

## Supervisors mull vehicle purchase

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middletown

Middletown supervisors will talk again at Monday night's meeting about whether casino cash could foot the bill for six new vehicles and save the township about \$158,000.

At their Feb. 16 meeting, supervisors delayed buying three police cruisers, two pickup trucks - one for the public works and one for parks and recreation departments - and a hybrid SUV for the fire marshal's office from the state bid list.

Supervisor Drew Kreiling suggested if the purchases can be put off for a few months, the township might be able to fund them with its annual grant from the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority. The grant, funded with money from the Parx Casino in Bensalem, usually is announced in November.

Board member Robert McMonagle suggested putting the vehicles out to bid in hopes of lower prices and the time to coordinate with the next round of casino grants. The supervisors will discuss those options again Monday.

Township Manager Ray Stepnoski will report on whether it's advisable to delay the purchases - especially the police vehicles - because of safety and other considerations.

The six vehicles are: three Ford Crown Victoria cars for the police at \$23,909 apiece, two Ford F-350 pickup trucks at \$29,000 each and an all-wheel-drive Ford Escape Hybrid SUV for the fire marshal's office at \$29,000.

Acting Public Safety Director Patrick McGinty said he believes the three police vehicles awaiting replacement each have more than 100,000 miles on them, so a delay isn't advisable. If the purchases are approved Monday, it might be several more months before the township gets them, he said.

Fire Marshal Jim McGuire said the hybrid SUV should save on gasoline costs because it runs part of the time on gasoline and part of the time on electric power. The added room of an SUV is needed to carry investigative and other equipment, he added. He said all-wheel-drive is important because the vehicle is used in inclement weather and sometimes must travel over rough terrain.

McGinty said equipment needed to make a vehicle hybrid doesn't mesh well with the special equipment on a police patrol vehicle, such as a larger alternator and stiffer suspension system.

"I don't know of anyone in this area using them for regular patrol," he said. "I suppose in the future we could think about them for non-emergency uses like transporting evidence."

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