

EDITORIALS

Downsizing gets a look in Cheektowaga

Cheektowaga joins list of towns willing at least to consider options

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The Cheektowaga Town Board deserves credit for rethinking its approach to governmental downsizing, and at least considering sending the idea to voters. The board could vote Monday in favor of appointing a five-member citizens' panel to explore the issue of downsizing the board from seven to five members.

The "yes" vote on the study should happen. Cheektowaga, like every other Western New York community, is facing harsh economic and demographic realities. Cheektowaga town officials are seeing that, as evidenced by the changing mood toward a proposal by civic activist Kevin Gaughan to get the board to consider downsizing, an idea that nearly got him run out of town last December.

Cheektowaga has one of the largest town boards in this area, and given the regional population drain, downsizing would bring the ratio of board members to population closer to what it was a couple of decades ago.

Gaughan has spent the past couple of years visiting towns and villages on an educational mission. There has been success in the Village of Lancaster, where residents recently voted to downsize the Village Board from seven to five, and disappointment in West Seneca, where Gaughan's use of a petition for a downsizing referendum was thwarted in court but will re-emerge in the spring. Blasdell and North Collins also have taken his efforts seriously. He's not giving up, nor going away.

Critics of downsizing have presented arguments ranging from a lack of representation to increased risks of corruption. Some argue that simply having fewer elected officials does not make for a better-run government.

But the bottom line is simple: Make the arguments on both sides, and let the voters decide. It's their government. And their money.

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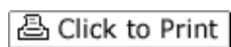
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