

# Two-headed leadership?

Village of Monticello Trustee Carmen Rue recently declared her opposition to the council/manager form of government under which the village is ruled. She started a petition drive to put on next year's ballot a referendum to give voters a choice of abolishing the system and institute a "strong mayor" regime.

It's easy to question Mrs. Rue's motives, since it's no secret she is not a fan of Village Manager John Barbarite or his backer, Mayor Gordon Jenkins. But, let's give her the benefit of the doubt and say she is operating under the best of intentions.

First, some definitions. The system currently in place in Monticello is a system in which an elected mayor and council/board make broad policy decisions while choosing a manager to carry out the policy and run the day-to-day operations of the village (or county or city).

Supporters tout its many advantages, and its origins partially go back to an era when reformers were attempting to correct the corruptions and inefficiencies of the "machine" -run municipalities. It was thought that a highly-trained manager – akin to a chief operating officer answerable to a board of directors – would make for a system combining electoral accountability and efficient governance.

*Welcoming a public  
debate over how our  
biggest village is to  
be governed.*

Monticello's experience, as always, makes it hard to clinch the argument. For well over a decade, it seems, there has been constant conflict, with a parade of village managers involved in ugly disputes with mayors and boards.

We've heard from people of impeccable credentials saying that it makes no sense to have a full-time mayor; no one would run for the position if it had to incorporate the myri-

ad of duties now carried out by the manager.

We ask, why not? Give the mayor a full-time salary, supply him or her with a supporting administrative system and then we'll probably get qualified people. Make the position a two-year one, as it was for decades, so a mayor will have to face the electorate and answer for his performance in office.

It's worth a try.

Something is obviously amiss with this current system, at least as it is practiced in Monticello. Political veterans point to good and competent managers in the past. No doubt they existed – and this is not to slight the competency and performance of current officeholder John Barbarite and his deputy, John LiGreci.

But there is something intrinsically political about the process of choosing a manager that a mayor and board can agree on. The frictions inherent in such a process make for a constant stream of dismal disputes and controversies.

At the very least, having Mrs. Rue's resolution on the ballot will bring to the forefront a debate over how the village is to be governed.

Such a debate is overdue – and welcome.