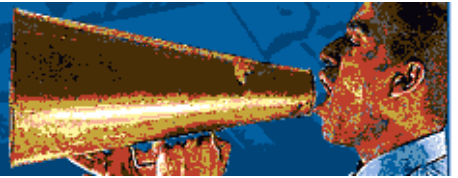


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West Seneca downsizing vote going back to court on appeal

By Helen JonesNEWS STAFF REPORTER

Updated: 10/14/08 8:04 AM

It's back to court for West Seneca residents who want to downsize their Town Board, after the board filed an appeal to a recent court decision ordering it to place the question on the November ballot.

"West Seneca politicians are now spending tax dollars to stop West Seneca residents from saving tax dollars," regionalism activist Kevin Gaughan said Monday. "If there was any doubt about the need to reform local government, this action by the board removes it."

Town Board members Vincent Graber Jr. and Christina Wleklinski Bove, who have opposed Gaughan's initiative, could not be reached to comment Monday evening.

Gaughan, who has led a campaign to downsize government throughout Erie County, said the town has hired the law firm of Harris Beach to handle the appeal. He called the firm one of the most expensive in Western New York.

"In the midst of a national economic meltdown, with New York State, Erie County and every local government facing fiscal crisis," Gaughan said, "West Seneca politicians' answer is to spend public money to deny the public will."

The appeal is the latest in a series of moves that began last summer when volunteers gathered 4,300 signatures on a petition to put the issue of reducing the Town Board from five members to three on the ballot.

At that time, a challenge was made by a West Seneca resident to the petition, and the Erie County Board of Elections ruled it invalid. Gaughan then took the case to State Supreme Court, where Justice Joseph Mintz ruled the petitions were valid and ordered the town to put the question on the ballot by Nov. 17.

At last week's Town Board meeting, Town Supervisor Wallace Piotrowski offered a resolution calling for the issue to be placed on the ballot, but the board voted to wait until it officially received the order from the Mintz.

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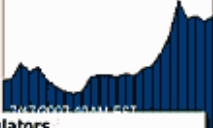
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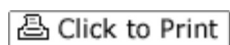
If West Seneca voters decided to reduce the Town Board from five to three members, it would be the largest town in the state to have a board with only three members.

The appeal by the Town Board was filed Wednesday.

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