

From The Morning Call

July 11, 2006

Forks board votes to fire township manager

Solicitor said supervisors wanted 'to move in a new direction.' Both sides are working on severance plan.

By Joe Nixon Of The Morning Call

Forks Township supervisors voted Monday to fire Township Manager Cathy Kichline, a move township solicitor Karl Kline said was made because the board "felt it was time to move in a new direction."

The township and Kichline's attorney, Lawrence B. Fox of Bethlehem, are working out details of a severance package, Kline said Monday. Supervisors, after meeting in executive session for nearly three hours, cast a unanimous vote to remove Kichline, who held the post since September 2002, when she replaced George Gemmel.

Fox attended Monday's meeting but had no comment on Kichline's behalf after the vote. Kichline, 45, could not be reached for comment at her Upper Nazareth Township home. She last worked on Friday.

Supervisor Chairman David Hoff and Kline would not comment on why the board decided to let Kichline go, saying it was a personnel matter. Hoff said it was not related to a controversy that erupted at Thursday's supervisors meeting over a \$3,000 custom wood table that was purchased for the lobby of the new township municipal building. Two supervisors, Bonnie Nicholas and John Ackerman, publicly questioned the purchase. Supervisors held an executive session after Thursday's meeting, but Hoff on Monday would only say it was for personnel reasons.

Kline said Kichline was not removed for willful misconduct and explained she served at the will of the supervisors. He said under the second-class township code, supervisors can remove a manager for any reason, or for no reason at all. Hoff said Kichline did not resign.

Hoff said the supervisors' committees and township department heads will run the township until Kichline's replacement is found. He said he expected the township will advertise the opening in local and state publications.

"We'll open it up," he said. According to the township budget, Kichline was to be paid \$65,936 this year.

Before Forks, she was borough manager in Bath.

The township saw several major changes during her tenure, including the completion of the \$10 million municipal complex that included a new municipal building and fire station and a doubling of the size of the police station. The township hired its first finance manager under her watch and also went to a full-time police force. She was also among the planners of the township's 250th anniversary celebration in September 2004.

However she did not enjoy unanimous support among the supervisors. She was reappointed by a 3-2 vote in January, with Nicholas and Ackerman casting the dissenting votes. Nicholas also voted against retaining

Kichline in 2005.

Copyright © 2006, The Morning Call