

Village of Dexter

Responses to Cityhood Questions

1) How will cityhood affect Dexter's growth as a bedroom community?

Trustee Semifero - Cityhood will not affect Dexter's growth or the nature of the community. There are two additional responsibilities for a city: assessing and elections. We used to run elections as a Village and there was no discussion when this service went to the townships that there was an impact on the Village. My personal view is that assessing should be done as a contracted service, as is done by many surrounding communities. We pay for these services to the township through total taxes that far exceeds what the services actually cost.

2) How will this growth affect the demand for water and sewer—aren't we all ready running the sewer plant at full capacity and have a need for an additional well?

Trustee Semifero - There is no growth associated with the Village becoming a city. The boundaries recommended by the City Study Commission are the current Village boundaries and that is what is being surveyed at this time. All the growth currently planned in the Village is all the growth in the proposed city. The sewer plant is not (I must emphasize, NOT) at full capacity. In fact, we run our sewer plant at levels far below its full capacity. The problem we have is inflow and infiltration into our sewer system from the portion of the Village bounded by Main, Jeffords, Broad, Grand, and Baker. This means when it rains, some portion of the storm water goes into the sewer system and has to be treated. The more rain, the more has to be treated. We are addressing this in two ways - reducing I & I and planning for an equalization basin, which is essentially storage for incoming sewer flow mixed with storm water to be held until the plant can process all the water. This will allow us to use all of the plant capacity. In fact, it has been estimated we have a very large number of residential equivalent units (REUs) of sewage treatment capacity that is going unused because of the I & I problem. The same goes for the new well being explored. The current wells were supposed to supply all currently planned development within the Village. Additional use has led to, during extremely high usage times (summer days when there is a large amount of irrigation) peak demand being over what those current wells can supply, when one well is taken out of service (firm capacity). For the peak demand, it was estimated by our engineers that the two additional wells being proposed would be needed to supply the ultimate needs of the currently planned development. There is no planned growth with the Village becoming a City and there is no capacity, beyond what is already planned (with the proposed addition of the two wells) in water or sewer for additional users.

3) Will the new city boundaries mean the loss of the high school?

Trustee Semifero - The high school is currently covered by a 425 agreement with Scio Township. At the end of that agreement, per Scio Township's request at the time the 425 was negotiated, the high school will revert to the township. It was covered by this 425 so water and sewer could be provided and so cost sharing could be put in place with the high school for police and fire services. I am unsure of the issues surrounding the police and fire services at the time the 425 was put in place. So, the short answer is, no, becoming a city will not result in the loss of the high school. The expiration of the 425 will result in the loss of the high school from the Village unless the current agreement is extended, but water and sewer could still be provided even after the expiration of the 425, sometime around 2050 (it was a 50 year agreement).

4) Will the new well be outside of the city limits and how will that affect Dexter's cost for water?

Trustee Semifero - The location of the well makes no difference on the cost of the well except in the initial connection to the system. A review of the Village was done and this was the closest location found for a new well. The new well, if you do not include the high school property as being in the Village, would be outside the Village limits, also.

5) Will cityhood mean having to develop more low income housing?

Trustee Semifero - I have seen nothing that indicates additional low income housing would have to be developed based on being a city versus a village. If there is additional information regarding this that you have I would be happy to look into it further. All information the Village has received has indicated the only two additional requirements on a city are elections and assessing.

6) Will Dexter have to have its own police department, or will we be paying more for police services to the county? If we don't have to own department, will the council want have city police department?

Trustee Semifero - There is no reason why being a city would change the police services for the Village. We currently contract from the County as this is the most cost efficient way to provide services to the Village at this time. Council asked the Village manager to investigate a police department for the Village and we found it would be more expensive and would carry greater liability for the Village than the current arrangement with the County sheriff. One significant difference is Village residents would not be paying for police and fire services twice - once to the township and once to the Village.

7) What properties, if any, will the village annex to square the boundaries in order to become a city? And would you, as a member of the council, vote to annex properties? Why?

Trustee Semifero - There is no plan to annex any properties into the Village to become a city. The boundaries recommended by the City Study Commission are the current Village boundaries and that is what is being surveyed at this time. I would not vote to annex in additional property. This only complicates and confuses the city process.

8) Does the city boundaries have to be squared? What exactly does the law say regarding this and what does squared mean for the boundaries?

Trustee Semifero - Nothing we have been told indicates the boundaries have to be squared. Again, the boundaries recommended by the City Study Commission are the current Village boundaries and that is what is being surveyed at this time. That is what is planned, as far as I know, to be submitted to the Boundary Commission when that step in the process occurs.

9) What will cityhood mean in terms of administrative cost to run the city? Salaries, administrative cost? Mayoral and Council salaries? Where will the revenues come from to pay for these costs?

Trustee Semifero - There is no difference for administrative costs with becoming a city. The administration of a city would be set the same way the administration has been set for the Village. I would expect nothing less than the proposed city to continue the same fiscally responsible policies that have resulted in us being so financially successful to date. Of course, that direction would be given by whatever legislative body might be formed. I believe there are a number of forms of governments available for a city, including a form very close to what that of the current Village. The form would be up to the Charter Commission.

10) If Dexter became a city, would the DDA and Planning Commission's power's be reduced and the council vote to follow the pattern of other cities to have a central office/person coordinating planning in conjunction with the business community? What would this cost?

Trustee Semifero - The DDA would be unchanged under a city and I believe the Planning Commission would, again, be set by the charter as developed. I see no reason why the PC would change. It has worked effectively to date, as has the DDA. There is no reason to change the "power" of either board. We already have a central planning person - our Community Development Manager, Allison Bishop. Again, there is no reason why a city form of government would require an additional person or costs.

11) Will we have a city inspector for homes and businesses to assess taxes, construction development, health (restaurants)? Are there costs involved?

Trustee Semifero - Again, there is no reason this would change. A Village could have an inspector as well as a city. As I said, I would be in favor of an assessor being contracted. I believe the cost of an assessor would be about \$35,000, per the City Study Commission. Scio Township collects approximately \$300,000 per year from the Village in taxes to provide us with elections and assessing. I would expect that health and building inspections currently required would continue through the County and their associated inspectors. This is not a cost to the Village or a possible city. The services are paid by fees.

12) What affect will becoming a city have on expanding the business park as a research/manufacturing center to increase revenues? How will it affect the retail businesses in view of the development of Jackson Avenue as a main strip for businesses in Scio Township?

Trustee Semifero - Becoming a city will not affect the research and manufacturing center. Any proposed expansion would have to be an agreement with Scio Township and any associated landowners regardless of whether we are a village or city. I believe the retail businesses along Jackson Rd are coming regardless of whether the Village becomes a city or not. The development of the entire Jackson Rd corridor presents a significant threat to the retail in the Village. There is no impact of the Village becoming a city on this situation, except that current business owners in the Village would not have to pay township taxes if we became a city. I am not sure how Jackson Rd fits into the discussion regarding becoming a city.

13) How long will the tax reduction for citizens truly last? Haven't Chelsea taxes jumped? Aren't Chelsea residents and businesses unhappy with cityhood? What makes you think you won't have to raise taxes for services?

Trustee Semifero - Taxes in a city or village are driven by the services provided. If the Village provides more services, taxes would have to increase. There is no causation between being a city and higher taxes. There is causation between services and taxes. For instance, Barton Hills provides very little in services and only levies 10 mills. The taxation level is also related to the fiscal decisions made by the local government. How we handle long term items such as salaries, health care, retirement benefits, etc., will drive our costs. I do not know what the drivers were for Chelsea taxes to increase but there is no service provided by the city which would cause the taxes to increase when compared to a village. I can only speak to the few people from Chelsea I have spoken with and I have not heard that becoming a city has impacted them in any way.

14) How will cityhood change our community with its small town celebrations such as Dexter Daze, the Ice Cream Social, etc.?

Trustee Semifero - There is no change to these celebrations in becoming a city. They are not run by the Village.

15) Aren't we drawing more interest from bicycle clubs and other tourist related groups as a village than we would as a city? Why aren't we seeking to expand this tourist related revenue base instead of offering what Ann Arbor and the cities east of Dexter are offering?

Trustee Semifero - Most people I speak with in and out of the Village refer to it as a "city" already. Many people do not realize there is a difference. There is no difference for tourists to the community whether the Village becomes a city or not.

16) Would it be necessary to hire an experienced city manager and staff to replace our current village manager and staff to run the daily operations of the city?

Trustee Semifero - Again, there is no difference between a city and village except as would be specified by the charter. Our current village manager and staff are EXTREMELY capable and could easily handle the additional responsibilities of managing assessing and elections. (Actually, elections would be run by the clerk, I believe.)

17) It is said that a city is more respected than a village. Paul Bishop was effective in village management to get the state government to approve an industrial park, and we have grown to the point that we have. Respect comes with the ability to negotiate and present an idea for the future. It is nice to say cityhood, but what exactly does it mean for to Dexter to become a city? What are the council's ideas for the future once we become a city, and what are the ideas for Dexter's future of those who want to keep it a village?

Trustee Semifero - For the Village to become a city it means, legislatively, that the city would be a recognized governmental entity to the state. As a village we fall under the townships. I am not aware of any plans specific to becoming a city, i.e., "when we become a city we will..." I do not know what the ideas are for the future of the government of the Village if it stays a village. My assumption would be to not change anything and to continue as we currently are continuing.

18) What will cityhood do my property values?

Trustee Semifero - I am not aware of how being a city versus a village has a direct impact on property values. It is possible, if taxes levied are lower by not paying township taxes, the value of the house could increase. I do not know what the impact of becoming a city had in Chelsea, although I believe if there was any impact it has been greatly overshadowed by other economic forces.

19) What will be done to insure that older persons with limited incomes won't be compelled to move because of the potential increases in taxes, as has happened in places such as Ann Arbor and other cities?

Trustee Semifero - There is no potential increase in taxes. Villages legislatively can levy as high a tax burden as a city with the taxes currently available to a village under current law. Ann Arbor taxes increased because of increased services and increased property values and taxes based on those property values. Becoming a city does not impact property taxes. Proposal A and the Headlee Amendment currently limits the increase in property taxes on a statewide basis.

20) I don't see what the big idea is here, but it seems to me the council wants one thing and some of the people want something different. Can you tell why I should I support cityhood?

Trustee Semifero - It is more accurate to say some people in the Village are in favor of becoming a city and some are not. The community will decide through an election whether or not the Village should become a city. Like any other ballot issue, it is up to the individual to make a decision based on how they view the issue.

21) When will the state requirements for cityhood reach fruition?

Trustee Semifero - There is no definite timeline to cityhood. There is a process that can take a number of years to complete. There is no way to say when it will be complete.

22) When will the village complete all the requirements for cityhood and submit them for state approval? Will we be allowed to vote before or after state approval on whether or not we want to become a city?

Trustee Semifero - Again, there is no way to state when the process will be completed. There are a number of opportunities for community input through elections through the process. And the state does not approve a village becoming a city - the people of the Village will decide whether or not the Village becomes a city. The state only makes sure the process is followed as is required by law.

23) Who will write the new charter? And who will make the appointments for the candidates to be voted on to write the charter?

Trustee Semifero - As it has been described to me, an elected charter commission would write the charter. As far as I know, the candidates for a charter commission (and if a charter was approved, candidates for a city council) follow the same process as any other elected position. This means anyone can get a petition, obtain signatures, and file to be a candidate.

Trustees Carson, Cousins and Keough have expressed their general concurrence with the above responses.