

**Village of Morristown
Dissolution Study Committee Meeting
Meeting #4 – May 23 @ 6:00 p.m., Morristown Fire Hall
Minutes**

Attendance

Committee: Cheryl Shatraw, Diane LaRock, Mark Blanchard, Chris Coffin, Michele Whalen, John Newtown, Jay Moore, Philip Barse, John Barse

Public: Ted Zoli, Earl Barse, Wayne Sardullo Jr., Wayne Sardullo Sr., Suzanne Boyer, Pat Reagen, James Kelly, JoAnne Marcelletta, Claude Barse, Randy Wright, Pat Corcorca, KC Corcorca, Dave VanArnam, Gail Spilman, Scott Ritchie, RB Lawrence, Sally Palao, Manny Palao, Sandy Warren, Joanne Vaillancourt, Frank Putnam, Judy Wright, Mike Bogart

Consultants: Carrie Tuttle, Hartley Bonisteel Schweitzer

New York State Department of State: Kevin Schwenzfeier

1. Presentation: Fire and Ambulance Services

- C. Tuttle provided an overview of the how fire services can be structured in New York State, and how the Village and Town of Morristown currently conduct their services.

- A summary of the presentation follows:

- Fire protection in NYS is complex and can be provided in many ways, either directly by a municipality, arranged under contract with a municipality, or independently governed by a fire district.
- In villages, fire services are paid for by a general municipal tax. Because towns cannot offer fire protection as a municipal function, they must use the taxing structure associated with the type of fire protection district they use.
 - Fire Protection Districts: the Town levies property tax in the areas of the Town served by the Fire Protection District.
 - Fire Districts: the Fire District is a separate unit of local government that has the power to incur debt and to levy taxes against the taxable properties within the district.
 - Fire District taxes are independent taxes. They are collected with the Town and County taxes and distributed to the fire district by the Town.
 - Funds can be used to purchase buildings, equipment, and insurance, and pay for firefighter training.
 - Additional funds may come from donations to a fire department, charitable fund-raising, facility rentals, and taxes on certain fire insurance policies written by out-of-state insurance companies.
 - In 2016, the Village paid \$44,660 for fire and ambulance services. This means that Village residents are paying \$1.72 per \$1,000 taxable assessed value. Revenue totals were updated with information from the Village Treasurer after the meeting. Slide 12 and 13 were updated in the presentation.

- The Brier Hill Fire District paid \$18,980 for ambulance services, or \$0.24 per taxable assessed value.
- The Town of Morristown paid \$49,270 for fire and ambulance services, with \$0.43 per \$1,000 taxable assessed value for fire and \$0.24 per for ambulance services, for a total of \$0.67.
- Comment: these numbers are the totals for each, do not add them together.
- The Morristown Fire Department is a department of the Village. The Village Board of Trustees act as the board of fire commissioners. They:
 - Approve Fire Chief, all Officers, and volunteer fire members
 - Contracts with Towns of Morristown, Oswegatchie, and Macomb for fire services
- Village owns the Fire Hall, all of the fire trucks, and related equipment.
- Village pays for building maintenance, gear and equipment, and heat/lights/fuel.
- In the FYE16 AUD the Village reported:
 - Revenue: \$107,965 Fire Protection Services - Other Governments
 - \$31,750 Town Morristown Fire Protection
 - \$36,500 Town Morristown Ambulance
 - \$19,750 Town Oswegatchie Fire and Ambulance
 - \$14,565 Town of Macomb Fire and Ambulance
 - \$5,400 St. Lawrence County Office of the Aging rental of Fire Hall for meal site. Comment: Treasurer of Village noted that this revenue was missing from the report. Slide 12 and 13 were updated with additional revenue. This changes the rate Village tax payers pay for Fire and Ambulance services in 2016 to \$1.72 per \$1,000 of assessed value.
 - Expenditures: \$152,625 Fire
 - \$35,300 Fire, equipment and capital outlay expenditures
 - \$73,757 Fire, contractual expenditures
 - \$43,568 Fire Truck debt payment
- A breakout of fire calls by municipality was requested by a committee member and provided by Kevin Crosby. There was some discussion of equity and percentage of service compared to cost, but without further information on the nature and cost of each call, or an entire year's worth of calls, it is too complex to extrapolate any clear strategies.
- Kevin Crosby provided updated numbers after the meeting, and Slide 19 of the presentation was updated with the following:
 - The number of fire and ambulance calls between January 1 and May 22nd of this year show: the Village receiving 12.9%; the remaining portion of the Town of Morristown receiving 36.6%; the Town of Oswegatchie receiving 25.8%; the Town of Macomb receiving 6.5%; and 18.3% of the calls going to "Other". "Other" represents calls in the City of Ogdensburg, Town of Lisbon, Town of Depeyster, Town of Hammond, and other areas.

- Slide 11: Fire coverages map was updated with accurate boundaries for Town of Oswegatchie.
 - Slide 20: updated to reflect current vehicle inventory
- Comment from C. Tuttle: The Village Board makes these contracts, and they do not factor into dissolution. These are existing conditions, and if the Village does opt to dissolve, then the Town would assume all existing contracts.
- Comment from K. Schwenzfeier: The contracts with the other communities are not really a factor here. This discussion is really about the Town and Village.
- Comment from K. Schwenzfeier: If the Village dissolves, the Fire Department assets cannot be sold to a non-profit. We would have to look into alternatives, and options will be discussed in greater detail during the Alternatives Phase.
- If the Village of Morristown dissolved, the Fire Department would no longer be a Village Department. Residents of the former Village could receive fire services through:
 - A Fire Protection District: the Town of Morristown could include the former Village area in its Fire Protection District, and then contract with a fire department for services.
 - A Fire District: a Fire District could be established for the former Village area, which would be comprised of 5 elected fire commissioners. The Fire District could own fire equipment and manage fire companies for fire services.
 - Joint Fire District: The Town of Morristown and the Village of Morristown, and other Towns, could create a Joint Town/Village Fire District at any time (outside of or prior to village dissolution), so the District would collect taxes directly instead of through a contractual arrangement.

2. Dissolution Study Meetings and Topics

- The upcoming meeting schedule was reviewed with the Committee. The next meeting will be on June 27th and the topic covered will be the Department of Public Works, Water, Sewer, and Highway Department.

Meeting Month

#1 Kickoff and Demographics February 28, 2017

#2 What Exists: Municipal Financials March 28, 2017

#3 What Exists: Municipal Officials, Employees & Local Laws April 25, 2017

#4 What Exists: Fire Department May 23, 2017

#5 What Exists: Dept. of Public Works, Water, Sewer & Highway Dept. June 27, 2017

#6 Draft Existing Conditions Report July 25, 2017

#7 Public Meeting #1 - Existing Conditions August 22, 2017

#8 Alternatives September 26, 2017

#9 Draft Alternatives Report October 24, 2017

#10 Public Meeting #2 - Alternatives November 28, 2017

#11 Final Dissolution Report and Plan December 26, 2017

#12 Public Hearing (if recommended by committee) January 23, 2018