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Fired manager's deal OK'd

Forks dismissed Cathy Kichline in July. Insurance coverage will continue through end of September.

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By SARAH MAUSOLF
The Express-Times

FORKS TWP. | Supervisors approved a severance package for former Township Manager Cathy Kichline this week.

The board fired Kichline July 10 in a unanimous vote.

A written copy of the agreement spells out the following terms for the severance package:

(Kichline will receive four bi-weekly payments of \$2,536. The payments cover pay periods ending July 23, Aug. 6, Aug. 20 and Sept. 3. They are subject to taxes.

(The township will provide health-care benefits for Kichline and her daughter through Sept. 30, 2006.

(Kichline will receive compensation for 106 vacation hours and one personal day hour at her hourly rate of \$31.70. That adds up to \$3,391.90. The sum is subject to taxes.

(The township will provide group life insurance of \$40,000 through Sept. 30, 2006.

Supervisors approved the agreement in a 3 -1 vote Thursday night. David Hoff, C. David Howell and Donald Miller cast the "yes" votes. John Ackerman was absent.

Bonnie Nicholas, the sole dissenter, declined to explain the reason for her vote, citing legal restrictions.

"We're really not supposed to get into that kind of stuff, so I really can't comment on that," she said Friday.

Supervisors who approved the package expressed satisfaction with the terms.

"I thought it was fair," Hoff said. "It wasn't excessive."

Hoff said severance packages are common in private industry when a company parts ways with its employees.

Kichline deserved some form of compensation, Miller said.

"We worked it out with her attorney and ourselves and, obviously, we felt she should have something to

hold her over until she finds a new job."

Howell said the terms fall in line with what any non-uniformed employee in the township would be entitled to receive under a contract.

Kichline agreed to the terms of the severance package, her attorney, Lawrence B. Fox of Bethlehem, wrote in a fax Friday. He wanted to conduct the interview by fax to meet an agreement he has with township Solicitor Karl Kline about speaking to the press.

Fox described the package as "an equitable settlement fair to both parties."

To fund the severance package, the township will use money previously earmarked for Kichline's salary, finance manager James Farley said. The 2006 budget allocates about \$65,000 for her salary.

Kichline served as township manager since September 2002.

Several supervisors declined Friday to elaborate on the reason for Kichline's dismissal. A letter introducing the severance package rules out "willful misconduct."

"The board merely decided that it was appropriate to make a change in the position of township manager in order to more effectively move the township forward in a new direction," the letter states.

Fox said Kichline "performed her duties as township manager in a professional manner, and was not terminated for a cause."

A clause in the severance agreement forbids both sides from discussing Kichline's termination with any parties unrelated to the negotiations.

Hoff said the board expects to discuss the township manager position during its first meeting in August. He hopes to find a replacement by late September, so the manager can be involved in early budget discussions.

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