

Village of Hermon

Dissolution Study Committee

Meeting #7 – 2/26/2015 @ 6:30 p.m. @ the Hermon Town Hall

Minutes

Attendees: Cathy Race, Jeff Foster, Jamie Matthews, David Doiron, Jane Doiron, Sheri Smith, Nathan Young, Larry Denesha, Carrie Tuttle

1. Finalize **Existing Conditions** Report – Committee had no additional feedback on the Draft Report. A copy of the report will be posted on the Hermon Dissolution Webpage at: <http://www.danc.org/operations/engineering/hermon-dissolution-study>
2. Discuss Alternatives/Options – the Committee discussed opportunities for additional shared services functions between the Town and Village and what items would have to change if the Village dissolved. From this discussion the Committee identified the following areas to further explore:
 - Consolidation of Village/Town Clerk functions. The Committee requested that C. Tuttle meet with the Village and Town Clerk to determine what functions could be consolidated and to develop an estimate of the cost savings that may be achieved. A review of other comparable studies indicates that by consolidating Village/Town Clerk functions the cost savings may be on the order of magnitude of 25% of the existing Village Clerk/Treasurers salaries and benefits, which would be ~\$3600 per year. This will be confirmed and updated after further exploration. By consolidating Clerk functions it may be possible to have one full-time position instead of two part-time positions and this could result in efficiencies and better service for the public by having more office hours. If the Village dissolves, then the current Village Clerk functions, which include water/sewer billing would have to transition to the Town Clerk or be contracted out to another entity. L. Denesha mentioned that in the Town of DeKalb they used to contract out the Water/Sewer billing but now have a new Clerk that took on the duties and it's saving the Town money. The Committee also discussed the differences between Village and Town Clerks. Village Clerks typically are appointed and their duties include Clerk and Treasurer duties. Town Clerks are typically elected and their duties may vary depending on the skills and background of the person that is elected to the position. The Committee would like to explore the possibility of changing the Town Clerk position to be appointed rather than elected and wondered whether other Towns in New York State have appointed Clerks. [After the meeting, an information sheet provided by New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness was located that provides additional information on this topic. It's available at www.nyslocalgov.org and was emailed to the Committee.]

- Water Sewer Operations. The Committee discussed the current delivery of services and expressed concern about the availability of the existing staff to respond to emergencies since they both have separate full-time employment outside the Village. In the context of the Dissolution Study, the current method of service delivery would have to change if the Village dissolved. The Committee agreed the cleanest way to address this would be to develop contracts for water/sewer services so these services aren't provided by Village employees. The contracts could be with the existing part-time personnel that provide the services or another provider. Mayor Race and other Committee members requested that a proposal for services be provided by the Development Authority of the North Country so that service delivery options could be compared consistently and the Village could determine what services they want provided (i.e., hydrant flushing, valve exercising, or just Plant operation and regulatory reporting).
 - DPW Services. The Committee discussed the current delivery of DPW services which are performed by 1 part-time Village employee. The Committee agreed that the Town has additional labor and equipment resources that could be helpful to address issues with Streets, Sidewalks, etc. within the Village.
 - Funds presently allocated for DPW services by the Village would be appropriated to the Town to do DPW services, if the Village dissolves. The Committee discussed that if the Village dissolves, residents should be mindful that the Town Highway Department will have to service the entire Town, including Trout Lake and the Village so resources won't be able to just support Village needs.
 - The Committee expressed that private ownership of sidewalks is a concern because sidewalks are not being maintained. The Village would like to explore the potential of taking ownership of sidewalks. This is a legal issue that would involve researching the current ownership, easements, etc.
 - Committee members also expressed concern that the Village and Town don't have an Asset Management Plan that provides an inventory of the assets that the Village owns, the existing condition, estimated life, and a prioritized plan for improvements. An Asset Management Plan would involve assessing the condition of Village owned assets such as streets, sidewalks, water and sewer infrastructure, etc. The Plan would also provide a qualitative condition code (i.e., good, fair, poor), include replacement costs, and a prioritized plan for replacements. This is something the Committee would like to see developed in the future. [A Plan the Authority developed for the Village of Lyons Falls was emailed to the Committee for reference.]
3. The Committee reviewed historical costs for the Village and discussed some potential cost savings that would result if the Village dissolved:

- a. Village Board Salaries = \$3200
- b. Clerk Salary
 - i. If 25% can be saved by consolidating = \$3600; need to confirm after further exploration
- c. Water Sewer
 - i. Potential savings by contracting; need to confirm after further exploration
- d. Disposition of Unused Real Property – The Village has reviewed the list of unused real property that was developed as part of this study and is working on updating abstracts to prepare to sell property. The total assessment of the unused property is \$44,700 plus Municipal Building \$19,400; and there is real property tax paid for the dump of \$79/year. These figures will be confirmed after the list is finalized and market value updates are incorporated into the property values.
- e. Other Savings – If the Village dissolves, some expenses will be eliminated. The following costs were taken from the 5/31/14 AUD Report.
 - i. Municipal Assoc. Dues \$727
 - ii. Elections \$281
 - iii. Insurance savings \$3,000; need to confirm after Village determines the real property that will be disposed of.
- f. The Committee reviewed the information provided by the Department of State regarding the ongoing annual incentive that provided if the Village dissolves. The incentive (based on the total tax levy information available at this time) will be \$99,710/year. 70% of this must be used to reduce property taxes.

4. Next Steps for Project

- a. Review Alternatives/Options Assessment Report & Discuss Recommendations (3/26/15)
- b. Finalize **Options Report & Recommendations** (4/23/15)
- c. INFORMATIONAL PUBLIC MEETING #1 – Mid-May Details TBD
- d. Compile **Existing Conditions, Options, Recommendations, and Executive Summary** (5/21/15)
- e. Finalize Report and Submit to Village and Town Boards (6/25/15)
- f. INFORMATIONAL PUBLIC MEETING #2 – July 2015 Details TBD
- g. All Committee Meetings will be at 6:30 p.m. at Hermon Town Hall

5. Future Meeting Schedule

- 4th Thursday's of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Hermon Town Hall; next meeting 3/26/15.