

# The Monticello merry go round

Once again we have the unsightly spectacle of a Village of Monticello Manager getting unceremoniously sacked. John LiGreci became the latest to get the boot after a special Village of Monticello Board meeting on Friday morning.

Is there something in the DNA of our biggest village and county seat that lends itself to these embarrassing power struggles leading to resignations and/or dismissals of one village administrator after another?

Even those who leave with relatively little rancor only did so after what could only be described as “eventful” and conflict-ridden tenures.

According to the best available data compiled by Village Historian Tom Rue, the first manager, Thomas Belmont, served from 1954-71 and was followed by shorter but still relatively long tenures by Donald Block and Louis Bernstein. Starting with Bob Norris, who quit on April 26, 1992 over (what else?) a dispute with the board, we’ve had (including interim appointments), 20 managers in 20 years.

Such frequent leadership changes are a symptom of underlying structural problems and deficiency in governance.

*Is it time to think  
about changing the  
system which governs  
Monticello?*

Is it time to again reconsider the Council-Manager system of governing in favor of a “Strong Mayor” with administrative oversight? Belmont, the village manager cited above, described the system he administered (via Tom Rue’s website):

“... The [elected] council is the governing body of the Village and the Village Manager is its agent in carrying out the policy which it determines. It is definitely understood that the Council deals with administration only in a formal manner through the Village Manager, and that administrative functions are at no time delegated to committees or individual members of the Council.... The Manager

provides the Council with information which enables it to determine municipal policies, advises the Council in matters of policy if the Council so desires, and executes the policy determined by the Council.”

Belmont then delineated the duties of the manager, including:

“To see that all laws and ordinances are enforced.

“To exercise control over all departments and in accordance with Civil Service regulations appoint, supervise, and remove department heads and subordinate employees of the Village.

“To keep the Board of Trustees advised of the financial condition and future needs of the Village.

“To prepare and submit to the Board such reports as may be required by that body.

“To perform such other duties as may be prescribed by charter or required of him by ordinances or by resolutions of the Board of Trustees.”

It seems so simple and straightforward. Yet introduce personality clashes and differences of opinion on policies, and you have the makings of constant conflict.

Richard Sush served the longest managerial reign in recent memory (Jan. 2, 2001-Aug. 11, 2006). A new manager, Sush told the **Democrat** at the time, must have a combination of intelligence and thick skin. “It’s a tough job,” he concluded

Maybe it’s time to restructure the system. Governments, as our Declaration declares, derive their powers from the consent of the governed. And though we’re not talking about a “long train of abuses” in Monticello such as Parliament inflicted on our colonial ancestors, the same principles apply. It’d be nice to live out our founding words: when governance is so suspect, then perhaps “the people” should think of changing it.