

EDITORIAL: Another chance for dissolution

Posted: Tuesday, January 24, 2012 9:21 pm

Here we go again.

Different village, same issue.

This time it is the village of Hudson Falls investigating the potential savings to taxpayers if it were to be absorbed by Kingsbury.

Earlier this month, village residents in Corinth rejected a proposed dissolution of its village by a 338-209 vote, despite potential taxpayer savings of a couple hundred dollars on their annual bills.

Savings are also anticipated if the village of Hudson Falls dissolves.

The Center for Government Research completed a 151-page report - complete with charts and tables - that concludes both the village of Hudson Falls and the town of Kingsbury are efficiently run as single-standing entities, but there are several areas where money could be saved if the village were to be dissolved.

Among the recommendations are the following:

- u Pursue moving the town offices to the village hall complex and creating a joint municipal facility;
- u Have the town contract with the village to manage the town's water districts;
- u Consolidate the village court into the town court;
- u Coordinate equipment and capital planning between the village and town fire departments;
- u Create single joint planning and zoning boards.

The report concludes that these measures could save \$204,000 to \$259,000.

The report also points out that the single largest expense is the village police department and that considerable savings could be had if the village opted for a more regional approach with its police protection by partnering with the county or neighboring towns such as Fort Edward.

We believe the cost savings are significant enough for the village to continue to explore dissolution. We also wonder what can be learned from the recent vote in Corinth.

Dissolution can be an enormously emotional issue when residents have formed an attachment, and identify with where they live. That was obvious in the Corinth vote.

To overcome these emotions, the village must find a way to reach its residents with the best available facts.

There were only 10 residents in attendance for the special meeting this week and unless the village can find a way to reach more of its residents, we suspect this dissolution will meet the same fate as the one in Corinth.

The village has the 151-page report online, but we are not hopeful many will tackle a document of that size and scope. We reviewed parts of the report and found it to be a readable document that few would have trouble following.

We urge residents to at least read the short executive summary as a start.

This information needs to be in the hands of village residents and the village needs to explore ways beyond meetings and the Internet. Perhaps a shorter summary could be mailed to residents?

Change is tough but high taxes are worse.

Even small amounts of savings are a step in the right direction and could lead to more savings down the road - such as the consolidation of the police department.

Baby steps may need to be taken, but even baby steps are steps forward.

Ultimately, all residents must feel like the savings will be worthwhile.

But beware those who have a stake in this issue. Some in the village might lose their jobs. Some might have friends who will lose a job. It is the reality of consolidation, and public officials and residents alike must be ready to make difficult decisions for the greater good.

The best way is to review the facts. Immerse yourself in the report online.

It has the potential to put some money in your wallet.

Local editorials represent the opinion of The Post-Star editorial board, which consists of Publisher Rick Emanuel, Editor Ken Tingley and citizen representative Charlotte Potvin.