

Curt Barrett

From: Tim Allen <tim@indigoinc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 04, 2012 1:47 PM
To: Curt Barrett; Bajor Jack; Erik Spande; Tony Reyes; Jay Olson; Jay Olson; Jim Hughes; Deborah Birutis
Subject: Districting Thoughts

All,

It appears that we are debating the pro's and con's of districting at this upcoming village board meeting. As you all know I, along with 25 other petition gatherers am the sponsor of this citizen sponsored referendum. With that in mind, and as a citizen, I am sending you my brief thoughts on this subject. There is no need to respond.

-Tim

It is a cold fact that until very recently Winfield had not spent a second of introspection on reviewing what is and isn't working with respect to our democracy. Only when our village government has reached its current level of brokenness do we take the time out to reconsider our rules of order for our meetings, a resolution for civility and districting as a remedy. In Winfield's recent history we have had PAC's with provincial issues dominate local politics. Whether the issue is pushed by Wooded Winfield, The Wynwood Homeowners Association, Winfield United or three trustees from Klein Creek the affect has been destructive to community spirit, corrosive to leadership continuity and caused unpleasant working conditions for our staff. The citizens votes vacillate between the pro and anti-development crowd sending mixed messages that keep Winfield stagnant. At the committee level, the wild swings of the elected officials has been the root cause for the Planning Commission routinely being fired en-mass when a new president is elected, the acquired institutional knowledge of the team being tossed to the wind.

In the upcoming election on March 20th, the citizens will have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they agree with my characterization. They will also have the opportunity to ask themselves, "Is Winfield doing "it" right." The "it" that they will be contemplating are all the questions we as a village board never bothered to ask ourselves. Is how we run our government and is how we elect our officials the best way and in the best interests of Winfield?

I clearly do not believe we are doing things right. Whether or not the citizens ultimately accept districting Winfield into 6 districts, I believe that this opportunity for reflection is well worth the exercise.

Below are my top 5 reasons for districting in no particular order.

- 1. Greater Accountability** - Our current village trustees are technically responsible for all parts of the town. However, if everyone is accountable to you, then no one is accountable to you. Each part of our village can be very different from other parts. Residents of a local area deserve to have someone on the inside of the village board meetings that can advocate for them, someone to be part of the closed door meetings, emails and negotiations where our futures are decided.
- 2. Distributed Power** – Our American democracy was founded on the dispersal of concentrated power. In 1776 we rejected the King in favor of the elected representative. It is time to recognize that the only proper way to run a democracy is to have all areas represented by their own trustee.
- 3. Less influence by big money donors and special interests in our town's elections** – Districting protects the citizens against the corrosive influence of money in our elections. Regardless of how much money a candidate or group spends on a local election Districting forces political groups to build bridges regarding issues that concern the electoral district. It doesn't matter how much money is spent, if the big money candidate can't find issues that are relevant to the district, the big money candidate will lose.

4. Lower Barriers to Run for Office – It is a daunting task to find the time and money to campaign across Winfield, to ring doors of 4000 households and shake the hands of Winfield's 9000 residents. By Districting, we allow people who may be outstanding leaders but who otherwise would not run for office due to time or funding constraints the opportunity to run. A lot of campaigning can be done inside a district for the cost of some ink and some shoe leather.

5. More Continuity in Winfield Politics – If you have lived in Winfield for any part of the last 10 years, you have seen the whip-saw effect of the village board being elected in and voted out three separate times by one angry group of voters or another. There is a strength in a peaceful village board that has continuity over the years.