

‘A heart of gold’

Kermit Frazier

Bedford Township, Bedford County

24 years of service

BY BRENDA WILT / ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Kermit Frazier, chairman of the board of supervisors for Bedford Township in Bedford County, is a man of few words. His reticence masks a head full of knowledge, though — a wealth of information about the community in which he has lived for 54 years.

“When I need a question to be answered, I go to him,” township secretary Janie McMillen says. “He’s very astute about what is required in the township and of the township.”

All of that knowledge will be missed when Frazier retires at the end of this year, McMillen says. “I told him he’s going to be on speed dial when he leaves,” she says. “I’ve told him he needs to write a book so we’re not left in the dark.”

‘A decent job’

Frazier moved to the township in 1955 after marrying a local girl. His bid to serve his community, however, did not come easily.

“I ran for supervisor three times before I finally got elected,” he says. “I thought it was a decent job to have.”

In addition to his position as chairman, Frazier shares the job of roadmaster with fellow supervisor Rick Fetter. As in many townships, road maintenance is a constant concern.

“There are a lot more demands as the township becomes more populated, especially to get all of the roads blacktopped,” Frazier says. About four miles of the township’s 70 road miles are still dirt. “The cost makes it difficult to blacktop the dirt roads and keep up the ones that are already paved,” he says.

Frazier and his fellow supervisors have also been dealing with residents’ reactions to the proposed 24-turbine wind farm that will span Bedford, South Woodbury, King, and East St. Clair townships. Bedford Township has a wind ordinance in place to regulate what it can, but many residents are still fighting the development.

“Some people don’t like the look of them and say they make too much noise,” Frazier says, “but I don’t have a problem with them.”

‘Unsung hero’

When dealing with riled-up residents, the longtime supervisor listens and doesn’t make rash judgments, McMillen says. “The years of experience help him in the decision-making process,” she says. “If he hasn’t run across a particular situation in the past, he’s probably been through something similar. I hope the person who takes his place will be able to dissect issues as he does before making decisions.”

One of the downsides to being in office for four terms is watching township government change, the secretary says. “It’s always difficult for someone who’s been here that long to see all of the new rules and regulations that come down from the state or federal government,” she says. “All you can do is present them to the residents as simply as possible and hope you retain their respect.”

The statewide building code was one new regulation Frazier got behind wholeheartedly. He says he is particularly proud of getting code enforcement in place, not just in Bedford Township but in the entire county.

Because Frazier doesn't like to toot his own horn about his accomplishments, McMillen is happy to do it for him. During his tenure, the township has created Little League fields, formed a joint municipal authority, built a new salt shed, purchased property, implemented intersection upgrades to improve safety, and tapped into new water sources for the community, she says. Frazier even went door-to-door to convince residents to support the creation of an agricultural security area in the county.

"Kerm expanded the township's 'bulky waste' day to the entire county and donates his own time to help with it," McMillen adds. "He gives a lot of his own time to the township. He's always working behind the scenes and is truly an 'unsung hero.'"

The secretary says Frazier is "from the old school" and doesn't mince words when he does have something to say.

"People respect that, and if they have a problem with it, they let him know," she says. "Residents appreciate him for being who he is. He doesn't blow any smoke. People know where he comes from and what he's about, and they can understand that."

Although Frazier has changed as he's needed to, McMillen says he knows it's time to move on and let someone else step up to do the work. Not that he'll be slowing down, though. The supervisor says he'll spend his retirement helping his son and grandson on their farm, and McMillen suspects he will remain a fixture in the township.

She'll be happy to still have him around. "Underneath that gruff exterior," she says, "is a heart of gold."