

**Batavia City / Town Consolidation Study First Public Forum**  
**June 18, 2009**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Batavia High School Auditorium**

**Questions / Comments / Suggestions received:**

- 1) Town resident asked why Town would want to take City responsibilities on. He said the Town is doing alright and has been a Town for years. He said the City is having problems and everything is broke down in the City. He said he doesn't think consolidation is right.
- 2) City and Town resident asked if a person's property is on both City and Town lines would they be in Tier 1, 2 or 3?
- 3) Town of Batavia resident asked who would determine how money is spent in a consolidated government.
- 4) Town resident said she has 0% Town Tax, has a great Fire Department, great roads and the Town has done a great job. She said the 3 Tiers sounds great until she sees that with Tier 1 the cost is now shared which she believes to mean that she will have a new tax. She said she is against consolidation.
- 5) Town resident and City employee asked if the vote to consolidate would be a weighted vote. He pointed out the difference in the population between the two entities.
- 6) Town resident asked how you can improve on 0% tax. He said he has little faith that a new government will be constrained. He said the City charges a utility tax for the library. He said he sees the need for taxes but not unnecessary taxes and he can't support it.
- 7) City resident asked if the combined entity would receive a combined sales tax percentage. He asked if anyone has addressed this with the County.
- 8) Town resident said he has no benefit of any of the services. He has a concern about paying for services he is not getting.
- 9) Town resident said his family has served on boards and services. It is his understanding that the idea of consolidation was not the City or Town's but it was the State's idea. He said it is like the fisherman holding bait out. He said they can't trust the State. He asked why the City Manager and Assistant City Manager are on the panel. He asked how long they have lived in the area. He said he believes in shared services. He said the decisions made back in the 60's are still affecting us today, such as urban renewal. He said with the landfill leaders didn't listen and look what happened, he said he hopes they are listening now. He said look at the City police that are working without a contract and he asked when it is awarded how much will it cost. He said what is it to say a board isn't

going to borrow from other Tiers. He asked what would prevent borrowing from happening. He said it seems like a weighted board. He doesn't want people to tell him not to hang his clothes on the line. He doesn't feel anyone should tell him in the Town how to live. He said we live in the country and we like it like that. He asked what prevents a board from making a resolution that Tier 1 borrows from Tier 2. He asked if the charter would be ready before they vote. He said that is the way the panel needs to present this, with the charter first for voters to know exactly what they are voting for. He asked what if in years something comes up that only affects Tier 3, who will vote on it.

- 10) Landowner in the City and Town asked what three cities in New York State use the tier system.
- 11) City resident said when he looked online it looked like the committee was going in the direction of suggesting a City. He asked why so many large towns do not become cities and yet this study seems to be leaning in the direction of a city. He asked if the committee will be providing a list of mandates the State requires on Cities that Towns do not have. He asked if they could zone it so the Town wouldn't have to have licensed plumbers.
- 12) Town resident asked if Tier 1 is making all the laws for Tier 2 and Tier 3 as one governing body. She asked if there are more people in Tier 2 can they make a law for ordinances in the Town that the Town doesn't currently have. She asked how you prevent stalemates in an equal representation. She said if it is equal representation then she believes they will end up in stalemates and if it's by the majority to break a stalemate the City has the majority. She said if it is not broke, why fix it. She said it seems this is coming from the State. She doesn't want it to be "look what Batavia did". She said if we are to make a name for ourselves it should be on our own not by what the State is making us do.
- 13) Town resident said it seems looking at the consolidation committee that the City wants this more than the Town does. He asked what do we have to do to have more representation on the committee from the Town. He said he would volunteer and he didn't know anything about it till he received the paper for the forum.
- 14) Town resident asked how many on the committee live in the Town of Batavia. She said there doesn't seem to be a lot of detail. She asked how much savings is there from the court system by consolidating. She asked if there is a guarantee of the State money every year. She said she is not for consolidation.
- 15) Town resident asked what would be the fiscal year. She asked when the tax bills would be mailed out. She asked if the Town and City Clerks would be appointed or elected.
- 16) Town resident asked what consolidation would do to the businesses in the Town. She said she believes that becoming one would cause Batavia to no longer be favorable to businesses because of higher taxes and she said the businesses will move to Pembroke

and LeRoy. She said the City has empty buildings and businesses move out of the City. She said the City has to find a way to lower taxes.

- 17) Town resident said he wants to know what the board is going to gain from all of this. He said everything is assumptions and they don't know what will happen.
- 18) City resident and Town property owner said for this to pass it has to be beneficial for both entities. He doesn't think people have a lot of faith in the State. He asked if the City gets a break on County taxes that the Town of Batavia and the rest of the County benefit from. He wants to know if the County roads in the Town are being taken care of by the taxes he pays in the City. He wants to know if as a City resident he gets a break on County taxes for having a police department and not utilizing the Sheriff's like the rest of the County. He said his County taxes are pretty high. He said that progressive thinking is good but that we are paying for the mistakes of progressive thinkers of the past with the urban renewal. He asked if Batavia gets a break on County taxes, he asked if City residents are supporting the Sheriff's department and taking care of County roads. He said that it seems like the City is paying extra.
- 19) Town resident and City property owner said she is concerned with savings of money. She wants to know how many people in the City actually own their property. She thinks it's unfair that people that don't pay taxes will have a vote in this. She pointed out the population difference between the two entities with regards to voting. She said the plan doesn't offer savings; she said the City would still have its own zoning officers. She said there would still be the same number of employees. She asked if the union contracts would start over again from scratch. She said she thinks the Volunteer Fire Department is much better than the City Fire Department. She said the City firefighters with benefits get \$100,000. She asked what would happen there. She said with the fires in the last few years the Town has had to come in and put out the fires in the City. She said its shared services now. She said take the City public works department; she would rather drive any Town road after a snow storm than any City street. She said there are a lot of concerns.
- 20) Town resident said she is twenty years old and a college student. She said taxes are a big issue but more important to her is how she lives. She likes to go hunting and asked if someone from the City moves out to Tier 3 and doesn't like guns near their house what will stop them from trying to push it through as a Tier 1 law. She asked what happens then and who votes on it. She asked what prevents the model of equal representation from changing.
- 21) Town resident and City property owner said he knows it is easier to get a response back from the Town elected officials then from the City elected officials when he has questions. He asked if they become one who will they have to contact for services.
- 22) Gentleman asked if they considered being a village and asked what the benefits are to being a Town or a City.

- 23) Town resident said he has listened tonight and heard the committee has worked for a year. He said the committee hasn't told us any of the issues. He said the committee is asking the Town to turn over our 0% to the committee and mix it with the City that is having a hard time staying out of debt. He said if you are looking for us to trust you to run things it is not going to happen.
- 24) Town resident said he appreciates the fact finding mission and it appears to him that the only benefit is for the City. He said he could list things the City has misused over the years. He asked how many cities decimate their downtown for urban renewal. He doesn't see where taking over the burdens of the City is going to benefit the Town. He said it is not the Town's fault that businesses have left the City for the Town. He said how many cities own their own mall and how many keep doing away with services. He can remember when God was involved and had a say in how government was run. He said living in the Western part of the Town he appreciates his neighbors. He said no one is keeping up with the Joneses. He said he enjoys living in the Town and working with his neighbors. He said a neighbor lost his barn and all the neighbors got together and rebuilt it. He doesn't see neighbors working together in the City. He has seen changes in the City. He said his folks use to live on Bank Street and he can remember houses on Bank Street and Washington Avenue that were beautiful and now they just have parking lots. He thanked the committee.
- 25) Town resident asked what the timeline is and if it was set by the State. She said she wonders if things are being rushed. She asked if they are rushing change and then in the end will they wonder what they have done.
- 26) City resident thanked the committee. He said to the Town residents that this might be a dream situation for all of us and said he hopes it can work out that they are one united group.
- 27) Gentleman said rushed progress is called urban renewal in Batavia. He said the committee talked about equal representation and asked how that is possible with the constitutional requirement of one person / one vote. He said with the ward system it would be an unbalanced vote. He said you will end up with an imbalance of population. He said he isn't convinced they needed this study. He said the committee is coming at it too soon and there are a lot of things they do not know. He said if he doesn't understand something he doesn't vote for it.
- 28) Gentleman asked if it was correct that they have to vote now without the charter written. He asked how they could vote without knowing the details. He asked the audience how many live in the City and the people raised their hands. He asked how many people where from the Town and the Town people raised their hands. He asked why you think that is; that there are many people from the Town there speaking negatively about consolidation and only a few people there from the City. He said that people he talks to in the City don't really care which way it goes. He said they are just looking for a bail out.

