

It *is* coming . . . and soon. Oh, it's coming for sure, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. My parents, friends and neighbors, people we meet at the grocery store, even perfect strangers – they are all talking about it. Truth be told, I know my mom and dad are incredibly excited and unbelievably frightened about it at the same time! Who would have known that such a significant event could ever come to my small, rural town? Sure enough, in just a few weeks, the United States Golf Association will host its 2017 U.S. Open Championship in one of the most beautiful towns in the state of Wisconsin: my hometown of Erin.

Starting out more broadly than the town itself, in the United States of America we have a federal republic form of government, which means that our national authority and governance really belongs to the people. This was so important to our country's founders that hundreds of years ago, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted, they purposely began with the words "We the People of the United States . . ." And one of the most famous quotations by one of our foremost presidents, Abraham Lincoln, states, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth." This form of government works well because all U.S. citizens are to play a part, to have a voice, in how our country is run. And even though at times it may not seem like it, yes, we still maintain a federal republic form of government in America.

"Funneling" down from federal or national government, through our state and county governments, to local governance, we then have cities, villages and towns. Although they are primarily self-governing, separate and independent, local governments are still in many ways connected to and dependent on our federal republic. I liken it to a very large umbrella, the top representing national governance, which then protects and "covers" all other governments down to the local, which are themselves self-sustaining and significant. Local authority, such as in my

hometown, is absolutely necessary and critical, especially when it maintains the theme of the Preamble to our Constitution.

One of the actual definitions of a **town**, from the American Heritage Dictionary, states that it is “the **residents** of a town.” In other words, the emphasis is on people. Town governments are critical to success because they are made up of the people elected by other people, and they represent their constituents – all the people of their town. All are encouraged to play a part; all have a voice. When this occurs, Lincoln’s words truly ring true: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people . . .” Town leaders must then take good care of their own, with strong integrity, as they represent the people. The town provides a number of necessary services, such as decent roads, good schools, fire and police protection, as well as circulation of information, public meetings and forums, and opportunities for town residents to express themselves.

I believe that capable, solid leadership that welcomes the positive, constructive participation and contributions of citizens is what really helps to make town governments successful. In fact, in his book *Local Government in Early America*, author Brian Janiskee states, “The most ardent proponent of strong local institutions was arguably Thomas Jefferson, and the reforms he proposed entailed the creation of a nationwide network of wards that would allow direct citizen participation in government” (2010). Town government was of utmost importance back in Jefferson’s time, and it is still critical today. After all, towns can hold incredible power to accomplish so very much for the good of the people. I think that what even a small town can do in the best interest of its citizens is underestimated by many. And as a perfect example of this, I come right back to the small town I call home.

In mid-June, the Town of Erin in Washington County will host one of the biggest sports events of all time, and it is doing so with open arms. Beginning with our town’s “can-do”

attitude of governance, Erin has been planning, listening, organizing, building, collaborating, and preparing for this grand event for many months, though my mom believes it has been going on for a few years. Information has been disseminated, public meetings have been held, opinions have been heard, and residents have been consistently updated as to what is happening along the way. Moreover, citizens of our town have been encouraged to play a part in the success of the competition, whether it be volunteering, working at it for pay, or even renting out their homes. Several of my friends and one cousin are thrilled to be U.S. Open Championship volunteers, and they look forward to it with great anticipation.

It *is* coming . . . and soon. Oh, it's coming for sure, but not to New York, or Los Angeles or Chicago. Thousands upon thousands will arrive in rural, scenic, quiet little Erin – a town with a very small population, but with so much to offer. Visitors to our area will be pleasantly surprised, I know, when they realize the beauty of Holy Hill, our many lakes, nature trails, lush greenery and, of course, our golf courses. In fact, one of my favorite things to do with my friends is to play sports in our town parks, with the sun setting and the silhouette of the Basilica in the background. In the end, I know that the United States Golf Association will be very pleased with the success of the 2017 U.S. Open Championship, and much of that can be attributed to our local town government. They have done very well! When it is all over, when all is said and done, people all over the world will recognize and appreciate for themselves the tremendous power, purpose and performance of my special hometown of Erin, Wisconsin.

Tony Pearson  
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