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## Slimming down in Niagara

**Vote for public downsizing hearing was a good move by County Legislature**

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Perhaps downsizing has become the “in” topic of consideration when it comes to legislative bodies, but the effect has been to draw welcome consideration of cost-saving and legislative efficiencies by elected officials across the region.

A case in point: the Niagara County Legislature has stepped up the pace of its own considerations by voting to hold a public hearing July 28 on reducing its size from 19 perhaps down to 15. And although this figure may be too large for some legislators, it is a place to start.

Undoubtedly, given the region’s population declines, some elected bodies are bloated and in need of revision. The 15-member Erie County Legislature is going through similar slimming-down considerations, not without considerable disagreement over topics such as representation and geography. That is to be expected, and the debate is healthy.

Niagara County legislators are not without their own individual axes to grind, but some have valid points to make. For example, Minority Leader Dennis F. Virtuoso, D-Niagara Falls, joined the unanimous vote in favor of the public hearing but brought up a valid question about doing “due diligence” study to find out if 15 is the correct number. Perhaps the Legislature should shrink to a smaller size, he said.

The number, as one legislator pointed out, is a starting point, and the Legislature should be given credit for moving things along and encouraged to continue doing so. Another hopeful sign of progress is a plan by Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, C-Wheatfield, to appoint a special committee after the election to study other possible changes such as term limits and pay increases. Both topics can be quite contentious but should be fully aired.

The Niagara County Legislature, like many other elected bodies, has been down this road before in considering downsizing. And although this simply may feel like the topic of the day, it is important in empowering the public to determine the proper size and scope of elected governments.

The Legislature’s unanimous vote to move things along and allow the public an earlier chance to share in that

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