



from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

I WAS RECENTLY READING AN ARTICLE about the old *I Dream of Jeannie* TV show and how it had been 53 years since its premiere on national television. It reminded me of a story I shared a few years ago and I think at this holiday season its worth resharing.

Imagine Bryan, a township official, taking a stroll along the Illinois River. It's a beautiful day, not too hot, not too humid, and there's not a cloud in the sky. It's just a great day to be alive and enjoying the outdoors.

Bryan nearly stumbles over something laying on the riverbank at his feet, but with that special agility and sure-footedness possessed only by township officials, Bryan manages to recover his balance and stoops to look at this "object" lying in his path. As he picks it up, he says, "Why, it's a brass vase or lamp. It's covered with dirt and years of grime, but clearly it's not just another piece of junk. It's worth investigating, perhaps even keeping!"

Bryan begins to wipe the dirt and grime off, and as the lamp's luster and true color appears, so too does a ghostly but smiling figure: the genie of the lamp. This is not the ordinary genie found in tales about the Arabian Nights or some other figures mentioned in East Indian lore. No, this genie, Bryan's genie is a real, live Native American genie made in America, by Americans, and ready to grant three All-American wishes to whoever released him from the lamp. In this case, Bryan.

The genie says to Bryan, "Well, Bryan, you've released me from captivity after many hundreds of years and you will be rewarded with three wishes. There are no strings attached, you will be granted anything you request, but remember: once you a request has been made, you can't change your mind."

This is clearly serious business, requiring serious consideration. Bryan sits down on a rock and pulls out his copy of the *Laws & Duties Handbook of Township Officials*, he begins searching for some kind of suggestion. Well, as you know, if you've read a copy of that book, there's nothing in it that provides any information regarding genies. However, Bryan does find a reference in the book that says for some purposes, township officials are advised to consult with their township attorney.

There aren't any attorneys handy, but Bryan does remember that some attorneys he knows had money. He says to the genie, "My first wish is for an unlimited supply

of money."

Wham! Pow!

A crash of thunder, and Bryan is deluged with money that never seems to stop coming, and he is delighted.

"For my second wish," Bryan says, "I want a bright, shiny, fancy new convertible with all the trimmings, gadgets, bells, and whistles.

Wham! Pow!

A crash of thunder and there's Bryan tooling along the high in his gorgeous new convertible, thinking to himself, "I'm not going to make my third wish too soon, I want to think about it for a while. I'm too smart to throw it away on something foolish—after all, my mother didn't raise a dummy!"

So, Bryan rides along with the top down, the wind blowing through his thinning hair, at peace with the world. What a feeling of Euphoria and satisfaction, he thought, as he turned on the car's radio and began to whistle along with a commercial.

"I wish I were an Oscar Mayer Weiner!"

And Wham! Pow!

A crash of thunder and—you guess it—mustard, anyone?

Circumstances and conditions for local governments are changing rapidly and on a daily basis. Township officials can be in the forefront of making those changes to benefit them and their constituents. Those officials who refuse to recognize that change is inevitable will ultimately be left behind with their "we've always done it that way" attitude.

Township Government and township officials can't afford to stagnate and refuse to recognize we can't fight change. Most certainly, township government can't afford any "Hot Dogs!"

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year to you all!