

## Shores to decide if it takes a village or city

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Dr. James Cooper is convinced that next week's Grosse Pointe Shores referendum is a matter of dollars and good sense.

On Tuesday, May 6, Shores voters will determine if the village should switch to city status. Cooper, Shores president, said incorporating as a city would save taxpayer money by eliminating a layer of government and combining administrative tasks to achieve economies of scale.

"It's a wise choice to streamline government, consolidate services and reduce expenses," said Cooper.

"My rough estimate for savings is \$225,000 per year," said Mike Kenyon, village manager. Cooper added, "Becoming a city may permit a tax reduction. I don't think residents will notice any change in services. I'm confident of it."

Village officials have been discussing the switch informally for decades. Matters entered officialdom late last year because state legislators proposed eliminating townships and shifting such duties to counties.

Shores boundaries encompass two townships, Grosse Pointe and Lake, while overlapping parts of Wayne and Macomb counties. Incorporation is intended to eliminate both townships and related costs.

"We have two township boards being paid, and face accounting and legal fees to run at least three entities," said Cooper. "We keep at least three sets of books. There's a lot of (administrative) time involved to run the two townships. We won't have to have township meetings that administrative people attend."

In addition, he said cities can "collect school taxes, run elections and do assessments. This becomes an issue of local control."

Cooper said city status wouldn't alter municipal or school district boundaries, nor increase property taxes. Although cities can impose income taxes, Cooper said there are no plans to do so in the Shores.

Likewise, although cities that span multiple counties can shed one county and consolidate in the other, Cooper said there are no plans to do so. If the Shores were entirely in Macomb County, however, total mills would be 38.6904 compared with 48.0694 in Wayne, a savings of 6.379 mills.

Shores residents might be able to have their city and keep a village, too. In a letter about the referendum sent last week to residents, it was suggested that the community could rename itself the Village of Grosse Pointe Shores, a Michigan city.

### Charter commission

Also to be decided May 6 is the election of nine members to a charter commission. Commissioners will draft a city charter for voter approval. The commission will go into effect only if a majority of voters choose city status.

Cooper said the village council discussed incorporation at its December 2007 meeting. A Dec. 19, 2007 letter to residents recommended next week's election and sought questions.

"Residents were given opportunities to voice their opinions," Cooper said. "Since December, we've had five council meetings and five townships meetings. I attended Lake Township meetings and sent letters to their residents after I met with the township board in January. We had a meeting for Lake Township residents in March to answer questions."

An article on the matter appears in the current issue of the village newsletter, "The Shorelines."

By Brad Lindberg

← Instead of \$225,000 in promised savings, we got a \$330,000 tax increase!

↙ It only took 3 meetings of the new city council before we got a 7% rise in our city property tax millage!

← Instead of spending a lot of time, energy and taxpayer's money on legal bills for a convoluted name, why weren't the incumbents looking at more important issues like the \$14- 16 million in unfunded retiree benefits?