



Forks tax chief asks about raise

She previously sued over low stipend; reorganization leads to no surprises.

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By EDWARD SIEGER
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FORKS TWP. – The township's annual reorganization Monday yielded no major changes but supervisors were asked to consider a pay raise for elected tax collector June Vail.

Vail said she wrote board Chairman John Ackerman in October asking for a pay raise. Vail said Monday she never received a written response to her request.

In December 2003, Vail sued the township to boost her annual \$850 salary. She alleged supervisors set her salary low to discourage anyone from running for the position.

The township and Vail reached a compromise in March 2004 that pays her \$5,000 for the first 2,500 township property tax bills processed and 75 cents for each bill thereafter. She has a separate agreement with the Easton Area School District and collects a fee from preparing township tax certificates.

Vail said she mailed 5,562 township property tax bills last year and earned about \$7,000. She asked supervisors Monday to boost her pay from about \$2 to \$3 a bill.

Vail said other municipalities pay their tax collectors more and that she deserves a raise based on her performance.

"Why our township has to act this way, I don't know," she said.

The board did not discuss the issue. Ackerman said the matter will be placed on the board's Jan. 20 meeting agenda.

As for the reorganization, Ackerman remains supervisors chairman this year, and Supervisor Donald Miller continues as vice chairman. Supervisor David Hoff, who was absent from the meeting, was again named secretary-treasurer.

Supervisors retained Solicitor Karl Kline, engineering firm Keystone Engineering, Zoning Officer Tim Weis and Manager Cathy Kichline.

Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas voted against Kichline's reappointment, but declined after the meeting to explain why.

"It's my opinion," she said. "That's all I'm going to say."

Also Monday, supervisors approved the \$52 Emergency and Municipal Services Tax which replaces the \$10 Occupational Privilege Tax. The tax is levied on all people working in a municipality.

Although the tax can be used for emergency services such as police coverage, Supervisor Henning Holmgaard, board liaison to the police department, cast the lone nay vote against the measure.

"I'm still not a happy camper," he said. "A tax is a tax is a tax."

Anyone working in the township and earning less than \$12,000 annually is eligible for exemption.

The township will collect the tax from its employees over the course of four pay periods, Kichline said. Many township employers indicated they would do the same, but the township cannot mandate how the tax is collected, she said.

Supervisors also hired two full-time police officers, phasing out all the township's part-time patrol officers.

Chief Greg Dorney recommended supervisors hire William Mills and Michael Friel who had both previously worked part-time for the department since October 2003.

Mills, of Moore Township, also worked part time for the Moore Township and Bangor police departments. Friel, of Bangor, also worked part-time in the Bangor Police Department.

(Reporter Edward Sieger can be reached at 610-258-7171 or by e-mail at esieger@express-times.com.

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