

# Winfield board censures member for editorials

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Winfield's village board censured one of its trustees for criticizing a local political group allied with several opposing board members.

The censure of Chris Levan, which trustees passed 4-2 this week, carries no weight beyond a public scolding.

At issue is an exchange of newspaper editorials written last month by Levan and Steve Romanelli, president of Winfield United for a Better Community.

The group was influential in rallying support for several candidates in last year's local elections, and its members now hold seats on a number of village boards and commissions.

Romanelli, himself a member of the village's plan commission, blasted Levan and Trustee Dale Bianco for advocating lower builder fees to be paid by Kimball Hill Homes, the developer of 255 condos and townhouses along High Lake Road just west of the town center.

Levan responded by accusing Winfield United of obstructing local development and wielding undue control over village board affairs.

Romanelli claimed Levan's comments as a public official amounted to an irresponsible use of his title.

Yet both Levan and Romanelli acknowledge the censure will not help a village hall that has become defined, at least in part, by political infighting.

Village President Rudy Czech also mildly scolded the board Thursday for its actions. He did not return calls for comment.

"Rudy has to do his best as village president to keep harmony," Romanelli said. "But it's difficult when he has one or two rogue trustees who are doing everything in their power designed to make the rest of the trustees look bad."

Levan has frequently blamed Czech and his board allies for not doing enough to attract new development.

Two months ago, trustees rejected a proposal to rezone property just south of town center to make way for a condo project. A special taxing district created two years ago to spur town center development has yet to attract much interest.

And the village has had trouble retaining its staff. Last fall, the village lost its manager, development director, clerk and treasurer. A move, several sources say Police Chief James Kruger will likely be the next to do. He's expected to be appointed next week as the chief in Roselle.

"This appears to me something they'd do in Nazi Germany," Levan said of Thursday's censure, which he and Bianco voted against. "All they're trying to do is embarrass me."