

“The purpose of government is to enable the people of a nation to live in safety and happiness. The government exists for the interests of the governed, not for the governors.”

-Thomas Jefferson.

The local government is responsible for protecting its citizens by maintaining a safe and healthy community to live in. It is their job to provide resources and services to the community to keep it running smoothly.

My mom has been the clerk for my town for the past ten years, so I have grown up being able to see the inner workings of what towns really do. I have attended meetings, talked to board members, and even worked for the town as a recycling attendant. Getting to see the behind the scenes of my mom preparing for meetings and doing paperwork for zoning ordinances, liquor licenses, absentee ballots, etc., has really broadened my horizons on the scope of what towns actually do. There are so many things that people take for granted that our towns do for us every day.

While the list of things towns do seems endless, there are definitely some things that they could improve life for town residents.

One of the most important ways that could improve the quality of living for residents is keeping government control local. In a lot of towns, the county has control of zoning. Some towns, like the one I live in gained control back by creating their own zoning ordinances. I didn't realize how important local control this was until 2023 when our neighboring township who's zoning was still under county control had a landowner who wanted to sell land to a rail line to create a unloading and reloading site for train cars. All the town residents were opposed to it due to the environmental risks, yet the county saw it as an opportunity to bring more business into the community; so against the towns wishes, the county used their control to change the zoning from

Residential to Industrial, to specifically allow the rail line use. This story shows the importance of towns keeping their control local so that they can keep the ability to make decisions to protect their residents.

Another important issue I think municipalities could improve on is to involve the community and focus on the residents' best interests. Local governments should strive to put the needs of their community members first and focus on the issues that impact them the most. There are many ways that this could be improved, a few that I think would be most impactful are public surveys and consultations, and the advancement of technology for advertising and informative purposes. Something I have noticed by attending local town meetings is that there is a serious lack of young adult representation. The most common form of advertising for local meetings is primarily local bulletin boards and newspapers, both of which are not frequently used by the younger generations. A study by slicktext.com showed that adults between the ages of 18 and 29 spend an average of 7.3 hours on their phone daily. This study shows the impact that the advancement of technology via online advertisements, social media posts and even TV advertisements would have in bringing in a younger aspect of the community. Young adults are pivotal members of local communities, and I think many of them would be very interested in being a part of the local government if they were more informed of that possibility. Bringing in younger community members would create a more well-rounded group to represent and stand up for the community's best interests, it would also give them the amazing opportunity to help improve the place they live and take pride in.

Another top priority to be pursued is better maintenance of our roadways. It is the job of the rural government to create and maintain roads to ensure safe travel of residents. Since the cost of road maintenance has skyrocketed within the last number of years this is a very pertinent

concern to look into. One possibility to gain more funding would be more active involvement from our representatives. These representatives could fight for the same opportunity for funding that big cities have that small towns often get cheated out of.

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