

## Manager leaves after no pact with supervisors

09 Jul 2010 — Bucks County Courier Times

middletown

The next manager will be Middletown's sixth since 2004.

Middletown Township Manager Raymond Stepnoski has left his job, he confirmed Thursday, his last day with the township.

Approached in his office Thursday, Stepnoski - township manager the last two years - wouldn't comment on the reasons he left. However, a copy of a letter from township labor attorney Tracy Paul Hunt to Stepnoski obtained by the newspaper indicated his contract wasn't renewed because the two sides couldn't reach a new employment agreement.

The supervisors voted June 7 not to renew Stepnoski's current employment agreement and to start negotiations with him on a new one, with an eye toward saving the township some money. According to Hunt's letter, the supervisors weren't receptive to Stepnoski's proposals for a new agreement.

"Based on both your rejection of the Board of Supervisors' offer of contract terms and upon your counter-offer, the Board of Supervisors will not be offering you a new employment agreement with Middletown Township and will allow your current employment agreement to expire at the end of business tomorrow, July 8, 2010," said Hunt's letter, which was dated July 7.

Stepnoski, a Democrat and former supervisor and township manager in Buckingham, was hired in Middletown by a Democratic board in July 2008. The board is now 4-1 Republican, though the board members who wanted a new deal with the manager have said politics weren't a factor and they were trying to save Middletown money.

Stepnoski was making \$124,897 a year.

"I'm not going to throw stones at anyone," he said Thursday during his last hours on the job. "Middletown is a great place. The people have a lot to be proud of, and I hope things go well for everyone. Hopefully, I did some good while I was here. I was just trying to do what was best for the citizens."

Township employees said Thursday they didn't know who the acting manager would be until a permanent replacement is found for Stepnoski.

Republican Supervisors Tom Gallagher, Drew Kreiling, George Leonhauser and Patrick Mallon all voted to renegotiate Stepnoski's agreement after emerging from an executive session at the June 7 meeting. The lone Democrat, Robert McMonagle, had left the meeting and didn't vote on the matter.

McMonagle later claimed the move to rework Stepnoski's deal was just a ruse by the rest of the supervisors to get rid of him, a charge the other board members have denied.

"I believe the township is now in danger of litigation over this," said McMonagle. "While any township manager in PA serves at the pleasure of the elected board, this board's statements and actions do not jibe with any good faith negotiation. + I believe this will be actionable."

The newspaper was unsuccessful in reaching Gallagher, the board chairman, and other supervisors for comment Thursday.

After the June 7 vote, Gallagher said: "These are very distinct and troubling economic times and I think we have to practice some real fiscal responsibility, and I think that needs to start at the top by example. I've told Ray myself at a meeting that I want to keep him. I'm hoping he will agree to a new deal and we can work something out."

According to Hunt's July 7 letter to Stepnoski, the supervisors wanted the manager to give up certain provisions in his employment agreement. Among the proposals: elimination of language requiring the township manager to be the highest paid employee; elimination of the \$500 township manager monthly car allowance; and a provision that Stepnoski contribute to his health insurance premium.

Hunt's letter indicated that Stepnoski's counter-offers weren't acceptable.

After 20 years of relative stability under John Burke from 1984 to 2004, the township manager's office has had a revolving door. There have been three permanent managers and two acting ones in the last six years.

Chris English can be reached at 215-949-4193 or [cenglish@phillyBurbs.com](mailto:cenglish@phillyBurbs.com).

*"Manager leaves after no pact with supervisors" Bucks County Courier Times 09 Jul 2010: A1*