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## 15 Batavia Gains Attention for Consolidation Process

Geoff Redick posted on December 15, 2011 15:46

If you believe Scott Sittig, Batavia's consolidation process is getting state and even national attention.

"It would be the first city-town consolidation across the state; it would represent a significant change in the way things are done," Sittig says. He is a senior associate, facilitator and consultant with Rochester's Center for Government Research, and he's overseeing Batavia's consolidated charter task force as they work to build a new charter for the proposed 'bigger' City of Batavia.

"A lot of people are watching," says Sittig, because this is an example of less government with more efficiency. Sittig leads off in an article at the CGR website by saying that, "if we could redraw the map, we would never create the patchwork quilt of local governments we have now." The proposed consolidation of Batavia is a first step to changing all of that in a positive, enlightened way, he says.

"A lot of 'consolidations' are starting with an existing slate of services, and trying to figure out how to share or who should control the services," he says, "essentially taking what you have, and just rearranging it."

But he says Batavia's charter task force is starting with what is basically a "blank slate," and trying to re-define how a government should work.

"In this case, (they) have the chance to re-write how the city is structured," Sittig says.

Sittig acknowledges that many of the changes won't be immediately evident if they're put in place. For example, most if not all of the services in the city will remain, and the town's will stay the same as well. The tentative plan also includes different tax tiers based on residency, so that town residents who currently pay zero property tax would continue to do so.

There is just under \$1-million dollars in possible shared-cost savings. But Sittig says

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another great advantage comes from economic development possibilities:eliminating a level of bureacracy and tying together revitalized city industrial properties with the shovel-ready parks in the town.

"You're positioning yourself as a progressive community, which is viewed favorably by businesses looking to relocate or start anew," Sittig says.

Ultimately, CGR and Sittig have no final opinion on consolidation, preferring to remain a neutral facilitator in the charter-writing process.

The consolidated charter task force meets on selected evenings. Their next meeting will be Tuesday, December 20th.

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