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Libertyville residents campaigning for televised meetings



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A pair of Libertyville residents hope to persuade village officials to begin broadcasting board meetings on cable television or the Internet.

Jim Moran and Luke Stowe have launched an online petition drive to drum up interest in their campaign, which they say will improve government transparency and give residents greater access to their local leaders.

Village officials debated televising meetings last year at the urging of newly elected Mayor Terry Wepler. They didn't pursue the broadcasts, however, because of the potential equipment and labor costs, Wepler said.

With layoffs and mandatory furlough days being used to reduce village spending, "we did not feel that was an expense we should incur right now," Wepler said.

Moran, a radio traffic reporter, said he took up the cause because he wants to stay informed about village business but can't attend meetings because of schedule conflicts.

Open government has been a popular call to arms in recent years, too - especially in Illinois.

"People need to know where their money is being spent," Moran said.

Many local governmental agencies broadcast meetings on local cable TV stations or on their official websites.

Some meetings, such as the Lake County Board sessions, are broadcast and webcast live. Many others - such as those in Mundelein, Vernon Hills and Gurnee - are recorded and shown to the public later.

Some of the broadcasts are polished, high-tech affairs. The county board uses multiple cameras and a team of staffers to put together its meeting shows; the villages of Mundelein and Vernon Hills use professional video crews, too.

But such potentially costly efforts aren't necessary for Libertyville, Moran and Stowe insisted.

"The technology is such that it's really easy to put the meetings online," Moran said. "All you need is a laptop, a camera, a tripod and an Internet connection."

That's essentially the setup in Island Lake, where amateur videos of meetings are available for viewing on Trustee Laurie Rabattini's personal website.

"You can get virtually 100-percent transparency for little to no money," said Stowe, who works in the Lake County clerk's office.

Weppeler is still interested in televising Libertyville's meetings. He thinks a majority of the board could favor a proposal if it can be done inexpensively.

To learn more about the Libertyville campaign or to electronically sign the petition, visit libertyville.tv.

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