

Letter To Our Editor

Time To Adopt Village Form Of Government

Editor, Journal:

Last week, an article appeared in the local press where a Park Ridge resident requested that the city bring back 14 aldermen to the council—two per ward. Moreover, the mayor indicated his support for this proposal suggesting that the vote to downsize was a reflection of voter frustrations with the “council wars” and not a belief that seven aldermen would be better than 14. I disagree. In fact, in August 2006, I submitted a writing to the local press that supported the smaller council.

The mayor ignores or is unaware of the facts supporting a smaller city council. In mid 2006, I conducted a mini study of the suburban towns, villages and cities northwest of Park Ridge; about 30 to 40 in number. The results of that survey were that most of the communities were organized as

villages with a mayor and from six to eight trustees elected at large. Of the cities in the study, Des Plaines has one alderman per ward and Evanston has one alderman per ward, downsizing from two per ward in the recent past. Two aldermen conducted their own study which showed that only one suburb, the City of Elmhurst, with two aldermen per ward. So out of all the communities in the suburban Chicago land area, only one was similar to Park Ridge. We were simply out of step with other communities.

In my writing of August 2006, I also pointed out that there were a number of aldermen who ran unopposed. The purpose of an election is to provide the citizen with choice so that we have a representative government. When an elected official runs unopposed, he becomes an alderman by default. This kind of election does not assure

us of the candidate that best serves our interests. A change to increase the size of the council would only make this problem worse. There is a fundamental issue here that needs to be addressed: namely, we live in a world that is fast moving where time is a premium. We just do not have a sufficient number of candidates who are able and willing to serve as aldermen. Based on this, we have to ask ourselves whether the city form of government, with aldermen and wards, is still appropriate for Park Ridge, I think not. The city form of government is appropriate for Chicago where the issues and priorities of Edison Park are substantially different from the Englewood neighborhood, one of the highest crime areas in the country. The issues in Park Ridge are not all that different from ward to ward.

I am proposing a referendum for the next election to transform the govern-

ance of Park Ridge from a city to village form of government with six to nine trustees, elected at large, for staggered terms. This proposal would place us more in conformance with surrounding communities. Most importantly, trustees would be elected from all of Park Ridge, not limited by the ward in which they reside. This would result in the best and brightest candidates irrespective of which ward they might reside in. Moreover, the possibility of a trustee running unopposed would be unlikely, if not eliminated.

It is a time for change but not for change that takes us backward but rather for one that deals with the realities of today and moves Park Ridge forward.

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Park Ridge