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02-28-25

Township Official of Illinois Scholarship Committee

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

As our world has become increasingly complex, township government has remained the same, with the same core duties. Townships may be one of the smallest forms of government, which some may think is a disadvantage. However, their smaller nature allows greater efficiency and represents one of the closest forms of government to the people. Whether the township is in Cook County or Alexander County, the core responsibilities and priorities of the township remain the same.

Townships provide essential services to their constituents, which are crucial for residents within the township. For example, during heavy snowfall, like many townships faced this winter, road commissioners work tirelessly throughout the night to ensure safe passage. Townships are smaller than county governments, which allows them to respond quickly with efficient problem-solving to local issues, such as drainage problems, bridge repairs, or township road repairs and maintenance. Townships also have much more local representation, which allows the community to make more direct decisions. Furthermore, because of the size of a township, both community members and officials can move more quickly on problems in comparison to larger government organizations.

During my interview with Craig Paulek (president of TOI), we discussed some of the issues that his township, in addition to other townships throughout the state, have faced and how township

officials have worked to address these challenges. One topic discussed was the need to bring awareness and promote the engagement of residents within the township. Township open houses are a great way for people to meet their elected officials and get an understanding of their local township, including current and future projects as well as township responsibilities. Larger townships can host local events such as the Festival of Trees hosted by the Taylorville Township, providing a family-friendly event and helping the local food pantry. Other townships spread awareness by sending out monthly newsletters about the topics being discussed for those who are unable to attend monthly meetings. In the technology age, it is important to consider technology implementation as another alternative to inform the community of township business, utilizing websites, monthly digital newsletters, and social media accounts. With talks of the consolidation or dissolution of townships, it is now more important than ever for the future of township government to educate the public on the importance of the services provided.

In conclusion, while the core responsibilities of the township government remain consistent, its ability to adapt to modern challenges is vital. By embracing technology, promoting community engagement, and educating the public about their vital role, townships can ensure their continued relevance. As discussions surrounding consolidation and dissolution arise, it is crucial to recognize the irreplaceable value of local governance in Townships and how, by their very nature, they continue to be the most direct links between residents and their government.