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Barrington officials are appealing to residents – by way of a referendum question on the Nov. 8 ballot – to allow the village to go home rule, a move that officials say would give the northwest suburb’s Village Board more autonomy when it comes to passing local ordinances to take care of the needs of the village.

Home rule status would give the leaders more local control in solving local issues, officials say, instead of having the General Assembly manage Barrington in that way.

Village President Karen Darch said after the board received input from residents through surveys, listening sessions, meeting feedback and community conversations, trustees elected to place a home rule referendum on the ballot.

“Home rule provides Barrington leaders with more ability to pass ordinances to address local issues, like crime-free housing, rather than relying on the state legislature for solutions,” Darch told Pioneer Press. “Barrington residents want better infrastructure maintenance for roads and sidewalks, as well as enhanced beautification and community spaces. Home rule will allow us to better spread the cost of those improvements to non-residents who visit Barrington.”

She said she hopes the village will join the other 218 home rule municipalities in Illinois. Several neighboring towns, including Barrington Hills, South Barrington, Lake Barrington and Inverness, have home rule status.

The Illinois Constitution automatically makes any municipality with a population of more than 25,000 a home rule unit of government. But since U.S. Census data indicates Barrington has only about 11,000 residents, state law calls for the village to vote by referendum to become home rule.

The question on the ballot next month asks: “Shall the Village of Barrington, Illinois, become a home rule unit pursuant to Article VII, Section 6, of the Illinois Constitution?” Voters will be able to respond “yes” or “no.”

That revenue could come in the form of a home rule sales tax or amusement tax that could be used for road maintenance and other village improvements. Other villages, such as Arlington Heights, have generated thousands of dollars in home rule sales tax imposed on visitors to its Arlington Alfresco, a downtown outdoor dining venue.

According to the resource center, home rule status would also empower local leaders to implement laws independent of the state, enter into multi-year contracts with village vendors to improve cost savings, create rental housing regulations, simplify the hiring of police and attain a AAA credit rating – which would lower village interest costs.

“Home rule is important because it allows the village trustees to craft better solutions to some of the local issues that we have,” said Trustee Jason Lohmeyer, also citing crime-free housing as a top issue. “Home rule would allow us to pass an ordinance that would provide greater powers to evict tenants who conduct criminal activity in rental units. Approximately 25% of our housing in Barrington is rental housing. I think this would be important to our residents, because these types of issues can directly affect neighborhoods and the overall property values in the village.

Lohmeyer emphasized that any home rule sales tax imposed by the village would not affect groceries, prescription drugs or car sales.

“If the village were to enact an additional home rule sales tax – which in effect spreads the burden of these taxes to non-village of Barrington residents who come here – we believe that we could fund additional infrastructure projects that our community has been asking for, such as additional road and sidewalk repair, as well as village beautification projects like additional community spaces,” Lohmeyer said.

The village has begun hosting a series of community information sessions to educate residents and allow them to ask questions about the home rule referendum. Sessions started Oct. 11 and will culminate with a virtual session Nov. 7.

***Elizabeth Owens-Schiele is a freelancer.***