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Citizen input trumps budget concerns

In response to the June 1 editorial, "Police costs worthy of fresh look, too," I would like to point out the real "cost" citizens are forced to pay when communities begin looking at downsizing and consolidating police forces behind closed doors.

While a less than robust economy forces cities and towns to be more creative in budgeting and expenditures on services provided to citizens, leadership must be honest with the public as they consider new possibilities. While most citizens would be open to new ways to reign in a budget and even save precious tax dollars, they are not willing to be forced to adopt these measures without the facts and without giving their input to the decision makers.

Considering alternatives to the usual town police force seems to be a common practice in Illinois according to the article; but, as the Winfield controversy demonstrates, these conversations and considerations cost the public's trust when done in private without public input.

Ultimately, if implemented, these decisions could save the village a lot of money, but the citizens will be the ones dealing with the reality of less police protection, and they should at least have the opportunity to voice their concerns over a decision that impacts them so personally.

While saving money and using ingenuity to make the most out of community resources is never a bad idea, even on issues of policing, this cannot be done at the cost of valuable citizen concerns and insight. The citizens' right to know and participate in these decisions should be placed above any other motivations including a budget no matter how lean economic times may be.

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