

Trustees vote down DPW raises

Written by SARAH McCRAW
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Divided Village Board refuses to adjust pay to cover overtime change

The Belgium Village Board last week denied wage increases for two Department of Public Works employees whose overtime pay has been reduced by a new policy.

Trustees discussed the issue for 20 minutes on Monday, March 11, before voting 4-3 against the 30-cent-an-hour raise recommended by the Finance and Personnel Committee last month.

A policy approved by the board last year states vacation and sick time cannot be counted as time worked during a 40-hour week when calculating overtime pay.

Treasurer Kelly Brinkman calculated the difference between the old method of determining pay and the new method and discovered it meant a \$600 annual loss for public works employees Pat Wester and Paul Bley.

The Finance and Personnel Committee proposed the raise to mitigate the impact of the reduction in overtime pay, but the majority of board members did not agree with that approach.

“The policy may have had a negative impact on your pay, but we didn’t have any guidelines and now we have guidelines in effect,” Trustee Ken Hirschmann said at the meeting. “I just don’t see a need for a pay raise.”

Trustee John Hise said the proposed pay raise would be a way for the village to show its appreciation to workers by keeping their amount of income at a similar level.

But Trustee Vickie Boehnlein asked, “Where does that line get drawn then? How do we show our appreciation that is cost-effective?”

Village President Richard Howells said a policy that reduces overtime should not be confused with a wage decrease.

“Here’s why I’m against the raise — there is no loss of income because there is no guarantee of overtime,” Howells said, adding that the suggested pay increase is not in the current budget.

Wester said the board has approved expenditures that were not in the budget before.

“Last year the board purchased \$40,000 worth of land out there that was not in the budget. You purchased a \$20,000 vehicle that was not in the budget. Don’t use the ‘not in the budget’ excuse because that’s saying we’re less important than a car,” Wester said

Trustee Acevedo said, “I agree with all of that. This Village Board will vote to spend money on anything, yet when it comes to the employees we will argue over \$1,000, \$600 or \$500.”

Annual reviews for DPW employees will take place this fall, Hise said.

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