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Dansville Village, town to explore city status

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DANSVILLE — Village and town boards are still looking at the possibility of **creating the city of Dansville** to replace the current town of North Dansville and Village of Dansville.

On Tuesday evening, the town council for the first time voted to take steps toward a city and the village board of trustees reaffirmed a decision made just over one year ago.

Both boards agreed to give direction to a committee comprising two members of both boards and several at-large community members.

Village Trustee Don Saylor steered the discussion. He said the two boards are at the point that they need to act to pursue actions proposed in a study commissioned by the two boards and produced by the Center for Governmental Research Inc.

Along with that question, Saylor said the boards needed to clarify the mission of the committee.

“Whether we clarify that tonight or not, I’m not sure,” Dansville Supervisor Dennis Mahus said.

Village Trustee Pat Kreiley pushed for a decision, noting that there had been no action on the part of the town council.

Town officials were hesitant to say they favored a city.

“I voted for city status, but I would not go that way at this point in time,” town Councilman Rick Schwenzer. He referenced a letter from state Sen. Catharine Young that suggested the county would need to buy off on giving home rule to a new city — a prospect that’s uncertain, but several board members hinted may be a significant obstacle. The primary concern is that a city could preempt a portion of the county’s existing sales tax revenue and the county could attempt to block a city on those grounds.

However, for the county’s part, there has been no official position on the matter and Mahus said in his discussion with Livingston County Administrator Ian Coyle there has been room for negotiation.

Other concerns from town council members related to reaction from the governor’s office, neighboring towns and public opinion among town and village residents.

Saylor said those obstacles don’t have to prevent consideration by a committee. He added that Dansville could negotiate with the county to not take existing taxes. He said a city opens the door for growth and city sales tax revenue could be limited to growth over existing county monies.

“We’re still going to be a more efficient government of one, instead of a government of two,” Saylor said, noting that new revenues aside, merging the two governments had other advantages.

“You can’t win if you don’t play,” village Mayor Peter Vogt said, admitting that creating a city may be an uphill battle. “You need to try. It’s like a game or anything else in life — if you don’t step into the arena, you’re not going to get anything out of it.”

After both boards agreed to give direction to the committee, Dick Fox, who is part of the committee expressed his frustration.

“I hear discussions without any particulars going around and around and around about the same thing,” Fox said. “I don’t think anyone read and took seriously that \$50,000 report that’s already come in.”

He said many of the questions asked by the boards are contained in the report along with steps forward.

The boards said the actions taken Tuesday are the next step in addressing Fox’s concerns.

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