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WEST SENECA

Politics seen in plan to cut size of Town Board

By Samantha Maziarz Christmann NEWS STAFF REPORTER

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Supervisor Wallace Piotrowski's proposal to reduce West Seneca's Town Board from five members to three may not make it out of the starting gate, judging by council members' reactions Thursday.

"I'm totally against it. It's not good government, it's a stupid idea," said Council Member Vincent Graber. He added that civic reformer Kevin Gaughan, who originally proposed the idea, "oversimplifies the problem and oversimplifies the solution" regarding bloated local government.

Graber said he feared a smaller board would be too vulnerable to political bossism, with two members forming an alliance against another.

Council Member Christina Bove agreed.

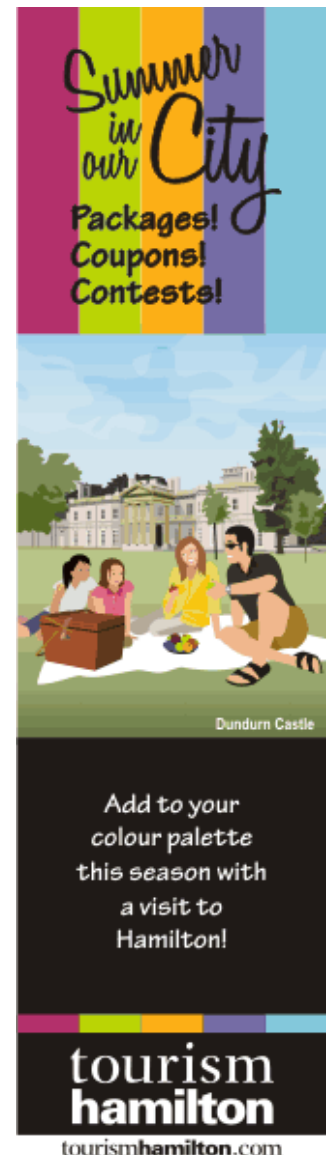
"The supervisor wants no board members — he wants to run this town on his own," Bove said, claiming Piotrowski is trying to get rid of council members in order to silence criticism of costly mistakes he has made in the past.

An e-mail sent to The Buffalo News on behalf of Bove, Graber and Council Member Dale Clark said Piotrowski has been "reprimanded for acting unilaterally" several times, making moves that would have cost taxpayers millions, including trying to cancel a \$95,000 HUD grant, mishandling employee health coverage and trying to break federal contracts.

"I have caught a number of his mistakes. He would like to have his opposition gone," Bove wrote.

Piotrowski could not be reached to comment Thursday night.

Council Member Sheila Meegan wants to know why Gaughan was happy when the Village of Depew board dropped from seven members to five, but wants West Seneca — which has a population about three times larger



than Depew's — to have only three board members.

In fact, if the board reduces its numbers by two, it would be Erie County's largest town governed by only three people.

Meegan said the board has a full plate as it is, and eliminating seats would only increase the burden.

But Gaughan has said the reason council members are overworked is because they have "inserted themselves" into matters other people are already being paid to handle. Outside of setting policy and adopting a budget, most current Town Board matters should be handled by town department heads, he said.

Graber, however, said it is the board's duty to keep department heads in check.

"If we weren't providing direction, these department heads would get nothing done. All they want to do is increase the budget," he said.

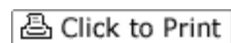
Though many of the council members agree with some of Gaughan's larger goals to reduce the size and cost of local government, they draw the line at reducing the size of the board.

"Kevin Gaughan has never been elected for anything, he's only been appointed, so he doesn't understand what it's like on the inside," Meegan said. "His heart is in the right place, and his ideas are commendable, but there is just too much work to be done."

schristmann@buffnews.com

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