

PAUL FRANCIS: WHY I DESERVE YOUR VOTE TO THE BEDFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD

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_____ Promoting economic development
- e_____ Reducing the size of Township government
- f_____ Full Disclosure of Township financial records (publish on Township web site)
- g_____ Maintaining and improving infrastructure (roads, water, sewer)
- h_____ Improving the commercial development and revitalization of the Temperance Overlay District & the surrounding area
- .i_____ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for 5-10 years out.
- j_____ Practicing 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
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Why do you feel that “Your top Five Priorities” are the most important?

I believe all of the above issues are worthy priorities for our township.

My goals and priorities as Township Treasurer are:

- ***Continual focus on providing excellent customer service, in the Treasurer’s Department, and in all township business operations***
- ***Strengthening fire protection and prevention services – utilizing the strategic plan to focus services to meet the needs of residents***

- **Strengthen law enforcement services – by reassessing the needs and desires of the residents, then developing plans to fund them**
- **Continual updating of our five year Pavement Asset Management Plan (for road maintenance and improvements), then funding those projects – will enhance economic development**
- **Develop Capital Asset Improvement Plans - strategic plans to forecast future needs and plan to meet those needs (have already started on Fire Service plan, but needed township wide) – will enhance economic development**

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

Over the past twenty years or so it was a fair criticism that Bedford Township had the appearance of being its own worst enemy with respect to creating a business friendly atmosphere. Hindsight always being twenty-twenty vision, in my judgement, this atmosphere was primarily the result of adopting ordinances and developmental guidelines and restrictions, although well intentioned at the time (over 20 years ago), that have now become cumbersome, and in some cases unnecessary. Developers and business owners have probably bypassed considering locating in Bedford Township because of these perceived roadblocks. These ordinances and guidelines need to be thoroughly reviewed and updated, and the process for approval of proposed projects and developments must be streamlined. I'm not convinced that it is the responsibility of the local government to create economic development per se. However, I am convinced that it is Bedford Township's responsibility to create the proper atmosphere, attitude, and incentives which will encourage and allow new businesses to germinate and thrive, and then get out of the way and let it happen.

The real goal of economic development is creation of long term, good paying jobs, and in my judgement those jobs are usually associated with larger employers. Larger employers are generally best approached on a regional basis. The township has partnered with the Monroe County Business Development Corporation, under the leadership of Tim Lake, to give Bedford a seat at the table when larger employers come calling. However, infrastructure (roads, water and sewer) are some of the most crucial items impacting relocation decisions. The township needs to develop a short and long range strategic plan for infrastructure improvements, including an additional industrial park area to accommodate projected future growth.

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 and streamed live on the Bedford Township web site?

As I understand the question, there is really no such thing as a "Town Hall" meeting" as described. Any gathering of four or more elected board members to discuss township matters would fall under the Open Meetings Act requirements – meaning advance public notice, indication of issues or topics to be discussed, agendas, minutes, etc. – all of which could be worked out easily. I would be in favor of holding periodic (possibly quarterly to start, then more often if needed) informal meetings or work sessions where issues or topics of concern could be discussed, but there would be no formal action taken, where anyone would be welcome to attend, to discuss whatever concerns they may have. I suspect it may be more efficient if residents would share in advance the concerns or topics they would like to discuss, to allow board members the opportunity to give informed, thoughtful

responses to the issues, rather than “off the cuff” answers. After all, what’s the purpose here, thoughtful discussion or blindsiding board members? I would have no objection to televising and/or streaming live these meetings on the township website, provided this could be done at a reasonable cost.

4. What is your position on using the Township Access TV Channel on Buckeye Cable and live streaming on the Township web site 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

Rather than initiate a new one hour TV show, hosted by “someone”, with the goal of disseminating important township information, it seems to me current and upcoming information could and should be announced at the end of township board meetings – which in fact is being done right now, and is posted on the township website, but could be enhanced to reach more residents. I strongly support the concepts and goals recommended by the Exploratory Communications Committee, and look forward to implementing them as soon as possible. In my opinion the board should develop and define the scope, guidelines and procedures under which the proposed Communications Advisory Committee would operate. I agree that our entire approach to communications needs to be revamped and refocused as a tool to both better inform residents of township matters and promote the benefits of living and doing business in Bedford Township. The basic structure for disseminating information to township residents is already in place, but due time and increased costs involved, has not progressed beyond the basics. Refocusing of effort and budgeting for equipment and staffing needs to accomplish

more effective communications should be a strong board priority.

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 take issue with the implied premise that all board members are not fully informed before decisions are made at township board meetings. It has been my experience over the last twelve years, that if board members do not feel they are adequately informed about any specific issue, they have not made any effort to get themselves informed. If I have questions on any issues to be considered by the board, it is part of my job as a board member to question or investigate until I am satisfied that I am adequately prepared to make an informed decision on the issues. In my opinion, this question and investigation process should take place before the board meetings, and not at the board meetings, so that process of transacting business and making decisions can proceed in an orderly fashion. In my opinion, board members should come to board meetings fully informed and prepared to deliberate and make decisions on issues – not investigate or interrogate only while the camera is running.

6. There may be some tough future decisions concerning cuts to current employee and trustee benefits. Are you willing to make these cuts if necessary?

Because I firmly believe that our township is in the “Service Business”, I think we need to employ the most qualified and experienced people we can find – to render the most effective and efficient service we can for our residents. After having been involved in township operations

for the past twelve years (on a daily basis for the past four years, as township treasurer), I do not feel that our current employees are overpaid considering the experience they have and the quality of their work product. It's very easy to spout off about employees being overpaid and underworked, without bothering to come in and see what the jobs actually are, and how experienced and knowledgeable personnel provide high quality service to the residents.

7. What is your opinion of the current practice by the Bedford Township Supervisor of limiting the time for public commentary to 2 minutes concerning agenda items and 3 minutes for general comments at the end of each Bedford Township Board Meeting? Would you recommend any changes to this policy?

The public must be afforded the opportunity to attend and comment at board meetings. In order for township board meetings to retain some semblance of order and efficiency, it is appropriate to set some type of reasonable structure for the meeting, so that the necessary business transactions can be accomplished. The current township board has been experimenting with the placing of public comment times during the meetings. Having one public comment time toward the beginning of the meeting, and another later in the meeting seems reasonable, but I am not firmly fixated on the length of each comment time. If additional time seems to be warranted, depending on the issues raised, I wouldn't necessarily be opposed to that being allowed. Public comment time should not be a "Show and Tell" for the camera, but it is difficult to have reasonable restrictions in a free society.

8. What motivated you to seek a position on the Bedford Township Board? 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?

The positions of Supervisor, Clerk and Treasurer have full time administrative duties defined by Michigan statutes, in addition to legislative duties which they share with the trustees. In Bedford Township, the allocation of time is about 80% Administrative and 20% Legislative. The position of treasurer is the key to the checks and balance system of internal controls, which is designed to safeguard the assets of the township. I am seeking re-election as township treasurer because I believe the residents of Bedford Township deserve and expect a treasurer who has first - hand knowledge of the job, professional qualifications, experience in the job, and personal integrity on which they can place their trust. I believe that my record of commitment to Bedford Township over the years, as school board member (8 years), township trustee (8 years) and township treasurer (4 years), prove the point that I am dedicated to our community, and have the maturity and judgement to fulfill the responsibilities of township treasurer.

Regarding the issue of placing items on meeting agendas for board consideration: Traditionally in Bedford Township, meeting agendas are prepared by a committee consisting of the Supervisor, Clerk and Treasurer, simply because they are conducting township business matters on a daily basis, and are aware of issues in their respective areas of responsibility that need board action. In addition, I believe each board member should have and does have the opportunity to place issues on the agendas, but in order to facilitate the orderly conduct of township business meetings, those requested agenda items should be coordinated by the agenda committee. I do not believe agendas should be amended at the board meetings for substantive (not minor or inconsequential) issues whether or not board action would be sought. The public has the right to be notified of issues to be considered by the board so as to afford them the opportunity to comment on that issue should they so desire. Adding

items to the agenda on the fly deprives them of that opportunity.

9. How many Bedford Township Board meetings have you attended in the past year? How many times have you watched the videos of Bedford Township Board meetings during the past year? After attending or viewing past meetings, do you have any recommendations to improve the efficiency and decorum at future meetings.

I've been on the township board for the last twelve years, eight as a trustee, and four as treasurer. I have not keep a record of my attendance, but would venture to say I have attended over 95% of the meetings, absent only for vacation or sickness, and have viewed the videos of those I missed. Regarding recommendations for improving efficiency and decorum for future meetings, I would hope that board members come to the meetings fully informed about the issues to be considered (see comments for question 5 above), and prepared to deliberate issues and make informed decisions, rather than do their "homework" at the board meetings. Regarding board member decorum: I recall the current board members agreeing early in the current term of office to treat each other and their opinions with respect, but that ideal has certainly vanished from many of our board meetings. Board members, some if not most, interrupt other members while they are speaking. Some members make facial or other gestures while others are speaking (watch the videos if you do not believe this). Some members pass notes between each other while others are speaking. In my opinion, a board meeting is no place for childish rude antics like these. Nor are board meetings a place for personal attacks, and we have all witnessed plenty of those over the past four years. Why is it that some cannot disagree without being disagreeable? Our township residents deserve better than this from their elected representatives. Maybe some cannot respect anyone's opinion that may differ from theirs.

10. What are some new ideas that you would recommend if elected? What is your "Vision" for Bedford Township in the next 4 years?

I think the township board should look even further ahead than four years – for future needs such as:

- ***improvement and upgrades to our sewer and systems (approaching 50 years old) – SAW grant funding already being utilized to assess problems and future needs***
- ***road maintenance and improvements (continual updating of our five year Pavement Asset Management Plan, and funding plan recommendations)***
- ***fire protection services – updating and utilizing the strategic plan to focus services and drive equipment and facilities replacements (develop plan for funding those needs), consider adding an additional shift to cover afternoon and evening service period (8 hour shifts supplement volunteers on call)***
- ***law enforcement services – conduct new township wide survey to determine level of law enforcement services residents desire (and are willing to pay for)***
- ***analyze cost effectiveness of replacing street lights with LED fixtures, to reduce monthly operating costs***
- ***Develop system of walking, biking, and running trails in appropriate areas of the township – to promote healthy lifestyles***

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

In my view, township trustees and administrators are elected to be representatives of those who elected them, and are to put aside their

personal preferences and biases, and make decisions based on what they believe to be in the best interest of the community as a whole. A board member will never please every voter with every vote he or she makes. As long as a board member has made decisions based on factual information provided, and in the best interest of the community as a whole, that board member has done what he or she was elected to do. Campaign promises are sometimes lofty and visionary goals, which may or may not even be feasible when tempered with reality. Board decisions are not made in a vacuum, but are made considering facts and circumstances already in place – some of those facts and circumstances prohibit or nullify the best of intentions. Periodic elections are about holding elected officials accountable for actions they have taken while in office.