

SOUTH NYACK

Say goodbye to South Nyack village government; dissolution on March 31 becomes final

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SOUTH NYACK – Bid adieu to the village government. Come March 31, Orangetown will become the government overseeing the community known as the village of South Nyack since 1878.

The 45-day deadline to challenge the plans approved July 31 to close the village books and government dissolution has passed – the final chance to stall the Dec. 17, 2020 vote by residents who overwhelmingly supported abolishing the government.

In the closing months, the Board of Trustees will complete selling off village property and equipment, and cover government debts. The Orangetown government will complete the transition by hiring village employees and preparing to take over land-use decisions, safety and zoning enforcement, public works, courts, and policing the streets where more than 3,500 people live.

Fades into history: South Nyack residents vote to dissolve the village government

Report finds tax savings: South Nyack property owners would see tax savings, Orangetown services under dissolution

Nyack College and dissolution: Campus sale sparks movement to dissolve South Nyack

Dissolution of villages begins one of two ways: the village board passes a resolution to initiate the dissolution process or the board receives a petition – as in South Nyack's case – from its registered voters calling for a public vote.

Charles Cross worked to end the South Nyack government, for which he served as mayor for about 17 years into the late 1990s. He and other advocates said rising property taxes and

expenses made a village government without taxable businesses too expensive for homeowners and renters.

Arguments for, against dissolution

While the sale and potential development of Nyack College to a Ramapo Hasidic Jewish congregation cast a large shadow and spurred dissolution among some residents, Cross said taxes were the main issue for the dissolution movement.

"We reached a point where the village was no longer sustainable," Cross said. "We have a few thousands of residents who cannot afford the costs of providing services, like public works and police."

Without a village government, residents could see a yearly property tax savings topping \$1,000, depending on property values and other fiscal factors, according to a consultant's report. Residents will have to pay separately for trash and recycling collection like all other Orangetown residents.

Cross and others said they are confident the board-approved dissolution plan will cover the village's debts and provide for village employees.

"This plan lays out what we need to do," Trustee Jeffrey Hirsch said of the dissolution plan.

Deputy Mayor Catherine McCue said at the time she supported the dissolution plan "with a sense of loss" but "with hope for the future."

The downside to dissolution cited by opponents is services like snow plowing, leaf collection, road pavings, and policing will fall under Orangetown's scheduling. Village residents will lose the convenience of their own police, public works department, court, building inspectors, and land-use control.

Dissolution and lawsuit: South Nyack officially starts dissolution

Selling off assets: Draft-Dissolution-Plan

Police Department splits: Grand View makes deal with Piermont police amid South Nyack dissolution

Bonnie Christian, who opposed the dissolution with several other board members, will likely be the last mayor of the village partially along the Hudson River and at the foot of the former Tappan Zee Bridge.

Christian's administration oversaw the village during the construction of the new bridge and the sale of the college's 106 acres overlooking the village. Her administration has filed a lawsuit to ensure the college buildings are safe and meet zoning – a legal action that could be left to Orangetown.

"The board members and I are working diligently to have a smooth transition into Orangetown," Christian said. "The effective dissolution date is March 31, 2022. At this time the Village of South Nyack will cease to exist and we will become a Hamlet within the Town of Orangetown."

Next steps for village, town

The South Nyack-Grand View Police Department, the village's most expensive service whose full-time staff is bolstered by part-timers, already has split with Grand View contracting with Piermont for police services. Orangetown police have been patrolling Nyack village since 1991 and will be adding the South Nyack community in January.

Orangetown Supervisor Teresa Kenny said the town has started the process of interviewing South Nyack employees but needs to work with the Rockland Department of Personnel to resolve questions about the hiring of the exempt employees, the non-civil service position like the police chief and department heads.

She said the town's preliminary budget finances hiring all the village employees and she plans to offer jobs to all of the employees.

She said the town is creating an advisory committee made up of village residents to help the town land-use boards with applications for properties in the former village.

She said her administration will work with the town's recycler to ensure the company can service the homes in South Nyack

She said garbage collection is handled privately by homeowners contracting with one of the town's licensed carters. She said the current charge is \$97.54 quarterly, with seniors discounted to \$87.78.

She said the carters seem to have worked out who collects neighborhoods. She speculated South Nyack residents could retain their current carter, who contracted with the village.

"Each hamlet, like a village, has its own unique characteristics and we have no intention of trying to change it," Kenny said.

South Nyack resident T. Paul Bailey said residents will be better off under Orangetown. He said the town brings bigger departments for services and has a budget to provide the legal and land-use issues if needed.

Bailey said the dissolution movement was based on practicalities. He said people should treasure South Nyack but should embrace being part of Orangetown without a village government.

"This effort was not political in nature but a response to the fact that in the modern era a small village simply does not have the ability to deal with major issues," Bailey said. "Indeed even the smallest village today is expected to conduct all its affairs with the same level of professionalism as that which is found in a major city.

"Achieving this is extraordinarily expensive and a failure to often result in lawsuits," Bailey said. "It is now incumbent on us to recognize at least part of our identity as being a part of the greater area."

Steve Lieberman covers government, breaking news, courts, police, and investigations. Reach him at slieberm@lohud.com. Twitter: @lohudlegal. Read more articles and bio. Our local coverage is only possible with support from our readers.