

Let me first thank all of you who have taken the time to meet with me about my desire to make some changes regarding the relationship between Peoria Township and the City of Peoria, in the interests of better and more efficient government for all.

In my due diligence on this matter, in consultation with authorities on this subject, we have uncovered a number of issues that I believe bolster the case for separating the township from the city:

- **Taxpayer savings.** Conservative estimates put the annual savings at \$112,500 annually, which could be taken right off the levy. While some may suggest that's not very much in the overall scheme of things, in fact it adds up, and that number may be just the beginning.
- **Previous overpayments.** In the course of our research, and in close consultation with our township accountant, we discovered that Peoria Township has unnecessarily been contributing to the city's GASB 45 fund, which estimates and is intended to cover worker post-employment benefits (other than pensions). We have confirmed Peoria Township has no such future liability, as it operates on a cash rather than an accrual basis, meaning it pays health claims as they occur. This has resulted in a collective overpayment over the years of some \$700,000.
- **More efficient government.** Separation would mean going from a township board of 11 members – the current Peoria City Council – at a total annual cost of \$33,000 to a board of 4 members costing taxpayers \$12,000. This move would allow the City Council an opportunity to focus unilaterally on city issues, and a separate, smaller township board to focus completely on township-related issues (like every other township in Peoria County). In the past, the township was asked to look at consolidation with the city, and we came to the board and shared our opinion that consolidation would cost local taxpayers more, not less. Separation, and not consolidation or the status quo allows an opportunity for more streamlined, efficient governance, and not confusing layers of bureaucracy.
- **Clear compliance with state law.** City boundaries are not aligned with township boundaries, which may not pose a direct legal conflict with Illinois' township statute, based on court precedent, but which arguably violates the spirit of the law. For example, Township Board members, making decisions on behalf of Peoria Township, are not required to live in Peoria Township if they are qualified to serve on the City Council. We can clean this up.
- **Existing precedent and a way forward.** Peoria Township would not be the first to follow this path. The Township Collector's position can be eliminated, and the tax collection duties performed by that office can be wrapped into county government through a simple intergovernmental agreement, as other Townships have done in Peoria County (one of the last Counties in Illinois with the office of Township Collector). The elected township supervisor, assessor and township clerk positions would remain with the services they provide guaranteed by state law, unless state law changes. Locally, we have no control over the latter. We do have control over this. Beyond that, multiple townships now exist within Peoria city boundaries, but only Peoria Township operates under this city-supervision model. This would bring Peoria Township into line with the others.
- **Public trust.** What value do we put on the public's faith in us to be responsible stewards of their money, and how does that faith or lack of it enhance or detract from our ability to do our jobs on their behalf? I recommend we work together to seize any opportunity to prove that the city and township understand taxpayer concerns, and that its leaders care as much about guarding other people's money as they do about protecting their own.

Clearly, I have become convinced that this is the right thing to do. That said, I am not asking for this proposal to be rushed to the City Council floor. Absolutely, Council/Board members should be encouraged to conduct their own due diligence, to verify the above numbers, and to become comfortable with this concept as I already am.

Again, I view this as just the start of an important dialogue. My door is always open. I look forward to hearing from you.

Frank Abdnour
Peoria Township Supervisor

