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Potential raises leave Forks budget in limbo for 2 weeks

Supervisors deadlock over 3% or 4% hikes for 6 department heads.

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A deadlock over whether to grant 3 percent or 4 percent raises to six department heads in Forks Township has pushed off a final vote on the township's 2006 budget for two weeks.

Supervisors ended in a 2-2 tie Thursday in a vote to adopt a general fund budget of nearly \$7 million that holds property taxes at 4.6 mills for the 10th straight year. Supervisor Chairman John Ackerman and Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas voted against budget adoption, with Henning Holmgaard and Donald Miller supporting the spending plan. Secretary-Treasurer David Hoff was unable to attend the meeting.

The board voted 4-1 to tentatively adopt the budget Nov. 17, with Nicholas casting the dissenting vote over raises for salaried employees who are not part of negotiated union contracts. That proposed budget included 4 percent raises.

Ackerman said Thursday he recalled that a previous poll of the board supported a 3 percent raise for department heads. Nicholas has objected to blanket raises for non-contract workers without performance evaluations, something supervisors have discussed implementing in 2006.

Miller said all department heads are doing a good job and added the 4 percent raise is nearly equal to the 4.1 percent cost-of-living adjustment being granted to Social Security recipients next year.

Township Manager Cathy Kichline, one of the department heads being considered for the raises, told supervisors the difference between a 3 percent raise for the affected employees and a 4 percent hike totaled \$3,100.

Supervisors voted to hold a special meeting at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 29 to adopt the budget.

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