

Municipalities work together to provide for residents

David S. Glasier

DGlasier@News-Herald.com

Twitter: @nhglasier

There are 15 cities, 16 villages and 20 townships in the News-Herald's circulation area.

The story those numbers don't tell is how these governing units empowered by Articles 10 and 18 of the Ohio Constitution and Titles 3, 5 and 7 of Ohio Revised Code co-exist and, increasingly, work together to provide for their residents in challenging economic times.

Cities (population 5,000 and up) and villages (population 4,999 and down) are incorporated municipalities. They can conduct business by adopting charters or eschew a charter and operate as statutory entities guided by Ohio Revised Code.

Townships can only operate as statutory entities. Unlike cities and villages, they cannot levy an income tax on residents.

Madison Township (pop. 19,000) and Madison Village (pop. 3,000) offer a textbook example of how two of the three entities maintain separate identities while also interacting strategically.

The eastern Lake County village, covering 4 square miles, is, technically, a part of the larger township

encompassing 54 square miles, explained Madison Village Administrator Alyson Moritz.

"Village residents can vote for township trustees if they choose to, but the village is a distinct entity," Moritz said.

While the two entities share a fire district, school district and senior center, they have different governing bodies, police departments, road departments and service departments.

Madison Village Council members Ken Takacs and John Hamercheck used the word "unique" to describe the official relationship between the two Madisons.

"It's mutual but arm's length because of the township-village mentality," Takacs said.

"In the township, they enjoy maintaining a more rural identity with farms, wineries and nurseries," he added. "We want a future with controlled growth. The core of the village always has been commerce and the town square. This is where the community gathers."

Madison Township Trustees Max Anderson echoed the sentiments voiced by his village counterparts.

"The township people like the idea of living in a township. The people in the village feel the same

Hear more from Concord Twp. Trustee

Christopher A. Galloway at News-Herald.com



about the village," Anderson said.

"That's a great group of people over there (in the village)," he added. "We're not going to agree on everything, but you can reach across the table and try to find common ground."

In recent years, the two Madisons have agreed to work together to fund the construction of two new schools and a new fire station near the intersections of Routes 528 and 307.

The latter project carries a \$4 million price tag in addition to the estimated \$490,000 the village will spend to extend and upgrade the water line that will service the new station.

The village and township also established the Madison Community Improvement Corporation, a nonprofit entity that raises money for events like the annual Christmas in the Park.

Powerful neighbors

The city of Mentor (pop. 52,000) and Concord Township (pop. 19,000) are two of the more prosperous communities in Northeast Ohio.

Mentor City Manager Ken Filip-

iak said the manager-council form of charter government has worked well for Lake County's largest municipality.

"I believe the success we've had in Mentor is directly attributable to being a charter government," Filipiak said.

"Our system here provides the greatest amount of flexibility," he added. "It allows us to stay involved with neighborhood issues while also paying attention to big-picture concerns."

Christopher A. Galloway is a Concord Township trustee as well as the township's fiscal officer.

"I'm always telling people about the good and bad aspects of township government," Galloway said.

"By its nature, township government is very limited," Galloway added. "Ohio Revised Code limits us in terms of what we the taxes we collect and the control we have over private property owners."

"That's one of the reasons why I love living in a township. A government that can do less for you can do less to you."

As the current president of the

Lake County Township Association, Galloway stays abreast of developments in neighboring townships and villages.

Both he and Filipiak believe there is considerable merit to proposals that advocate sharing of resources and services where it makes sound economic sense.

"I wish townships and villages all the success in the world because we grow as a region," Filipiak said.

"It's especially important for us to work together in Lake County because this is the smallest county in Ohio."

In agreement

Representatives of groups representing cities, villages and townships see a future in which these entities explore every option for cost-saving through consolidation of services.

"We're all in the same boat dealing with cuts in funding from the county, state and federal governments," said Robert M. Weger, mayor of Willoughby Hills and president of the Lake County Mayors and Managers Association.

"Funding is the elephant in the room for all of us," added Matthew J. DeTemple, executive director of the Ohio Township Association.