

Letter: Important questions for Saratoga Citizen

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The future structure and cost of Saratoga Springs city government could spin out of control unless Mayor Scott Johnson and the City Council act promptly to protect our future.

The group Saratoga Citizen Inc., whose funding and backing remains mysterious, has proposed a new form of government with unsubstantiated promises of transparency and savings.

I have two questions about Saratoga Citizen's proposal to install an unelected city manager, an unelected assessor, and institute other undemocratic measures: Who's paying for your campaign and legal expenses? How much is your proposal going to cost the taxpayers?

Unless and until Saratoga Citizen answers these simple questions, Mayor Johnson and the City Council should do everything in their power to prevent the taxpayers from being victimized by a proposition where we do not have answers.

As for question No. 1, by Jan. 19, Saratoga Citizen was in seeming violation of law in failing to file its required financial disclosure with the New York State Board of Elections. They did so last July, but not on time in January. Why not? Their leaders claim to have spent tens of thousands in legal expenses fighting the city. Who gave the money? Who will be calling in their debts if this undemocratic form of government comes about?

As for question No. 2, the sponsors of this proposal, who claim extensive expertise in local government finance, have refused to disclose what their proposed form of government will cost taxpayers. Are they keeping this information under wraps because the facts would be against them? Their refusal to disclose financials should cause any cost-conscious taxpayer to question not only the group's abilities but their integrity.

At this point, it is the mayor's responsibility to use his authority under New York state law to protect the fiscal condition of the city. We have a successful city by any measure, and we should not turn our future over to a group of self-appointed advocates that won't tell us the things we have every right to know.

Raymond Watkin

(Mayor 1974 to 1980)

Saratoga Springs