

Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting Public Hearing of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Lake George, NY, and the Town Council, held on Wednesday, September 7, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. at the Town Administration Building located at 20 Old Post Road, Lake George, NY. Zoom teleconferencing was available.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert M. Blais, Mayor
Joseph Mastrodomenico, Trustee
Ray Perry, Trustee
John Root, Trustee

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Earl, Deputy Mayor

TOWN COUNCIL PRESENT: Marisa Muratori
Dan Hurley
Nancy Stannard

Also Present: Clerk Debra McKinney, Julie Allen, and Project Manager Dan Barusch.
Laberge Consultants: Ben Syden, Vice-Present and Kathleen Rooney, Local Government Specialist

Others in attendance and some signed in as follows: John A. Cocozza-Hill, Dolores Marinelli, Bill Manion, Clara Conte, Barbara Smith, Doni Smith, John Carr, David Menter, Carol Sullivan, John Herzog, Pam Mannix, Frank Mineo, Bill Doster, L. LeBar, Helen Ravalli, Mike Ravalli, Jim Barber, and others. There were also several Zoom participants, as well.

Mayor Blais called the Public Hearing to order at 2:00 p.m. and noted its purpose is to take comment about the Dissolution Interim Study. He stated that at the end of the presentation if anyone that would like to ask a question or make a comment, they should come to the podium in the front, state their name, and their residence. Comments will be limited to three to five minutes. Mayor Blais noted that the Town and Village funded an independent study, which was done by Laberge Group, and they are now prepared to make a presentation.

Ben Syden of Laberge began and announced that Carl Ublacker of the NYS DOS is present. He has been working with the Village and Dan Barusch to pursue a grant. Mr. Syden noted that the development of an Interim Dissolution Plan is not required by law. The Village Board has decided to provide its residents and business owners this information so that they can make an informed decision when they vote. Mr. Syden confirmed that the Special Election is set for Tuesday, September 13, 2022, at the Town Hall from noon to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Syden began review of the Interim Study. Mr. Syden noted that this is a Joint Village & Town Board Public Hearing. He noted that the study, as well as other documents, are available on the website, www.labergegroup.com/lakegeorge. Mr. Syden, along with Kathleen Rooney reviewed the Village of Lake George Interim Dissolution Study outlined as follows:

- How Did We Get Here?
- The Interim Dissolution Study Process
- What is an Interim Dissolution Report?
- Does it make “sense” or “cents”?
- How will Village Governance change?
- Will my services change?
- Citizen Empowerment Tax Credit
- Potential Post Dissolution Fiscal Impacts
- Board of Trustees Alternative to Dissolution
- Next Steps

The consultants explained each bullet point in detail.

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Mayor Blais then opened the floor to public comment and asked anyone that would like to speak to identify themselves and where they live.

Several people asked questions and/or made comments.

Mayor Blais pointed out that in March of 2023, there are three Village Board seats up for election, and then in November, there will be three members of the Town Board up for election, for a total of six Board members that could possibly change in the near future. He reiterated that there are no guarantees.

Mayor Blais made note that the Village fund balance monies that are being planned to be used will be in the first budget, but with the tax cap, future budgets will be affected, as well.

Several more attendees made comments. John Cocozza-Hill asked for a correction on the location of the September 12 at 6:00 p.m. meeting, stating that the web site should say that the location is the Lake George High School Auditorium.

Councilperson Muratori and a Village resident commented that the Village and Town both work for coordination of services. She assured that the Town will do their best to make a smooth transition, if necessary. She stated that from her perspective, she does not see a crisis here, and these are stable communities. In summary, she said, "I'm going to vote no on dissolving the community, the Village."

Mayor Blais asked for any other Board comments. Trustee Perry pointed out that after review of the study, he found that 163 times words such as "assume, assumption, assuming, belief, nearly, approximately, estimated" were used. He commented that it wouldn't be that way if we were doing a consolidation of services because the Town would be fully involved and guaranteeing us a future with our transition. Trustee Perry said, "...he is voting no, as well."

Trustee Mastrodomenico confirmed that if the Village's budget is reduced next year, so will the CETC be reduced.

Councilperson Stannard asked for some clarification with the difference between consolidation and dissolution. Mr. Syden reviewed these.

Trustee Root mentioned that he just doesn't think it's fair to the Town residents "...to hand them this bag without their input." He suggested that it would be more harmonious if we do it together and come up with a consolidation plan.

Mayor Blais asked for comments from the Zoom participants, and there were further comments made.

Mayor Blais thanked everyone for taking the time to come, and reminded the audience that there is another Public Hearing tonight at the Lake George High School at 6:00 p.m.

At 3:35 p.m. Mayor Blais closed the Public Hearing and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra J. McKinney
Village Clerk