

Township manager post filled for now

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middletown

For the second time, the township's parks and recreation director has stepped into the acting manager's role.

Parks and Recreation Director Debby Lamanna will serve as acting township manager in Middletown until at least Monday, and possibly beyond.

The temporary appointment comes after Manager Raymond Stepnoski left the job Thursday after failing to reach agreement with the supervisors on a new employment agreement.

Lamanna said she would continue as acting manager, if asked, until a permanent replacement for Stepnoski is found. Supervisors Chairman Tom Gallagher said the board would decide Monday night on who will continue as acting manager, a role Lamanna filled for about four months in late 2005 and early 2006 before Richard Gestrich was hired.

Lamanna, the parks and recreation director since 2000, said she has no interest in being the permanent manager.

"I think my role as acting manager is to keep things moving along and make sure all the work gets done until the new manager arrives," she said. "I have some experience with this so I think I can be helpful. I would say it's difficult when any chief administrator leaves an organization. But we have very capable and experienced department directors and very capable and dedicated employees and we'll all make sure the public does not see any reduction or change in the level of township services."

Gallagher said he and other township officials held a meeting with employees Friday morning to explain the Stepnoski situation.

"Personally, I think Debby should continue as acting manager but that is up to the entire board and not just me," said Gallagher.

He repeated his contention that the move to negotiate a new agreement with Stepnoski was to save the township money and not political. Stepnoski, a Democrat, was hired two years ago by a Democratic board that has now turned 4-1 Republican.

Robert McMonagle, the lone Democrat, claims Stepnoski was unfairly pushed out, a charge denied by the other supervisors.

"This has always been a best interest of the taxpayers issue," said Gallagher of the move to rework Stepnoski's deal.

At Monday's meeting, the supervisors will solidify the acting manager's position and talk about wording on an advertisement for a new permanent manager, said Gallagher. The supervisors meet at 7:30 p.m. at the township municipal center, 3 Municipal Way.

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