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Trustees to mull proposal for Erwin-Painted Post consolidation

By **Jeffery Smith**

Corning Leader

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Painted Post, N.Y. — The possibility of dissolving the Village of Painted Post and consolidating with the Town of Erwin will be discussed further when village trustees meet in January.

The Painted Post-Erwin Study Committee held its final public presentation Thursday night, outlining the possible economic benefits of dissolving the village.

A more in-depth final report will be given in January.

"We will present our final report to the village (of Painted Post) and town (of Erwin) boards at the January meeting," said Phil Roche, committee chairman. "It's a timely issue, so I'm sure they will consider it fairly quickly."

Roche said dissolving the village and consolidating it with the Town of Erwin would greatly reduce taxes.

Village taxes would drop to \$13.35 from the current \$20.52 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. If additional cost saving measures were taken by reducing government employees, the rate could drop to \$12.64 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The village rate would include the creation of a pair of special tax districts for the Painted Post fire and police departments.

"They are included in the \$12.64 (per \$1,000 assessed property value) bill," Roche said.

Town taxes would rise to \$6.09 from the current \$5.38 per \$1,000 assessed property value.

"The impact of additional cost saving (reducing employees) would keep the town tax at \$5.38 (per \$1,000 of assessed value)," Roche said.

Painted Post Village Mayor Roz Crozier said he is sure the board will discuss the report at its Jan. 9 meeting, but since he has not received it he had no comment Thursday on the issue.

"I'm in a 'no comment' mood until I get the final report," Crozier said.

Roche said the village is facing financial problems like many small New York State municipalities.

Deferred infrastructure costs, increased operational expenses, increased mandate costs, pensions, fuel prices and a flat tax base are killing the village, Roche said.

In 1968 the village, a small portion of the town, accounted for 46 percent of the town's value. Currently it is only 15 percent of the town taxable assets.

Erwin Town Manager Rita McCarthy said the Town Board will also likely discuss the issue in December.

"Tonight's meeting was very informative," McCarthy said. "The committee did a wonderful job."

Roche said if Painted Post decided to hold a vote to dissolve it likely couldn't be held until March 2013.

"There's just not enough time to get it on the 2012 ballot," Roche said. "But a special election could be held later in 2012."

Roche said the nine-member committee, formed in December of 2010, also researched the possible savings of shared services, but the positive impact was much less than consolidation.

The Center for Government Research, a Rochester-based consulting firm, helped complete the study. The firm was paid \$58,000 for its services by Three Rivers Development.

"Village growth has been less than inflation," said Charles Zettek, of Center for Government Research. "The town is higher than inflation."