Our dealership parcel is empty and so is Northtowne's. These parcels are also very similar. Northtowne has 10 acres and a 32,000 square foot building. We have 8.5 acres and a 22,000 square foot building. Northtowne has a tax value of \$1,420,000 and ours is \$1,278,000. The asking price on the Northtowne property is \$900,000.

For simplicity we will compare prices per acre. Northtowne is taxed at \$142,000, Masserant at \$123,000 our dealership at \$150,000 and our body shop at \$112,000. Northtowne is asking \$90,000 and our body shop sold at \$56,000 per acre. All tax values are way above what Northtowne is asking or our sale price. This happens time and again to all of Bedford businesses. The numbers speak for themselves.

We compared acreage for simplicity and picked these sites because they are so similar. We are once again going to sue the township in tax court over our grossly inflated tax valuation. Tax court on commercial property is very expensive for both sides. Bedford could spend tens of thousands from your general budget in tax court. We have the money to do this. Many businesses are not able to challenge their grossly unfair tax value. They are silently bitter about how they are treated. They say nothing because the officials turn on you when you challenge them.

Some tax things approach ridiculous. The Northtowne tax value increased by \$23,000 since 2010 as it sits completely empty. This is in addition to having a tax value of \$500,000 more than the asking price. Bedford businesses are paying literally hundreds of thousands of dollars too much per year in real estate taxes. Buildings become empty and stay empty partially because the real estate taxes are way too high. This unfair tax policy is weakening Bedford businesses financially and destroys business' trust in government. It also keeps people from leasing or buying empty buildings as they see the inflated tax values and know something is very wrong politically. (empty buildings have tax increases in addition to being overtaxed in the first place) Community planning function is much more than just zoning. Tax fairness, permanently empty buildings, a bad reputation, and lack of the public's trust in government are no concern to Bedford's planning efforts.

This indirectly tells every business "we are going to put it to you." The tax numbers speak for themselves. This unfairness is expensive to challenge. This practice has become a permanent part of Bedford's political culture. Nothing good comes from this situation. This is one of the reasons we have given up on your community.

Does public trust still matter? We have asked dozens of people this question: Given what you know about Bedford would you re-buy your house? Two out of three would not re-buy. The rate of increase in serious crime categories is one of the highest in the county. There is no long term planning about problems Bedford faces. State law requires you update the Master Plan every five years. They admitted under oath they have not done it since 2002.

It appears outsiders do not see Bedford in a positive way. The last Bedford politician to win statewide office from was Bev Hammerstrom in the 90's. All others have lost including Bob Schockman. Why do they now lose?

You can read for yourself the deceptive things on the township web site. If this were done by the elected officials in financial products they would go to jail. A Bedford minister recently went to jail for financial deception. Bob Schockman was fined \$7000 for campaign finance violations when he ran for Senator. Sherry Myer has voted against every zoning we requested and the court ruled this is illegal. In Walt Wilburn's deposition (pg 100) he says "there's a lot of things that go on in the community that aren't above board."

If you go to bedfordmi.org, information, library building you could read for yourself how deceptive the library vote was. You were promised that money "would be used to rework the existing building and to accommodate the expansion and to remedy some problems in the electrical and plumbing systems. A new air conditioning and heating system will be required for the current building." Obviously the current building would be saved and improved. How can they destroy it after making those promises?

The township said the reason they did not oppose the referendum is the law they cannot spend money to influence a campaign. In the recent Township Newsletter Wilburn told of many reasons to support the road millage. This newsletter cost money to print and mail. He also holds public meetings to inform you. How can this be legal to spend time and money to influence the road campaign when campaign law forced them to be silent about the referendum? This is how inconsistent government is in Bedford.

Before you vote on the road millage remember some previous votes. A) School expansion millage of about \$25 million to build a new school and expand the high school because there would be so many new students. Now they are closing schools. B) The library 'expansion/improvement' which was completely misleading about the destruction of the existing building. C) Zoning referendum on our land. Wilburn said they had to be silent because of the campaign laws. Why aren't they silent about the road millage? None of these turned out like you were promised. What will be different this time?

We have been asked to say things about our thinking. These are some of the reasons we have given up on your community. Many people have also given up on Bedford. It is not possible to have privately funded projects any more. Feel free to raise millions and prove this wrong. Township officials have no money for anything other than the unlimited funding for lawsuits and lawyer fees. Of all the problems Bedford faces, zoning ranks low. Bedford in the future could easily be known for its high crime rate, poor roads, and dishonest political culture.

What community keeps the public's trust in government by spending hundreds of thousands on lost lawsuits, selectively gives or withholds information, deliberately misleads on the zoning map and has tax policies which are obviously unfair to business? Is Bedford headed in the right or wrong direction?