

Greg Stewart : 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_1_____ Improving fire protection

c _____ Improving parks and recreation

d_3__ Promoting economic development

e _____ Reducing the size of Township government

f _____ Full Disclosure of Township financial records (publish on Township web site)

g_2__ Maintaining and improving infrastructure (roads, water, sewer)

h _____ Improving the commercial development and revitalization of the Temperance Overlay District & the surrounding area.

i_4__ 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_5__ 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?

First let’s address my prior priorities and those I see today. Four years ago I had in my top five full disclosures of Township records and using the Township website to communicate with residents. I was at that time aware of the Governor’s project to create a dashboard approach to government finances which in many Townships and cities in Michigan were in very bad shape, mostly due to continued growth of future retirement and healthcare liabilities. Bedford does not have those problems. The state was going to provide the means to show all municipalities’ “Dashboard financials”. The state never kept updated information and through jumbled statics ruined a good idea. I then looked at the Township Website and saw that we did have the budget, posted all financials to be approved by the board and published all bills by department that were paid and approved by the Township Board. As I dealt with questions in regards to our financial openness I realized two major hurdles. Government financials are not in a format that most people are used to and that many are looking for specific information that in many cases are scattered throughout a budget for many reasons. I then began to attempt to answer financial questions by posting on my section of the Township site. I have not given up but although important it does not have the urgency that safety and infrastructure has at this time.

Here are my top choices:

1 Fire protection

We need a new Fire Chief, we need a Capital Improvement Plan, and we need to continue to look at what changes need to be made to protect our citizens. We have had great volunteers and great leadership over the years and as we have grown we have relied on them heavily. We need to plan and implement plans to give relief to those that have served us so well, we need to put in place another shift to serve so that we do not burn out our volunteers and loose good men and women.

2 and 3 Infrastructure and Economic Development

As I said four years ago, good economic development is attitude and infrastructure. My decade working in Economic Development taught me that most decisions by businesses looking for locations are made long before the local entities know they are being considered. The water, utilities and transportation issues can kill a deal; the demographics of a community are researched long before there is any communications with the Township or County. Our best first step is to have a Capital improvement plan in place and show that we are implementing the plan. Our attitude also needs adjusting. We are too often our own worst enemy when we plaster negativity across the internet when in reality we live in an exceptional community. Our schools excel and produce compassionate, smart, world recognized students. Our economic condition is far and away the best in the region. We have much to be proud of and the world should know. We also have things that need improving and we should work together as a community to solve those issues.

4 Capital improvements Plan

I have already touched on this issue both from an economic development issue and an infrastructure issue. I believe that if we don't plan where we are going in the future, then we just go where the future takes us. To stay in good financial health and to meet the future needs of the citizens of Bedford we must continue to focus on our main mission which is for the GENERAL welfare of the community. That means that our time and efforts should be focused on building and maintaining those resources that gives the most benefit to the most people.

5 Better Bolder Decisions

We have seen our focus on the primary purpose of a Township slip away far too many times in the last four years. While others emphasize community development, Farmers markets, community gardens and how to chat online, we have become distracted on how to keep this Township sustainable, growing and prospering. We are a government service organization created by the state to serve the residents of Bedford Township. To create the atmosphere that others may see the value in contributing to the community through community development groups, business and community minded individuals should be the byproduct of our efforts.

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

I have gone into economic development deeply in other questions but let me touch on the individual areas in Bedford.

I stand ready to assist in putting forward the effort that the communities are looking to change or retain, but it would be arrogant of the Township to change the individual communities into something that is not their vision. The people of the Township have distinct and diverse visions of their surroundings, Temperance, Samaria and Lambertville must be the captains of their own destiny.

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?

The Michigan Township Association tells me that there is no such thing as a Town Hall meeting. The sunshine laws prohibit quorums of elected officials to just get together and discuss township

matters. I am beginning to believe some people have an unhealthy obsession with television. Most of our board is more than happy to discuss ideas, complaints and ways to make Bedford even better, but I will not risk breaking the open meetings act so that individuals can be seen on TV for their own self-promotion.

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.

This idea sounds self-serving and a waste of Township resources. Let those who wish to set time aside to talk to their constituents' one on one. Give them a way to contact you, have an open door like I do.

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 have consistently and throughout my term avoided and objected to bringing items to the agenda at the last minute. Not only does it prevent board members from being prepared, it blindsides interested citizens that may have objections and questions. I have also split the comment time to afford citizens an opportunity to speak on agenda items before there is action taken. I encourage discussion but am disheartened that questions that should have been part of the board's research is so much of the so called discussion.

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?

The premise of the question is flawed, it should ask: What steps should be taken to ensure the highest quality services are provided to this community at the Township Hall? The Township must stay focused on our mission, putting township time and resources into training and retaining the brightest and the best to serve our people. When we become distracted from our real mission and delve into activities best suited to the BBA, charitable organizations and community minded individuals and groups we stray from our mandatory duties that we must accomplish.

Of course I will do what is necessary, but getting to that point is a failure of leadership.

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?

Well I am somewhat biased. I changed the comment time for two reasons, first by having an early comment time it afforded the public the opportunity to comment on agenda items before decisions were made by the board, therefore allowing the board to hear other voices on issues in front of them that evening. I then put a comment time at the end to allow the public to address the board, and the supervisor specifically. This is a time for the public to speak to the board, it is not meant,

and never has been, about addressing the general public. It is not the appropriate venue to get 15 minutes of fame. Someone that is focused on their concerns can easily manage to convey their ideas in three minutes. This board, and I am sure the next board, will be ready to talk to you after or later if you so wish.

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?

My motivation is simple, my education, business experience, and my desire to give back to a community that has given my family so much.

My role would be to build consensus, keep the board more focused and listen.

I have always attempted to accommodate those with items for the agenda. They must be submitted in a timely fashion to avoid blindsiding the public, and I will disagree with the occasional item, but virtually all items brought to the administration are put on the agenda.

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 have been at every meeting in the past year, and use the videos to double check my "things to do" from the meeting.

I made a commitment four years ago in this very survey to try and encourage discussion to let viewers see why certain actions are taken. In so doing I let the board begin to wander and not stay focused. Instead of coming prepared they used the meeting to learn what they should have researched before the meeting. They use the opportunity to bicker instead of respectfully disagreeing.

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 want to move forward with LED lights and eliminate the mercury based lighting we presently have. I want to see our communications committee succeed as a tool to bring awareness and understanding in regards to their Township government. I want to build plans that will ensure sustainability and embrace a quality of life that this community deserves.

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

An elected official should be held accountable for their promises by the results. Did we get better roads? Did we surpass the region and the nation in job creation? Did we create a leaner government through lower legal costs, leveraging funds through grants and other available dollars? The answer to all those questions, all those promises, is yes.