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11 Council Playing 'Football' Over Consolidation Geoff Redick posted on October 11, 2011 21:23

Maybe it's the Buffalo Bills' recent success, or a secretive pride in local high school football teams.

Whatever the reason, the Batavia City Council is suddenly drawing parallels to football when it comes to consolidation with the Town.

"Right now, we're on our own 10-yard line," said Councilman-at-large Tim Buckley on Tuesday night, speaking about the sluggish consolidation process. "We've got 90 yards to go. Let's get to the endzone."

Buckley was one of the "Yes" votes as Council decided 6-2\* to approve a contract with Rochester's Center for Governmental Research. CGR will now supply a facilitator for Batavia's consolidated charter task force - the group that will write the new rules for a consolidated City and Town.

Buckley noted that with a state grant and Town contribution, the CGR consultant will cost \$54,000 (about \$2,250 for the City contribution). But he says that's money well-spent, even if consolidation is voted down.

"What this will bring to the table is ideas...and ideas bring new ideas," he said. "Maybe we can apply those for the City and Town, and find some shared services, find some cost savings."

But Ward 1 Councilman Bill Cox isn't buying it. He was one of the two "No" votes, along with Rosemary Christian.

"To me, doing this study is to write the playbook, without any plays written," Cox said, again comparing to football. He says nobody has shown him any cost savings. so why continue to spend money?

"They haven't identified any specific reductions in workforce...any buildings they might close and sell the property...any specific shared services," he said. "You consolidate to cut costs. That's why I believe this is the cart before the horse."

In the only other vote taken, Council voted 7-1\* to sell a 19-acre parcel of land on Park Road to the Town of Batavia, for \$150,000. The Town hopes to someday build a consolidated courts facility for itself, and the Towns of Elba and Oakfield.

In public comment, city resident John Roach reiterated the observation he's made before, which seemingly tied the whole night together: "At the same time you're going to vote to spend \$55,000 for a consolidation facilitator. If you're selling the land to Town so they can build a joint courthouse (with other towns)...it's pretty well assured that they have no intention of consolidating (with the City)."

\*Councilwoman Kathy Briggs was absent from Tuesday's business meeting

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