

Dissolution Study Committee

Minutes

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March 9, 2011

Civic Center Community Rm
6 – 8 p.m.

Chairperson: Tim Connolly

Present: Michele Arnold, Tim Connolly, Ruth Garner, Cindy Goliber, Eleanor Hopke, Alexandra Jacobs, Mark Lee, Jack McGuire, Dan Parker, Marie Regan, Rose Rivezzi, Mike Zagrobelny, Charlie Zettek

Excused: Mario Pusateri, Will Siegfried, Steve Warr

I. Minutes: Feb 9, 2011 approved

II. Presentation:

A. SUNY Potsdam Assistant Professor of Politics Jack P. McGuire shared an overview (FAQ's and sample framing questions) of the research survey he and colleague Robert A.Hinckley will give in March and October 2011

B. DSC comment and response-

1. The survey is purely academic
2. An exercise to assess the influence of issue framing on public opinion
3. A distinctly college endeavor – unrelated to DSC
4. The framing questions should be released with the survey results in context
5. Administered to permanent potsdam Village registered voters
6. Media will focus on it
7. A phone survey is complicated by unlisted cell phone residents

III. Subcommittee Reports:

A. see separate reports –

GENERAL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

1. **Anything new:** We have nothing new to add to the What Exists report since updates made to our subcommittee's sections and the full document on Monday.
2. **Current services:** I know these sections are important, but I don't have the exact budget numbers for these figures at this time. Jaime was going to help our subcommittee parse these, but I haven't seen the numbers and don't want to get them wrong. The staffing would include the salaries and benefits of 11.5 FTE office staff positions in the town and village, and the mayor/board of trustees and supervisor/town council wages and benefits in both municipalities. It would also include the 2.5 FTE positions in the village Planning & Development Office. Expenses for these offices would definitely include their supplies, but I'm not sure how well things like computers would be represented. Revenue would come from things like parking tickets and dog licenses. The village Planning &

Development Office's grant success is reflected in the What Exists report. There will be a serious shortfall for this office upcoming, however.

- a. **Staffing: ?**
- b. **Expenses: ?**
- c. **Revenue: ?**

3. Functions provided:

- a. **Both entities separately:** Clerk, registrar, tax collection, treasurer, mail, secretarial duties, custodial work
- b. **Any shared/consolidated services:** Town contracts with village Planning & Development Office for some grant application writing and administration services, contributed to Empire Zone program
- c. **One entity alone:** Only town: Has assessment functions and its clerk is elected. Deals with bingo/games of chance, dog and conservation licenses. Has no administrator or IT specialist. Only village: Has administrator/IT specialist. Has Planning & Development Office.

4. Substantive differences between village and town:

- a. **Cost differential:** This will be substantial overall. In general, the village office staff makes more money and has better benefits than their counterparts at the town. The town has more municipal employees in this comparison, however, because of its assessment duties. The village also pays its trustees and mayor more than the town pays its board members and supervisor; plus, village trustees take health insurance. Also, the village has a Planning & Development Office, while the town does not, though it does pay for some grant writing and Empire Zone services. Again, I do not have an exact figure for you to use at this time.

5. Three "hot button" topics:

- a. Possible organization chart for transfer of municipal duties to town—so far, we anticipate that there would be the same number of positions transferred over to the town. We think there should be a town administrator, especially during the transition if the village were to be dissolved.
- b. Multiple options for dealing with issues facing Planning & Development Office need to be dealt with whether village is dissolved or not. These could include paying substantially more locally to support the department; cutting back and adding contracted services and a community development oversight board, or simply eliminating the department altogether under town leadership.
- c. How to address use of space if town takes ownership of Civic Center offices, retains newly renovated Town Hall and has 18 Elm St. property. Court/Fire Department/Police/Library/Museum locations must be taken into consideration. Because there are many options and toes to be stepped on, this could be contentious. This is an important thing to think through carefully.

6. Outstanding items needed for the final report draft: None at this time.

Fire and Rescue

1. Anything New to add2 retirees, not one
2. Current Services....done
 - Staffing
 - Expenses
 - Revenue
3. Functions Provided....done
 - Both entities separately
 - Any shared/consolidated services
 - One entity alone
4. Substantive differences between V and Tdone
 - Cost differential
5. 3 Hot Button Topics.....1) justifying the paid drivers to the town
6. Outstanding Items needed for the final report....
7.
 - 1) .map will be added to final
 - 2) Lease clarification on Rescue Squad building
 - 3) breakdown of where FD responses were made in the year's prior to 2008

Police Subcommittee

1. Anything New to add
 - Police Districts**- History of police district
 - Town police protection -
 - The establishment of a police district is not permitted under current state law from 1932 without special legislation
 - Generally, the opinions of the State Comptroller (NYS OSC Opn No. 86-53 and No. 86-60) that Sean Maguire has read on the matter seem to indicate that a town is to provide police protection town wide or not at all.
 - Part-town police districts-
 - Prior to the recodification of Town Law in 1932, they were permitted.
 - currently Town Law does not permit a part-town district (opinions from Office of the State Comptroller)
 - Port Washington Police District in the Town of North Hempstead was permitted by 1934 town law amendment
2. Current Services
 - **Staffing** – see report
 - **Expenses**

- a. \$490,758 benefits + \$1,331,776 budget category 3120 = \$1,822,534
- b. OT = 9% of total salaries
- c. \$110,000 Police Station (part of Rescue Squad Bldg) lease; 30 yr lease is debt; some operating expense (insurance and maintenance contacts) are stipulated in the lease- they might be required even without occupying the bldg.
- d. \$72,000 debt service + \$38,000 current operating expense= \$110,000

- **Revenue**

- a. \$55,000 fines (local ordinances)
- b. \$29,000 meters; offsets expenses of labor and equipment maintenance

- **Assets:** see report

3. Functions Provided- see report

4. Substantive differences between V and T

- Cost differential - inapplicable

5. 3 Hot Button Topics

- How to provide police services upon dissolution –
- Police union contracts
- Job evaluations

6. Outstanding Items needed for the final report

- More Town-wide PD comps
- Cost of county coverage

7. Anything New to add

Compensation - Village code 35-6d compensates dept heads, the Village Admin and the Treasurer/Clerk 1 week vacation for attending night time meetings

Code Subcommittee

1. Current Services

- **Staffing** – nothing new
- **Expenses** – see report
- **Revenue**
 - c. \$61,000 budgeted; \$127,000 as of Feb 2011
 - d. fees building = \$115,437 +rental/fire inspection\$12,050
 - e. \$29,000 meters; offsets expenses of labor and equipment maintenance

2. Functions Provided – nothing new

3. Substantive differences between V and T

- 75% untaxable property, 70% rental property
- Rental burden

- 2,244 vs 50.2 persons per sq mile - density-related issues
4. 3 Hot Button Topics
 - How to enforce code upon dissolution – need police cooperation
 - Reconciling different code definitions (i.e. family)
 - Addressing rental issues: under-assessed properties, density of rental units, low fee schedule, uncooperative landlords
 - Job evaluation
 5. Outstanding Items needed for the final report
 - Reconcile census/population

Dissolution Sub-Committee Utilities/DPW Meeting of March 2, 2011

Present, Mario Pusateri-Chairman, Dan Parker, Wil Siegfried. Tim Connolly excused early due to illness. Absent Eleanor Hopke. Guest Bob Henninger, Village of Potsdam Water, Sewer, Hydro Superintendent.

The committee discussed the various union contracts of Village employees. Dan Parker would research and have an update ready for the March 9 full committee meeting.

Will Siegfried was assigned to research the DPW responsibility regarding sidewalks and would have an update for the full committee meeting of March 9, 2011

The discussion turned to positions that would be retained within the DPW should the Village dissolve. It was felt an administrative position could be eliminated. However the position should be retained by the Town for at least 2 years to ensure a smooth transition and training of personnel in Village operations. Addition of any employees remain stalled due to the unknown of the future Hydro Plant requirements.

Consolidation of Village Water and Sewer, Town Water and Sewer was discussed. Possible creating separate water and sewer districts were discussed. General consensus is it would be a Town of Potsdam decision to create separate districts should the Village dissolve. Elimination of the contractor servicing the Unionville plant was discussed. Mario shared Marie Regan's reply at a committee meeting regarding this issue. Marie stated the monies paid for a private contractor are less expensive than if done by in house employees. Marie cited benefits, salaries etc not having to be paid by the municipality and the additional duties performed by the contractor that would require employees from other departments within the town to perform. Marie stated employing a contractor at Unionville is a cost saving for the town. The discussion then focused on the possibility of a contractor being engaged in maintaining the Village Water, Sewer and Hydro plants should the Village Dissolve. This would be a decision of the Town should dissolution occur.

The committee recommends should Dissolution occur, the Superintendent of the Town DPW should focus on elimination of excess equipment. Should dissolution not occur, the

Village and Town should revisit additional avenues of Shared services and equipment? The committee was given a Village contract for plowing County/State Highways. Village contracts for plowing county/state roads and the Town does not. Recommend under the current Village contract and reimbursement to the Village, it appears those costs related to plowing are reimbursed to the Village. It is recommended, should the Village dissolve, the Town should re-Visit the possibility of performing this function

Pending reports from Will and Dan, this should conclude the What Exists for the Utilities, DPW sub-committee.

IV. CGR Report:

- A. Short term process and outlook
 1. *Hot Buttons* is a worthwhile exercise to anticipate the public's questions
 2. Proposed schedule includes:
 - *What Exists Report* in April
 - *Options Report* in July
 - *Dissolution Report* in August
 3. DSC writing will decrease as CGR's writing increases
 4. Community opinion will shift during the next 5-6 months, driven by facts and public discussion
- B. Discussion on and introduction to the final report, laying the framework for the reason dissolution was considered in the first place

V. Public Reflections: None

VI. Next meeting: Wednesday, 3/23 3rd floor Civic Ctr Community Rm, 6 – 7:30 pm

VII. Adjournment: 8:15 pm

Submitted by Michele Arnold

