

Village of Fort Johnson, New York

Dissolution Study and Plan



Photo Credit : Kelly Lucero - NYHistoric.com

PUBLIC MEETING – APRIL 13, 2022

LABERGE GROUP

MUNICIPAL SOLUTIONS EXPERTS



BEN H. SYDEN, AICP
VICE PRESIDENT



KATHLEEN A. ROONEY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SPECIALIST



NICOLE T. ALLEN
DIRECTOR, PLANNING &
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

MEETING DECORUM

- Please sign up to speak
- Speakers will be selected in order from the sign-in sheet
- Questions/Comments will be received at the end of the presentation
- Each person who signed in will have 3 minutes to speak



HANDS ON EXPERIENCE

Laberge Group is well versed in the **development AND implementation** of local government reorganization studies/plans under GML Article 17-A:

- Village of Highland Falls Interim Dissolution Study, Orange County
- Former Village of South Nyack Dissolution Plan, Rockland County
- Village of Pawling / Town of Pawling – Interim Study of Consolidation, Dutchess County
- Village of Spencer Dissolution Study, Tioga County
- Former Village of Mastic Beach / Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County
- Former Village of Port Henry / Town of Moriah, Essex County
- Former Village of Salem / Town of Salem, Washington County
- Former Village of Van Etten / Town of Van Etten, Chemung County (implementation only)

WHAT IS A DISSOLUTION PLAN?

- A Dissolution Plan must address all the legal requirements outlined in Article 17-A of the GM (details on next slide)
- Prior to the Referendum, the Plan will provide residents with information of how the Dissolution might affect them:
 - Future conditions for services and how they will be delivered
 - Estimated impact on property taxes for Village taxpayers
 - Disposition of Village's assets & liabilities
 - Potential Impact on Existing Village Local Laws and Codes
 - Potential plan for the transfer/elimination of employees
 - Proposed Date of Dissolution

INITIATION OF THE PROCESS

- The Fort Johnson Dissolution process is a board-initiated process.
- A new Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act was enacted in 2010 and provides for a revised process:
 - Village Board of Trustees may initiate the process; however, it must study the impacts of dissolution and develop and adopt a proposed plan before holding a referendum by the Village voters.
- Prior to 2010, 39 New York Villages had been dissolved.
- Since 2010, 22 Villages have dissolved – most recent is the Village of South Nyack - 3/31/22

BOARD INITIATED DISSOLUTION PROCESS

We are Here 



PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

ASSESS

DEVELOP PLAN

VOTERS DECIDE



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTION

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTION FOR THE VILLAGE OF FORT JOHNSON:

- Village and Town Stakeholder Driven Study and Plan Development.
- Safeguarding Community / Hamlet Identity.
- Provision of Services reflecting community values.
- Community-Specific Transition Strategies.
 - Potential Need for Creation of Special Taxation Districts for Village-Specific Services.
 - Employees.
 - Maintaining Priority Services.
- Incorporating Input from Public Engagement Efforts.

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTION

TREPIDATION & CONCERNS REGARDING:

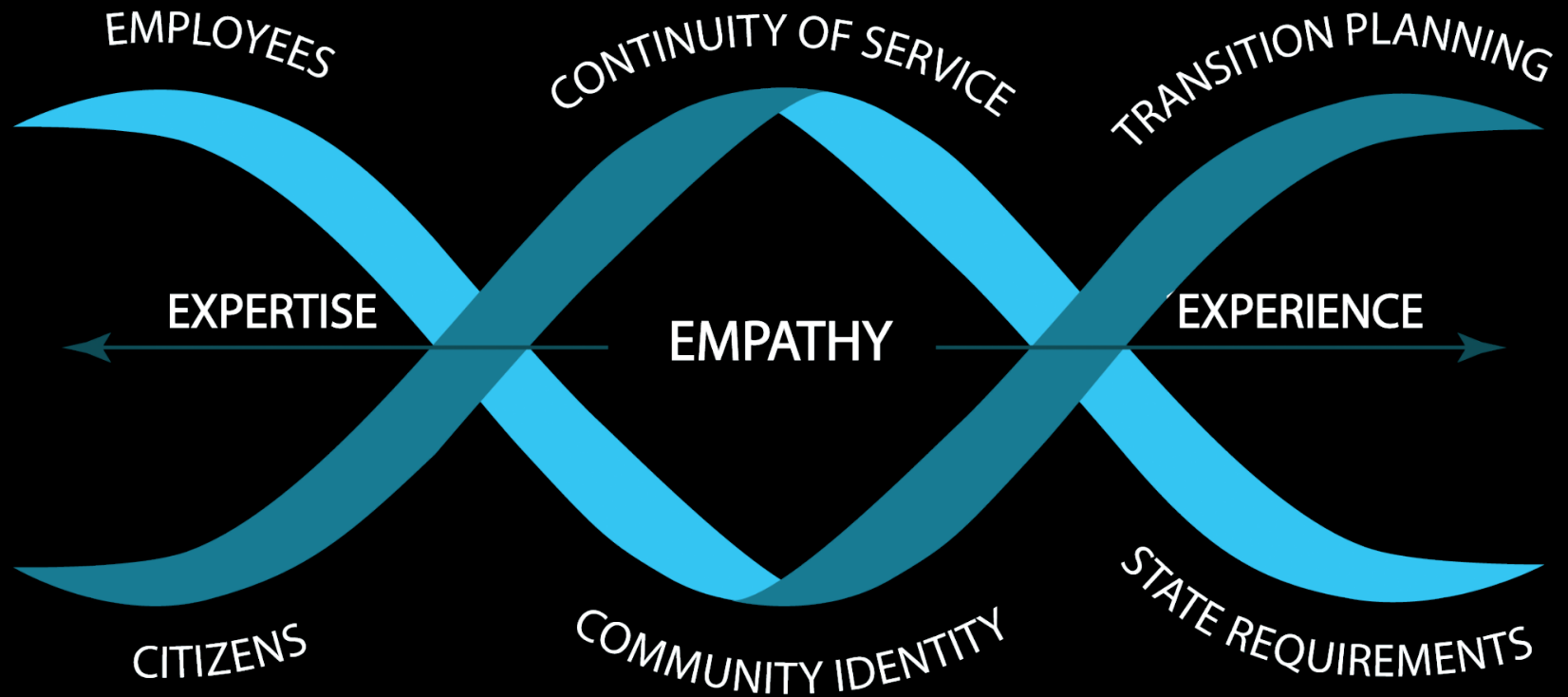
- COMMUNITY IDENTITY
- REPRESENTATION
- SERVICE DELIVERY & CONTINUITY; ie.
 - SNOW PLOWING / ROAD MAINTENANCE
 - STREETLIGHTS
 - SEWER SERVICES
 - FIRE SERVICES
- FISCAL IMPACT TO FORT JOHNSON TAXPAYER
 - Including Village and Town property tax

HOW ARE WE DEVELOPING A DISSOLUTION PLAN?

- Facilitate a cooperative and collaborative Study and Planning Process
- Analyze the Current Village and Town Services, Costs and Property Taxes
- Obtain Ongoing Input from Residents
- Present Objective Information to Residents
- Develop a study document/DRAFT Dissolution Plan
 - Present Potential Post Dissolution Conditions
 - Services and Service Delivery
 - Fiscal Impact to Residents
 - Plan for Disposition of Village Assets and Liabilities
 - Plan for the transition including staff, if possible
 - Impact on Existing Village Local Laws and Codes

Communicate – Coordinate – Collaborate

DISSOLUTION STUDY/PLAN DNA



VILLAGE & TOWN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

ESTABLISH STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORK COLLECTIVELY WITH VILLAGE AND TOWN STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS & DEVELOP CONSENSUS

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Village Trustees & Town Board Members
- Review Data & Analyses
- Create Dissolution Framework
Propose Service & Service Models
- Provide Ongoing Input & Feedback on Services & Fiscal Post Dissolution
- Development of Plan Building Blocks
- Recommend Plan to Village Board of Trustees

DATA COLLECTION, INTERVIEWS & WORK SESSIONS

- Village and Town Board Representatives, Key Staff and Stakeholders
- Provide Ongoing Input & Feedback on Current Services, Service Delivery and Fiscal Condition
- Identify Key Issues
- Provide Input on Potential Post Dissolution Services, Service Delivery and & Fiscal Impacts

COLLABORATION

COMMUNICATION

LOCAL OWNERSHIP

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*WORK **CLOSELY** WITH THE COMMUNITY
PROACTIVELY ADDRESS CONCERNS*

PUBLIC MEETINGS (2)

- Share facts and dispel misconceptions
- Answer any questions
- First step toward building consensus, finding common ground, and collaborating on solutions

PROJECT WEBSITE AND ON-LINE Q & A

- Forms available online to dialog and address questions and concerns
- All documents and FAQ on the project website
- Website updated weekly

PRE- REFERENDUM BROCHURE

- Additional public access to objective information on the potential post dissolution conditions

www.LabergeGroup.com/FortJohnson

TRANSPARENT

AVAILABLE

ACCESSIBLE

DISSOLUTION PLAN PROGRESS TO DATE

- **Joint Village-Town Steering Committee**
 - **Members:** Michael Simmons, Mayor
William Maines, Deputy Mayor
Thomas P. DiMezza, Town Supervisor
David Thibodeau, Deputy Town Supervisor
 - **First Meeting Held on March 9, 2022**
- **Dedicated Website:** www.LabergeGroup.com/FortJohnson
- **First Public Meeting:** 4/13/22
- **Interviewed Key Village and Town Staff & Gathered Information**
- **Identifying Key Issues & Initiated Analysis**

EMERGING TOPICS AND KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- Governance Issues Facing Small Villages
 - Increasing Complexity of Operations w/Limited Staffing
 - Difficulty Recruiting Candidates for Elected Office and Staff
- Village Identity
- Critical Village Services
 - Snow and Ice Winter Maintenance
 - Fire Services – Extension of Existing Fort Johnson Fire Protection District
 - Streetlights
 - Sewer System – Creation of a Fort Johnson Sewer District
- Ownership and Transfer of Disposition of Assets
 - Village Hall/DPW & Satellite DPW Facilities
 - Fire House
 - Parks
- Village Local Laws and Ordinances

Citizen Empowerment Tax Credit (CETC)

CETC is an incentive = to 15% of the Combined Village and Town Tax Levies in the year prior to Dissolution that is paid annually in perpetuity to the Town.

Village 2021/2022 Levy \$132,960
 Town 2022 Levy \$ 0

Village of Fort Johnsons and the Town of Amsterdam		
Estimated Citizens Empowerment Tax Credit		
Maximum CETC for Tax Reduction	100%	\$19,944
Minimum CETC for Tax Reduction	70%	\$13,961
Maximum CETC for Capital Projects	30%	\$5,983
<p><i>*CETC is contingent upon annual New York State appropriations and is not a guarantee. Calculations based on 2021/2022 Village Levy and 2022 Town Tax Levy. The final CETC is based on the municipal budgets in the year prior to dissolution.</i></p>		

WHERE ARE WE GOING FROM HERE?

- Continue Investigation and Analysis
- Development Study and Draft Plan Document
- Steering Committee to
 - Delve into emerging topics and key touchpoints
 - Frame Potential Post Dissolution Conditions
 - Set a Process Timetable with Dates for:
 - Next Public Meeting
 - Vote on Draft Plan
 - Formal Public Hearing
 - Vote on Final Plan
 - Referendum on Village Dissolution
- Update Website weekly – www.LabergeGroup.com/FortJohnson
- Hold a Second Public Informational Meeting

WHAT VILLAGE RESIDENTS SHOULD KNOW

ABOUT DISSOLUTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- **While the Village is required by law to develop a Dissolution Plan, it is really not Village issue but a Town issue.**
- **Collaboration with the Town:** Town leadership has embraced the process, been fully involved in the development of the Plan, and provided information and Town staff participation- all aimed at the development of a realistic plan that the Town participated in - though they're NOT obligated to do so.
- **Town Role in Dissolution Plan Development:** The Town had NO input on the dissolution decision. The Town does not have a vote in the referendum, but if the Village electorate votes yes, the Town will be responsible for managing NEW OBLIGATIONS. With this in mind, the Village and Town are coordinating to determining the “what,” “who,” and “how” services will be provided – SNOW PLOWING | ROADS | STREETLIGHTS | SEWERS | PARKS | ...
- **Town Role in Service Provision:** Upon dissolution, the Town will be responsible for governance, services, local laws and taxing..
- **Realistic Plan Development:** Coordinated development by both Town and Village rather than a Village “wish list.” The Town is NOT BOUND by the plan, but is actively participating to smooth the transition.

WHAT HAPPENS POST REFERENDUM?

If the vote is “No”

- Dissolution will not take effect; nothing further will occur.
- Dissolution process may not be initiated again for 4 years from the date of the Referendum.
- Village to address issues with recruitment of candidates for elected Village Offices.
- Village and Town may focus on shared services with other entities to reduce costs and improve quality.
- The Village and Town or their residents can still pursue a consolidation, but that is very rare.

WHAT HAPPENS POST REFERENDUM?

If the vote is “Yes”,

- Dissolution will occur on date set in the Dissolution Plan.
- Village will wind down Village Operations.
 - Transfer Properties & Sell and Liquidate Remaining Assets.
- Town will take steps to ramp up expanded operations.
 - Prepare Post Dissolution Budget.
 - Arrange for necessary staffing and equipment.
 - Expand existing Fort Johnson Fire District to include the area of the Village
 - Create Fort Johnson Sewer District.
- Town and Village Continue Coordination to Assure for a Smooth Transition
 - If necessary, establish Inter-municipal Agreements (IMAs) for the provision of services prior to dissolution.

Q&A FOLLOWING THIS PRESENTATION

To allow time for the maximum number of attendees to participate:

- Please limit your question to 3 minutes.
- Questions will be answered on a first-come / first served basis.
- If we run out of time to address all questions, we will post the Questions / Comments link again at the end of the Q&A session so that you can ask your question there.
- To provide the greatest opportunity for the largest number of community members to be heard, please refrain from asking a question that has already asked.

www.LabergeGroup.com/FortJohnson

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ENGINEERING
ARCHITECTURE



Group
SURVEYING
PLANNING

Thank you!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUE
PARTNERING WITH YOU
ON THIS IMPORTANT ENDEAVOR