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Meeting of split votes returns Ackerman as Forks Township chairman Divided board also has trouble selecting its vice chairman and reappointing manager.

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Of The Morning Call

Forks Township supervisors failed to reach a majority vote Tuesday night to elect a chairman, which meant the job stayed with current Chairman John Ackerman.

A divided board also initially deadlocked on selecting a vice chairman, before a unanimous vote was cast for C. David Howell. Howell was elected to the board in November over former Police Chief Leon Fisher and sworn in to office Tuesday.

Ackerman and previous board Vice Chairman Donald Miller were both nominated for chairman, but the vote remained deadlocked when Miller declined to vote for himself. Miller said he didn't want to be chairman if the support was not unanimous.

Ackerman said after the meeting that he believed his support of Fisher in the fall election was why he failed to get more support for chairman. Howell said that did not come into play in his decision. He said he supported Miller for chairman because of Miller's neutral nature and ability to look through controversy to find solutions.

"I have not supported John Ackerman as chairman since he's been on the board," Supervisor David Hoff said after the meeting. Hoff said there were other reasons why he didn't support Ackerman, but declined to elaborate.

"I just think the board needs to find a way to work together," Hoff said.

Ackerman had the support of Supervisor Bonnie Nicholas, while Miller was backed by Hoff and Howell.

A similar tie vote for chairman occurred when Hoff was supported by Howell and Miller, but opposed by Ackerman and Nicholas. Hoff, like Miller, declined to vote for himself. Hoff nominated Howell for chairman, but there was no second to his motion.

Hoff was unanimously re-elected secretary-treasurer.

The split board also surfaced in reappointing Township Manager Cathy Kichline, voting 3-2 with Ackerman and Nicholas dissenting. "I didn't want her as township manager," said Nicholas, who declined to elaborate and who voted against Kichline last year. Ackerman said he didn't think Kichline was doing "the job she ought to do," but also declined specifics.

Kichline, manager since September 2002, said neither Ackerman nor Nicholas has "indicated to me that I'm not doing something I should be doing."

She pointed to several successes including the hiring of a finance manager and implementation of new computer software, a special census in 2003 that brought in an additional \$35,000 in liquid fuels money, and renegotiated interest rates with banks that netted the township an additional \$80,000.

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