

Two Questions about the 2-28-2017 Vote to Hire a Township Manager

1. Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?
2. There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

The questions were written, distributed and collected by David Gordon

Northfield Township Trustee Responses, 3-20-2017

- **Lenore Zelenock, Township Treasurer**
- **Kathleen Manley, Township Clerk**
- **Marlene Chockley, Township Supervisor**
- **Janet Chick, Trustee**
- **Tawn Beliger, Trustee**
- **Jackie Otto, Trustee**
- **Wayne Dockett, Trustee**

Lenore Zelenock:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

I ran for treasurer to protect our tax dollars. By not having a manager, we can save around \$50,000 a year. I do not think we received enough value for the \$100,000/year we paid the prior manager.

The previous manager made recommendations that the Board followed and lost nearly \$500,000 from our investments. That was above and beyond what his salary cost us.

If 97 of 100 townships in Michigan and if 21 of 22 townships in Washtenaw County can operate without a manager, so can we. In the end, we should protect the taxpayer's dollars and not hire a manager.

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

In my campaign, I promised to keep the people informed and that is why I sent the postcard. I wonder how many of our residents even knew the manager resigned. Or that we hired a manager in 2013.

I was extremely satisfied with the number of people who responded to my postcard by coming to the Board meetings, sending emails, or making phone calls. It is not easy to make your opinion heard. It takes time, effort, and courage.

I had many people tell me they did not want to have a township manager but they felt the Trustees had already made up their minds and their opinion would be ignored. That's not good.

The overwhelmingly opposition to hiring a township manager confirmed my decision to vote NO. A big "Thanks" to everyone who responded to my postcard. It truly meant a lot to me.

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Kathleen Manley:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

After researching the position, speaking with other Townships, employees, the MTA and others, I voted against hiring a Township Manager. People want to be lead, not managed. Voters want to go to the Township and speak with an elected official, not a hired spokesperson. We have a Supervisor that is capable of doing the job, and willing and able to do the job, so we should let her. She stepped up when Howard left, and has done a great job. A majority of Townships in Michigan do not have a manager, which says a lot. A manager furthers the distance between the taxpayer and their elected representative.

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

I ran my campaign that I would be the VOICE for the people. The people spoke, and I did listen. I did read each email, and voted with what the people wanted. That opinion was the same as mine.

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Marlene Chockley:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

Could a township manager have value? Sure. But could there be a better use of the \$100,000 or more per year it would cost? I think so. That's why I voted no.

We have a great many capital needs. The township recently purchased 23 acres and is in the process of determining how best to use it. Most of the ideas received from our citizens cost money. It could be improved to offer lake front recreation. That's not free. We are hoping to complete a non-motorized path on Barker Road from the elementary school to downtown. It will serve a great many citizens, especially helping to keep children safe. That's not free. A sidewalk or bike connection over US 23 at 8 Mile Road to downtown could have been had for less than \$40,000. We could actually improve our public parking area (a big sore spot for some downtown businesses) at 75 Barker. Many of our roads, both in the rural and the developed areas, are in need of maintenance. If we can provide the match that the road commission requires by law, it effectively doubles the money so \$50,000 turns into \$100,000 of improvements. Even a small amount of money can be matched for the natural areas or farmland protection that our citizens ranked so highly in the last 2 surveys.

We have staffing and space needs that could be addressed and building maintenance issues that have been ignored for years. All that costs money. Investing in our community will pay dividends in improved property values and an increase in commercial and residential development. That will pay dividends by spreading out the tax burden for the necessities and amenities that our citizens expect.

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

I truly appreciate those who wrote in no matter their opinion. The overwhelming slant confirmed my vote. There are pros and cons to each form of government, but in a very small township like ours, a township manager is a rarity. It cost \$12 for every man, woman, and child in the township. I would like to see what it saved that would not have been saved by an engaged board.

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Janet Chick:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

I will always vote in favor of those items that provide the greatest benefit to our community and its residents. If that means putting someone in place with the best education, expertise and skills in a municipal management position than that is what I will work to do. Our residents deserve it. If anyone is interested in the greater details on my consideration of the issue I would direct you to the Northfield Area News site where the issue was discussed at great length before the vote to hire occurred.

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

I was told the number of cards mailed was around 2,200. If that is correct than we did not hear from 2129 residents. Over 96% did not feel compelled to respond.

I had two initial concerns with the postcard and spoke with Lenore about this before and after the cards were distributed and tallied. My first concern was that unless the public had a good working and detailed knowledge of the difference between both a Board/Supervisor structure of government and a Board/Manager structure it would be nearly impossible to make a judgement based only on the results of the mailing that would be reliable enough for the board members to use as the only consideration in making a decision.

The second issue for me is that it was not a survey. A survey would present each side of an issue giving enough information for the responder to make an informed decision....OR at least addresses an issue which the responders have good knowledge. This postcard did neither. It made a personal statement based on one person's position with one set comments that the author presented as items to consider, then asked if the reader was for or against hiring a manager. There is so much more to consider in a decision of this importance. There is also a difference between ensuring an outcome based on limited information and seeking a balanced informed response.

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Tawn Beliger:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

Why I voted in favor of a manager at this time,

...I understand that a few years ago, there developed some serious issues with a few elected officials that failed in the performance of required duties. And as a result of these many troubles, a township manager was sought to resolve these issues. In doing so, the structure, or format, of the government was altered.

The current structure of the Northfield Township governing board, includes a PART TIME clerk, treasurer, and supervisor, with a FULL TIME manager. In this recent election, the clerk, treasurer and supervisor positions were sought by candidates on the premise that the positions are PART TIME. Candidates applied, and ran, for offices based on the premise that they may be elected to the mentioned PART TIME positions. It is also to be considered, that the pool of candidates to run for office, would be significantly different were the 3 officers positions FULL TIME.

Let it be considered that an alteration in the structure of the government should perhaps coincide with an election year, thus providing potential candidates with clarity as to the positions sought, duties, and compensation. To enact a change in the structure of the governing body immediately after the election, is in my perception, unfair to all.

NOTE, Prior to our current governing structure, the clerk, treasurer, and supervisor roles were FULL TIME positions, and no manager was present.

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No Response

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Jackie Otto:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

No Response

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

No Response

Wayne Dockett:

1 - Why did you vote either for or against hiring another township manager?

No Response

2 - There was a great outpouring of correspondence on the manager issue from the public. A total of 61 missives were received. The tally was 54 against and 7 in favor. What impact did this have on your vote?

No Response

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