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Wood Hill Herald staff writer
what is a village?

Quite simply, according to Illinois Statutes, a village is any area of contiguous territory, not exceeding two square miles, which has at least 400 residents living in permanent dwellings (not trailers) and which lies at least one mile from the boundary of any existing village or city.

Thirty-five electors (registered, qualified voters) residing in the area to be incorporated may present to the county judge a petition setting forth (1) a definite description of the lands to be embraced in the proposed village (2) the number of inhabitants (3) the name of the proposed village (4) a request that the question of incorporation be submitted to the electors.

Wood Hill is already a village, in effect if not in fact. The difference is that we have no actual or operating government. The State of Illinois has set a minimum of 400 inhabitants within a two square mile area. Should not such people govern themselves? Is the county and township authority more interested in police and fire protection for you than you yourself are? Is the county and township more concerned about water filled excavations, speeding automobiles, blocked firelanes, or pot-hole gravel streets, than you are?

On the other hand, is the county or township interested in helping to attract new buyers to an attractive area? Have we exercised a voice in present zoning, which will effect your property values for years in the future? What about schools, parks and playgrounds, future sites for libraries? Will they be simply provided for us? Do we have a choice of location, type of construction, etc?

We are in effect, a village. No one will make us a legal village. We must do that ourselves. If we require services of the county and township, we must be willing to pay for it through higher taxes. Nothing is free. This does not intend to imply that we are criticizing the county or township. A county government is organized to govern and represent a county area. Naturally it must operate on a broader scope. Local interests must often be forfeited in view of the overall county requirements, which generally is rural by nature. A township operates on the same premise but concerns a smaller area. Only a village government, represented by village residents can give you an effective voice and action in providing local or village services, spending your money the way you want it spent.

It is not reasonable to expect the federal government to operate our states. It is no more reasonable to expect the county or township government to operate as a village.
INCORPORATE WOOD HILL? YES!

It is true that many residents of Wood Hill would like to see Wood Hill remain just as it is. According to recent newspaper articles, at the present rate of population growth, by 1970, a population equivalent to all the people now living in the Rocky Mountain Region will be added to our population. In other words, we will have enough annual gain in population each year by 1970 to require in housing a city the size of Chicago. It is predicted that 110%--150% increase in population will be experienced in South and Southwest Chicago by 1970. It is inconceivable that Wood Hill will not feel this increase.

Primarily the major advantages offered by village government are:

1) To provide a local administration and authority to represent your will as expressed by secret ballot.
2) To provide public convenience and welfare protection and services.
3) To regulate and govern according to ordinances proposed and adopted.
4) To plan an orderly development of services and to plan future requirements.
5) To represent village residents in other area, county, state and federal affairs.

Each new family and home in Wood Hill increases the problems of police and fire protection, street maintenance, water and sewage, schools, health protection, parks and playgrounds, wild dogs, and rodents, snow removal and many others.

Each month of delay in incorporation, increases the problems which will face a village government.

Village government is not a final solution to problems which face Wood Hill now, but is rather a method of recognizing those problems and organizing to meet and handle them. Only through elected responsible authority can we place responsibility for handling our affairs. A volunteer cannot be expected to be responsible for authority. Our Fire Department has been given responsibility to protect our lives. Only through legal government can we give them the authority to go with the responsibility. This is equally true of individuals who have provided police protection risking their persons and property without reimbursement or local authority.

As more families move into Wood Hill, personal service requirements increase. Facilities for recreation, stores and shopping areas, auto repairs, etc., will be developed. Many of our present residents offer services, etc., which are available to other residents. A plan can be prepared to provide for these interests, both in attracting new business and protecting them once they are here. We must be able to attract these businesses and services. With organized authority and proper planning, property values can be multiplied. On the other hand lack of authority and planning can cause a depreciation, that is development of undesirable structures, businesses, etc.

Probably the most important reason for incorporation involves "Security against encroachment by other municipalities. A village charter is something to throw into a safe to provide future protection against annexation". These are the words of Attorney Arthur Hammel, Joliet Attorney who led the incorporation, in the last three years, of the Villages of Shorewood and Cresthill, both located within five miles of Joliet. Cresthill was previously an unincorporated area located right at the boundary of Joliet city limits. It was as a result of this incorporation that Illinois Statutes were changed to require that any future petitions show that area to be incorporated must be at least one mile from the boundary of any existing municipality or have permission of that municipality to incorporate.

Attorney Hammel pointed out that at least three different means can be employed to prevent our incorporation:

1) Individual property owner petition to existing municipality for annexation. (If property owned by this individual extends to within one mile of Wood Hill we are out of business - Consider farm property between Monee and Cresthills, Monee, Hammond property, Park Forest College property, etc.)
2) Group of individual property owners may petition existing municipalities for annexation. This is the same as preceding except that all property owners in the area to be annexed must sign the petition.
3) Annexation by encirclement. Whenever an area containing 60 acres or less is wholly bounded by a municipality, it may be annexed by ordinance of that municipality alone.

In an article in the Park Forest Star, dated October 14, 1962, discussing the future of Park Forest and its problems, Mrs. Beverly Savitt, Village Trustee said in answer to the question, "Has Park Forest expanded as far as it can?" "To the West, East and North, yes." She went on to explain that the area to the South and Southwest of the village is unincorporated, and incorporation can take place only after mutual consent of the village and the residents of those areas. She said, "I have a feeling we'll expand that way and as those areas South of Monee Road continue to request village services, we come closer to incorporation."

Do we need any more definite warning? Park Forest can expand in only one direction--South. If Park Forest were to annex the present Park Forest College site, plus an additional 1/8 mile, South, incorporation of Wood Hill as now planned would be impossible. We must act now to incorporate "THE VILLAGE OF WOOD HILL".

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WHAT EFFECT WILL INCORPORATION HAVE ON TAXES?

Most of us are vitally concerned about this question above all others. First of all, let it be made clear that, existing taxes will not change. That is, tax for school, is increase approved by voters last fall, will continued. Increases in this area will be determined as the need for new schools in the school district increase. This will continue regardless of incorporation.

The amount of taxes a village may assess by ordinance for general corporate expense is limited by law to 2 1/2% of the assessed valuation as determined by the County Assessor's Office. On a construction value of $20,000 assessed for taxation at 5 1/2% or, $11,000, the annual cost in village taxes would be $563. However, it is not necessary that a village levy any taxes at all; or they may levy a portion of this rate.

Attorney Hammel stated that the village of Cresthill, which originally comprised an 1/4 mile square, and has been in existence for three years, has not yet levied its first taxes. How does the village pay its expenses? First of all, none of the village officials draw a salary ($1.00 per year). Telephone services to the village President is provided at no cost by the telephone company on a utility franchise. Police are on a volunteer basis. While they have a township Fire Protection District, all volunteers, some utility credits for telephone, gas and electricity (based on population) is provided at no charge. Primary expenses to the village comprise office equipment and stationery, publication fees for ordinances, attorney fees (based usually upon a set amount to $25.00) etc. Road repairs, snow removal, etc. were provided by the township and county until this year. Cresthill has recently purchased a used dump truck for $400 which is used for all purposes. Volunteers supply the labor to fill pot-holes in streets, etc. Material to date has been donated.

The major point is that village services cost exactly what you want them to cost through election of local officials and regular attendance at village meetings, and prudent management. If you as a body oppose or propose expenditure or require services, you have a place to have your position heard.

Other village income is possible through liquor and food licensing, construction permits, vehicle and dog permits, road and bridge returns, motor fuel tax returns, and other means.

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT INCORPORATING WOOD HILL?

The initial step after determining area to be incorporated involves determining exact number of inhabitants. This step was begun last November in conjunction with a school census. Final work is now in process.

A petition meeting requirements as set forth on page 1 is then presented to the County Judge asking that the question of incorporation be submitted to the electors. An elector is a legally registered voter and to be legally registered, must be 21 years of age, an American citizen, must have resided in Illinois one year, county 90 days, area to be incorporated, 30 days.

The County Judge establishes a hearing date, and after hearing determines if qualifications of a village are met. If so, he date sets a local referendum at the place requested in the hearing. Ballots are prepared, election judges appointed, and voting follows. Following closing of the polls, sealed ballot boxes are returned under guard to the County Clerk's Office. The following day, ballots are canvassed and results announced. If a majority of ballots cast favor incorporation, a village is created. A Court Order to that effect is issued.

The County Judge then establishes a date, not more than 60 days in the future, for election of village officials. A village President and 6 Trustees must be elected. Any qualified elector presenting proper petition to the County Clerk may file for these offices. Their petitions for President or Trustee must contain a statement of candidacy and the Oath of Allegiance. The President's petition must contain 50 signatures of electors, Trustees' petition must contain 35 signatures of electors.

Ballots are prepared and election held. Same procedure for ballot protection and canvassing as above. Winning candidates are announced by the County Judge.

The Village President and Trustees take office immediately. The Trustees must decide by drawing the length of their particular service. Not more than three village trustees terms may expire in any one election year. Village elections take place in odd years. Therefore, three of the newly elected Trustee terms would expire in 1965, while the remaining three would expire in 1967. In each year, 1965 and 1967 we would elect 3 village trustees while the village President's term would expire in 1967. Following seating of village officials, a village clerk is appointed and a Police Magistrate may or may not be appointed.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO INCORPORATE?

Attorney Hammel, based on his experience, estimates cost at between $700 and $900, including legal fees, costs for filing petitions, materials for balloting, legal announcements, canvassing fees, etc. Attorney fees are often deferred for payment until village has resources for payment.

Interested citizens may make donations for expenses of incorporation and such donations may be reimbursed after incorporation as funds become available.

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INTEGRATION DISCUSSION SET FOR MAY 26, 1963

The Committee to investigate incorporation has scheduled a very important areawide meeting, open to the Public, for Sunday, May 26th, 2:00P.M. at the Wood Hill Volunteer Fire Station, located at Exchange Street near Blackhawk Drive, according to an announcement by Robert Dowd, Committee Chairman.

Several prominent guests are scheduled to appear. Guests include John Houlihan, Assistant Will County Treasurer; Monroe Gorman, Monee Township Assessor; Arthur Hammel, City Attorney of Crest Hill; and Richard Petrarca, Monee Village Attorney.

Following a talk by Mr. Hammel and Mr. Petrarca pertaining to incorporation, the latter half of the meeting will be opened to questions from the floor. Mr. Houlihan and Mr. Gorman will also be available for questions from the floor pertaining to their offices.

Mr. Hammel and Mr. Petrarca are well experienced. Mr. Hammel has served as attorney for incorporating two new villages in Will County, Shoreland and Crest Hill. Crest Hill is now a city, and Mr. Hammel continues as City Attorney. His experiences should prove enlightening.

Mr. Petrarca, currently Monee Village Attorney, and formerly Assistant States Attorney, has until this past month also served as City Attorney of Chicago Heights. With his extensive knowledge of area codes and municipal ordinances, knowledge of present and future problems can be obtained.

Committee Members include, along with Robert Dowd; Dan Dobbert, Charles Barnhart, Case Timmer, John Pomeranski, Jerry Wien, Louis Glielmi, Alex Galbraith, Jerry Schifl, George Hansen, Ted Clark, Gene Buckmeier, Don Kieper, Dave Coon and Fabio Falcione.
CLEAN UP DAY

SATURDAY  JUNE 6  ALL DAY

General cleanup of all areas by all residents of Wood Hill. This includes streets, sidewalks, lawns, vacant lots, and any unsightly areas.

Let's all get out and work to make Wood Hill a hometown to be proud of.