

## **The Role of Township Government in Today's Society and the Future**

In today's fast-paced and increasingly complex world, it is easy to overlook the importance of local government. However, township government continues to play a vital role in meeting the everyday needs of communities and maintaining a strong connection between community members and their government. As one of the most local forms of governance, township government serves as both a practical service provider and a foundation for civic engagement, and its role will remain important well into the future.

In modern society, township governments are responsible for services that directly affect residents' daily lives. These responsibilities often include maintaining local roads, managing snow removal, caring for cemeteries, overseeing parks, bridge maintenance and providing general assistance to residents in need. Because townships serve smaller populations than counties or state governments, they are able to respond quickly and efficiently to local concerns. To help me better understand the township and its responsibilities, I spoke with a trustee for the township in Ashland Illinois, Derek DeGroot. As township trustee, DeGroot emphasized in our discussion that, *"Township government exists where the needs are immediate and personal. When something goes wrong, we're often the first call."*

Another important role of township government is its accessibility. Township officials are typically neighbors, community members, and local leaders who are easy to contact and willing to listen. The absence of layers of bureaucracy and the ability to quickly and easily reach out for assistance is a hallmark of our local township. This accessibility encourages people to get involved and helps residents feel that their voices matter. According to DeGroot, *"People don't need an appointment or a lobbyist to talk to us. They just need to care about their community."* For students like me, township government represents a first exposure to how democracy works on a practical level. It shows that government is not just something that happens far away, but

something that is shaped by people we know and trust. Oftentimes the idea of being involved in government or public office seems like something other people do, but the trustees of our local village are friends of my parents and adults that I have grown up around.

Looking toward the future, township governments will continue to face challenges such as limited funding, aging infrastructure, and changing population needs. Some question whether townships are still necessary in an era of expanding county and state services. However, in Illinois it is certainly reasonable to question if expanded state services will remain constant based on the state budgeting crisis and funds previously dedicated to downstate roads and infrastructure being diverted to larger urban areas. From this perspective, the need to have the township form of government remain stable, relevant, engaged and effective is as critical for the future as it has ever been.

In conclusion, township government plays an essential role in today's society by providing local services, supporting residents, and encouraging civic involvement. Its future success will depend on its ability to adapt while preserving its commitment to the community. As a high school senior preparing for college and future leadership opportunities, I believe township government demonstrates that meaningful leadership begins at the local level, where even small actions can make a lasting difference.