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Unification committee has Dec. 1 deadline

By Ben Woodson/For The Lebanon Reporter

Zionsville — A government reorganization committee wants to have its work done by Dec. 1, giving it a very short time frame to come up with a plan.

The committee, which will come up with a plan to combine all or some elements of Union Township, Eagle Township and Zionsville government, met for the third time Saturday.

Finishing by Dec. 1 would give the governments time to review and possibly modify the plan before it needs to be accepted. After acceptance, the next step would be to put the plan on the ballot in either May or November 2008.

Committee member Kevin Schiferl said he expects any plan approved next year to take effect in January 2009. The committee will have a clearer idea of its time frame after its mid-August meeting.

Committee Chairman Gene Thompson said the committee should try to stick to the timeline of having the issue on the ballot in May, but he also suggested thinking about moving it to the November ballot. He does not know of many competitive elections for the May primary election, and he wants as many people to vote on this as possible, he said.

At the committee's previous meeting, it created six sub-committees. Each committee is made up of one committee member from each political sub-division and at least two other members of the public who have relevant skills.

By the next meeting, Thompson said he wanted each sub-committee to have appointed its members of the public, and to have started collecting the data it needs to make a recommendation. He also wanted each committee to identify the main issue it will face, but it does not necessarily need a solution to that issue yet.

Another issue is how the committee would interact with a state-level local government reorganization panel created by Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Thompson said both the committees have the same goal — reorganizing local government to make it more efficient — but the state project was doing it on a larger scale and in a different manner. The local committee is a grass-roots effort that is specific to local concerns and solutions, he said.

"I would much rather the solution come from the bottom up than the top down," he said.