



Citizens for Clarendon Hills

The Village's Home Rule Research Committee

In April 2011, the Village Board appointed twelve individuals to a Committee to review and research the potential advantages and disadvantages of home rule for Clarendon Hills. Two of the Committee members were sitting Village Board members; they served as Committee Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Committee met three times substantively before a fourth meeting at which they voted on five "questions." The first meeting consisted mostly of two Village-staff presentations, the first providing an overview of what home rule is and the second providing a summary of the Village's presumed financial condition. The second meeting was generally a discussion of Committee-derived questions about home rule. At the third meeting, an attorney well-experienced in home rule issues and the Mayor of Warrenville (a home rule municipality), both spoke.

At the fourth meeting, the Committee voted on five "questions," the most important being if "The attainment of Home Rule Status is appropriate for the Village of Clarendon Hills at this time." The vote was 10-2 in favor of home rule.

Five of the twelve Committee members provided letters summarizing their own views on home rule. Of the individuals who voted for home rule, some of their own reflections are very insightful (Their entire letters are part of the Committee Report).

One member voted for home rule but wrote, "A tax increase requiring referendum approval is likely to be needed. Such a referendum approval **should be sought directly.**" (**emph. added**) In other words, it seems he is saying that if home rule is needed for increased revenues, The Board should seek it directly. He wrote:

Home Rule allows municipal flexibility in taxation/revenue sources/bonding to an extent, all of which can still be limited by the General Assembly, which in light of Clarendon Hills revenue needs is a positive. By itself, however, the revenue benefits do not seem enough justification for Clarendon Hills to seek Home Rule. In the current environment, **A Home Rule referendum will likely become a referendum on raising taxes**, rather than a consideration of the merits of Home Rule.

Another member voted in favor of home rule, but seems to have some very serious reservations about the degree of power that would be unleashed:

Although I recommended that a referendum to authorize the Village to seek Home Rule status be put before voters as a means to help alleviate the shrinking fund balances that seem to be exacerbated by current economic conditions[,] I have reservations that should go on the record. **From a philosophical position I have both considerable trepidation that Home Rule may not be the most appropriate course of action for a small community like Clarendon Hills as well as a profound reluctance that excusing any governmental body from the strictures of the Illinois Property Tax Extension Limitation Law ["PTELL" state property tax cap law] is **not in the best interest of residents and property owners.****

The broad powers that are granted to any Home Rule community in Illinois seem better suited to the profligate spending that enabled the mayor of Illinois' most populous city to cement his position for decades. The disregard shown by his administration for the realities of overly generous payrolls, insider deals for labor leaders and consulting firms of all types **A mindset that puts municipal workers before the welfare of residents could easily infect any set of civic officials. Beyond the siren call of revenue, the potential to "make a local ordinance" as a sop to some aggrieved "squeaky wheel" could result in a nightmare of regulation that **would make Clarendon Hills a far less desirable place for businesses, developers and ultimately residents.****



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A third member voted in favor of home rule, but voted that it not be used to increase property taxes beyond the statutory PTELL caps:

Although I recommend the pursuit of Home Rule, I did not recommend the use of Home Rule power to increase property taxes in excess of the state-mandated PTELL limits...If a larger property tax increase is required, I think it most appropriate that it be done via referendum.

Committee member Bill Baum was one of the “No” votes. [Read his letter here.](#)

Eric T. Stach (who is on the Steering Committee for **Citizens for Clarendon Hills**) was also one of the “No” votes. [Read his letter here.](#)