

Town of Clifton & Town of Fine

Efficiency/Consolidation Study Committee Meeting

Meeting #12 – 1/27/2016 @ 6:00 p.m. @ the Town of Fine Municipal Building

Minutes

1. Attendees:

Committee Members: Sue Westbrook (F), Brian Donovan (F), Roger Folsom (F), Chuck Hooven (C), Kelly Smith (C), Joe DeMart (C), Sherman Craig (F), Mark Hall (F)

Guests: AD Burr “Butch” Brown (F), John Russell (C), Tracy Typhair (F)

Consultants: Star Carter (DANC), Carrie Tuttle (DANC)

2. Brainstorming Session on Alternatives to Town Services

Committee members and guests participated in an exercise to brainstorm ideas for alternatives to the delivery of current town services as identified in the Existing Conditions Report. Ideas were posted on sheets of paper and then discussed to get a “first pass” on what alternatives the committee would like to focus on for this study. Some categories were simpler due to the current conditions and others were more complicated and will need further research and discussion. A summary of the discussion for each town service category, in no particular order, follows:

- A. Safety Officer – Currently, 1 part-time appointment in each Town and the Hwy Superintendent assumes the position. If the Towns consolidated, there would be 1 part-time Safety Officer. If not, there are no opportunities for savings or efficiencies.
- B. Recreation – Currently, there are many seasonal part-time employees to cover recreation services related to the Arena, Golf Course, Beach, and Youth Program. The Committee discussed the importance of these services to the communities and how they provide residents with easily accessible recreation opportunities. Because these services are already co-managed by the Towns, there may not be many opportunities for savings, especially since the Golf Course is self-sustaining. There was discussion about the utilization and challenges of the Arena building (weather dependent ice, very hot in the summer, etc.). If the Towns consolidate, there would no longer be a need for IMAs and there may be additional resources available from the combined tax rolls.
- C. Library – Currently, the Clifton Community Library is chartered to serve the Town of Clifton and is funded through Clifton only. There are many patrons in Fine and other areas, and the committee agrees that changes could possibly be made to more fairly fund the library. If the Towns consolidate, the Library charter would need to change. The library could remain a community library that served the new Town, a school district library, or a regional library. Discussion included challenges with current location (not

ADA compliant, no room for expansion, not centralized) and possible solutions (upgrade current location, move to new location, open a second branch). If Towns don't consolidate, opportunities to change the charter still exist and these options can be explored.

- D. Historian – Currently, 1 part-time appointed employee in each Town; stipends are \$500 in Fine and \$400 in Clifton. If the Towns consolidated, there could continue to be 2 part-time historians; 1 part-time historian; or 1 historian with volunteer “helpers” from each hamlet. There was discussion that 2 historians wouldn't reinforce the “1 community” mentality. 1 historian would allow for more consistency and possibly access to more resources, but could also be a large burden for 1 person without help, so could be paid equal to both current stipends. There would likely be no savings, but could be more efficient. More volunteers are needed for this position.
- E. Registrar – Currently there is 1 part-time registrar and 1 “back-up” in each Town, and the duties are completed by the Town Clerks. If the Towns consolidate, there would be several options: 1 part-time Registrar; 1 part-time Registrar with 1 assistant; combine with another employee's job; or combine the Registrar and the Historian position, since they are closely related duties. If the Towns don't consolidate, there isn't much opportunity for change in this service.
- F. Town Justice – Currently, each Town has a Justice, which is an elected position. Fine also has 1 part-time court clerk, but Clifton does not. If the Towns consolidate, there are a few options: 1 full-time Justice, 1 full-time clerk, and 1 courtroom; 2 Justices, 1 part-time clerk, and 1 courtroom; and looking into a regional court. More research needs to be done on how many Justices a Town can have. There was discussion on the challenges the Towns have with their current courtrooms, including: ADA issues, capacity, security, and separation of defendants and public spectators.
- G. Legal Services – Currently, Fine has an appointed attorney who is a Town employee, and Clifton contracts attorney services. If the Towns consolidate, there are two options: 1 appointed attorney or 1 contracted attorney. Legal fees would be expected to decrease due to elimination of IMAs between the 2 Towns.
- H. Bookkeeping – Currently, each Town has a full-time appointed Bookkeeper and Clifton also has a part-time assistant. The Towns use different software and accounting systems. If the Towns consolidate, there are a few options: 1 full-time Bookkeeper and 1 part-time assistant; 1 Bookkeeper and a payroll contract. Consolidation would also mean there would be 1 type of software and 1 accounting system, and one Town's share of the paperwork would be eliminated (AUDs, budgets, etc.). Without consolidation, the Towns could implement the same type of software to make this system more consistent in the Towns and also allow for the Bookkeepers to more easily help each other, if needed. They could also implement a payroll contract.
- I. Code Enforcement – Currently, each Town has its own part-time Code Enforcement Officer. In the past, the Towns have shared 1 Code Enforcer. If the Towns consolidate,

the recommendation from the committee is to have 1 Code Enforcement Officer, either as an employee or a contracted service. The codes are the same in each Town, with possibly some small differences in local codes, but the enforcement would be consistent with 1 officer. 1 officer would result in continuing education savings. A contracted service might eliminate potential conflicts. Without consolidation, one Town could contract with the other for Code Enforcement, which would eliminate one payroll and provide consistency and efficiency.

- J. Dog Control – Currently, the Towns separately hire the same part-time Dog Control Officer. Each Town contracts with a different animal shelter. If the Towns consolidate, the committee recommends there be 1 part-time Dog Control Officer and 1 contract with an animal shelter. This would save the Towns money on shelter contracts and make payroll more efficient. Without consolidation, the Towns can negotiate a combined contract with 1 shelter, and possibly one Town could contract the Dog Control position with the other.
- K. Insect Control – Currently, the Towns separately hire the same 2 part-time seasonal technicians. If consolidated, the committee would recommend the same 2 part-time seasonal technicians, and the efficiency would be in the streamlined payroll, paperwork and permitting. Under 1 Town, additional duties could possibly be added to manage invasive plants, which would require additional training and permitting. More research needs to be done to see if the DEC would allow 1 permit for both Towns if they did not consolidate.
- L. Town Clerk – Currently, each Town has 1 full-time elected Town Clerk and 1 part-time Deputy Clerk. If the Town’s consolidate, the committee recommends that there be 1 full-time clerk and 1 deputy. If the Towns do not consolidate, there are no alternatives or savings that can be gained in this position.
- M. Highway Departments – Currently, each Town has their own Hwy Dept with 1 elected Hwy Superintendent. Fine has 6 full-time Hwy employees and Clifton has 5, but has had 6 in the past. One of the employees is designated as the Deputy Superintendent in each Town. The Highway Department is a complicated topic, but the “base case” scenario if the Towns consolidate could be: 1 Hwy Superintendent, 1 or 2 Deputies, and the same number of highway employees (12). Other considerations would be: higher pay for the Superintendent, 2 winter shifts, 2 or 3 less pieces of equipment, 2 less highway employees, one Hwy garage, 2 highway garages, 1 new town barn phased in, and moving water and sewer maintenance employees under the Hwy Dept. Without consolidation, efficiencies might be gained by changing the snow plowing routes.
- N. Buildings – Currently, each Town has their own municipal buildings and offices, plus several other municipal buildings that may be underutilized. If the Towns consolidate, there are a few options: designate 1 existing building as the new Town office building and have all government offices located there; have multiple buildings for offices; build a new Town office with space for all offices. The committee agreed that having all of the offices in one building was most preferable, reducing the amount of driving between

offices for residents and employees. Ideally, the office would be centrally located to be close proximity to majority of residents. Many committee members thought that building a new building was not a good idea, and existing buildings may be improved for offices, therefore freeing up other buildings to be used differently (one courthouse, more library space, etc.). Committee members also agreed that there is currently confusion from many residents as to which Town they reside in and which office they need to contact for service. One building would reduce that confusion. Without consolidation, there may still be options for the Towns to look at using their existing buildings differently and capital improvements to address issues like ADA compliance and security.

- O. Community Action – Currently, there is 1 part-time employee that is currently shared between the Towns. With or without consolidation, there would be no change and likely no savings. An MOU could be drafted to lay out the sharing of this service, instead of the current set-up, which could be cleaner and easier to administer.
- P. Real Property Assessment – Currently, Fine has 1 part-time appointed Assessor and 1 assistant; Clifton has 1 part-time contracted Assessor. In the past, the Towns used the same assessor. If the Towns consolidate, the options are: 1 appointed full-time and 1 part-time; 1 full-time appointed Assessor; 1 contracted Assessor. Without consolidation, the Towns would benefit from using the same assessor as there would be consistency in assessments if done by the same person. This could affect Town and School taxes. Some discussion on conducting a re-val before or after consolidation. The Towns could do a re-val anytime they wanted to, but it should not be part of this study, as it will make everything too complicated and people will focus on the re-val issue and not the consolidation.
- Q. Other Opportunities – Other opportunities discussed were: consolidating Fire Districts, which is outside the scope and control of this study; 2 water operators; and if the Towns consolidated, there would be 1 Town Supervisor and 4 board members (possible higher pay?). There may be insurance savings in directors insurance and health insurance (larger pool of employees, but this is may be difficult to quantify).

### 3. Existing Conditions Report – Summary of Changes

- Star explained the changes that have been made to draft report:
  - i. Age and LMI trend charts added to pages 6-7
  - ii. Cemeteries updated on page 24
  - iii. Revenue and Expenditure tables corrected to AUD 2014 values (transcription error)
- The Existing Conditions Report will be finalized on Feb. 5, so please have comments back before then.
- Kelly Smith stated that he has updated Hwy figures to calculate and submit.

### 4. Future Meeting Schedule

- Next Meeting Study Committee meeting February 24

Kick Off Meeting	January 28, 2015
Demographics & Taxes	February 25, 2015
Services Provided: Highway Department Part I	March 25, 2015
Services Provided: Highway Department Part II	April 22, 2015
Services Provided: Fire Department	May 27, 2015
Services Provided: General Fund Town Services – Library, Arena, Golf Course, Dog Control, Court, etc.	June 24, 2015
Services Provided: Water/Sewer	July 22, 2015
Personnel	August 26, 2015
Finances and Budgets	September 23, 2015
Review Draft "Existing Conditions/What Exist" Report & Plan for Public Informational Meeting #1	November 23, 2015
Review PowerPoint and Draft "Existing Conditions/What Exist" Report for Public Informational Meeting #1	January 4, 2016
Informational Meeting #1	January 6, 2016
Evaluation of Alternatives	January 27, 2016
<b>Evaluation of Alternatives</b>	<b>February 24, 2016</b>
Evaluation of Alternatives	March 23, 2016
Evaluation of Alternatives	April 27, 2016
Evaluation of Alternatives	May 25, 2016
Evaluation of Alternatives	June 22, 2016
Public Informational Meeting #2	July 2016
Recommendations & Final Report	August 2016
Public Information Meeting/Hearing	September 2016

5. Other Business –

- Mark Hall drafted a press release about the project. Star will send out draft to committee members for review.