

Reporter·Progress

Letter on home rule had no basis in fact

One of the many great things about our country is the freedom of expression, including the right to express and publish opinions that are without any basis in fact. So it is with Tim Cahill's letter to the editor in the Feb. 8 Reporter. It seems Mr. Cahill would do well to recall the well-known refrain that "facts are stubborn things," because his published rant is belied by some clear and unemotional facts.

Mr. Cahill's diatribe lists several things he dislikes about Downers Grove and assigns blame to the village's home rule authority. Curiously, Mr. Cahill fails to connect exactly what home rule authority has to do with what he finds offensive. Readers of Mr. Cahill's opinions are left to assume that Mr. Cahill, at some juncture, once enjoyed living in Downers Grove and simply pines for the "old days."

However, even in the "old days" Downers Grove was a home rule municipality! In fact, Downers Grove has been a home rule community since 1970. Certainly something positive must have kept Mr. Cahill in Downers Grove for an extended period of time, while the village possessed home rule authority, no less.

Perhaps Mr. Cahill's anger is misdirected and he is unaware that home rule authority basically empowers local residents to determine local solutions to local issues -- rather than relying on legislators in Springfield to address our matters. Or, maybe Mr. Cahill is unaware that home rule permits the village to establish and maintain a diverse taxing base to capture revenues to pay for our police, fire and public works services from non-residents.

That is, rather than solely relying on Downers Grove residents to pay for such village services through property taxes, home rule authority permits its local government to levy consumption -- or use-based taxes derived mainly from nonresidents (as much as 75 percent of such tax revenue because Downers Grove's daytime population swells to about 125,000 people -- who use our police, fire and public works services -- due to many significant local employers).

But there's no reason to simply believe me, or Mr. Cahill for that matter. Residents interested in learning the facts -- not baseless, anecdotal "theories" -- about the propriety of home rule, and why home rule communities are typically taxed less than non-home rule communities, need only go to Yahoo, Google or another online search engine and type in "Home Rule Illinois." Our village library can also assist in any research endeavor (unfortunately there are negative consequences for our wonderful library should home rule go away).

The fact is there is a bevy of literature easily available, including scholarly pieces from professors who have studied home rule communities versus non-home rule communities with no ax to grind and no fight in any political game. The results may upset Mr. Cahill and others, but then again "facts are stubborn things."

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