

VOTE “NO” TO UPSIZING TO A FIVE MEMBER TOWN BOARD

On September 28th 2017, in an editorial titled “*No To Upsizing*”, the Buffalo News concluded that since the Town of Evans was broke, that “. . . *the town should be looking to save wherever possible*”. Regarding arguments made by the UpSizing Folks, the News writes: “*The magical thinking by proponents of upsizing is that because the town has financial problems, it somehow makes sense to have more people working on them. And, they say, the state’s Open Meetings Law makes it difficult for three members to do business. Wrong and Wrong.*” Read the editorial at UpSizeNo.org.

The Town of Evans is not only broke but has contractual obligations with the Erie County Water Authority to build a water tower at an estimated cost \$5-7,000,000 and to pave 24 roads with a multi-million dollar price tag likely. Turning over the water department to the ECWA was a decision made by a previous five member board. We, our children and grand children will pay this bill over the next 30+ years. Today’s cost of adding one board member is estimated to be \$39,300. If salaries and benefits don’t increase, the 30 year cost of two additional board members is \$2,358,000! Even if the town board votes to eliminate all benefits for councilpeople, the 30 year costs is still \$918,999! The UpSize No folks would rather spend this money paying down the debt on the water project.

Under Open Meetings Law, meetings between two board members are **NOT ILLEGAL** as long as proper notice is given. The Buffalo News makes an important point. “*Board members should be discussing business in public, and not in secret*”. The town board could schedule meetings on MTWTF at 10:00 AM in the conference room and any two board members could **LEGALLY** discuss any topic.

Examples of poor decisions by a five member board not only includes the water project but allowing a \$2,600,000 federal investment in the Angola Airport to be wasted. A five member board was silent while the airport was being decommissioned. The property was then allowed to be used as a solid waste facility without any public input. When a heliport was put in a residential neighborhood, a five member board was silent. When a home for paroled sex offenders was proposed for the property adjoining the town’s youth fields, a five member board said there was nothing they could do! Millions of dollars in the town’s reserve funds disappeared under five member boards. More than one DWI in a town vehicle. Waste, fraud and abusive spending at conventions. Failure to implement the state comptroller’s recommendation’s after the 2002 and 2012 audits. All these points prove that two additional board members won’t improve decision making in our town. An important question is if a three member board can fix the problems created by five member boards, why would residents want to spend \$78,600 a year to re-establish something that clearly was broke?

In a town where the per capita income is \$19,122.00, it just does not seem fair that the hard working residents of Evans be asked to provide part-time board members with \$15,300 in salary plus \$24,000 in full-time benefits. The \$80,600 cost of two additional board members could go to pay for the water project, fix town roads, towards drainage work, improving parks & recreation and many other things. Maybe even keep town taxes as low as possible!

If we lived in a perfect world, a five member board may make sense. Unfortunately, we live in the Town of Evans where we will be paying for past mistakes for another 30 - 40 years. This makes the Open Meetings Law requirement that all public meetings under a three member board be conducted in public an important protection for Evans residents.

On a \$150,000 property, the Town of Elma pays \$32.50 in town taxes while Evans property owners pay \$1,447.00! This proves that by electing town board members that put the interests of the residents before the special interests, our town can thrive. Our current three member board has made significant strides in fixing the town’s financial mess. If it’s not broke, don’t fix it! On Tuesday, November 7th, vote **NO** on upsizing. Voting “**NO**” to Upsizing is a vote for “Open Government”!

Visit UpSizeNo.ORG for additional information.

