

WILL: Pushes transparency and accountability in Hayward controversy

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The News: The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) sent a [letter](#) to the Town of Hayward, demanding that they follow Wisconsin law and hold a publicly noticed town meeting so residents can properly weigh in on significant spending projects. The town is ignoring a clear legal obligation and WILL is promising to take action.

The Quotes: WILL Associate Counsel, Skylar Croy, stated, “No town government should defy the law and ignore their constituents, but Hayward is attempting both. They have been provided multiple petitions from residents, including our client, and their lack of action cannot stand.”

WILL Client, Brenda Dettloff, added, “The Town of Hayward is denying citizens open, accountable, and transparent government. Before significant updates to town infrastructure and amenities are made, taxpayers deserve to have their voices heard. Because of that simple fact, hundreds of Hayward citizens, from across the political spectrum, are speaking out as one voice and demanding a true public meeting ‘of the People’ to properly vet the pending resolutions.”

Background: Hayward held its annual town meeting in April, and pursuant to a somewhat obscure statute, was not required to provide public notice (Wis. Stat. § 60.11(5)). Since no notice was provided, the town took advantage of this statute and passed three controversial resolutions. These resolutions resulted in approving a \$15 million building project and reorganizing the town board. Only 32 town members were present at this meeting. Notably, in a 2019 advisory referendum, Hayward citizens expressed disapproval for a similar \$5 million

building project.

After hearing about those resolutions, our client, Ms. Dettloff, and over 270 other citizens organized and collected signatures to call a “special town meeting” to have the resolutions reconsidered under Wis. Stat. §§ 60.12(1)(b) and 60.14(b). They have submitted three separate petitions, but the town clerk has refused to call the meeting. Their latest petition met basic requirements, plainly stating the time, date, and purpose of the proposed special town meeting, which is all that is required by statute, yet the town clerk is still refusing to organize the meeting or explain her reasons for failing to comply with the law.

The Letter: WILL’s demand letter asks the Town of Hayward to give public notice and hold the special meeting. It is clear that the town clerk is stonewalling, playing games, and violating her plain legal duty. If the town does not comply, WILL shall exhaust all legal efforts to ensure the rule of law.

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- [Demand Letter](#), August 2023