

A Special Meeting with the Board of Trustees and the public was held **Tuesday, January 17, 2023** at 6:30 p.m. at Village Hall.

The meeting started at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Mayor: Sridhar Samudrala  
Trustees: Jeremy Fitch, Ian Lamont and Jeffrey Gearhart

Absent: Trustee: Janet Tweed

Guests: Maya Boukai, Jessi Raber, Raegan Reed, Jim Thomson, Harold Eustis, David Truscott, James & Cynthia Smart and Lillian Browne (The Reporter)

Mayor Samudrala began the meeting stating that we are brought together with the public as a continuation from the December 1<sup>st</sup> Public Hearing to figure out how to generate and improve the Village of Delhi's revenue standings. The public had requested to meet with the entire board to discuss options as we are tax strapped.

Mayor Samudrala stated that 74% of the properties are Government Organizations, NGO's, Schools, Religious Organizations and other Tax Exempt Organizations, where only 26% is taxable. This falls on the existing residents of Delhi and they are given the un-due burden which he believes is not fair.

Since the original meeting in December, he has created a concerned citizens group with Maya Boukai, Jessi Raber and Raegan Reed. Jessi Raber spoke up and said they call themselves the Delhi Community Coalition.

Privilege of the floor was granted to Raegan Reed, Business Owner who stated that since the meeting on paid parking meters, the community has been made aware that there is an issue with the Village needing funds and their group has come together to see how they can support our community. Raegan asked why do we have both a Village and a Town. She said there are grant funds available if we are interested in it, to combine both the Town and Village.

The grant that is available is to do a study to see if it is worth pursuing. If we end up going with the study and it works for us, the Village would be responsible to pay for 10%, where if we stop pursuing this once we start; we would end up paying 50% of the cost. Raegan and her group feel that we should go forward with the study to see if it is worth combining the Village and the Town.

Jessi Raber, Village Resident and landscaper/architect by trade spoke and said they are looking into the possibility of either dissolution or a shared services arrangement. There are different options available, for instance we could just merge the Highway and Street Departments but not the Village. Jessi said if we were to dissolve the Village, then Delhi would become the Hamlet of Delhi, not the Village of Delhi.

Jessi stated that only 26% of the village properties pay taxes and that the Town is able to utilize our services but doesn't have to pay village taxes. It behooves the Town to take advantage of the Village's Police Department but they don't pay for these services. Delaware Academy consists of 14% of the potential group of our taxed based who are not paying taxes. Jessi stated there is a lot of redundancy with the Highway and Street Departments that we could rule together.

Maya Boukai, Village Resident spoke and said there are 2 options:

1. Board Initiated Resolution: Where the Board votes to approve the study to determine the impacts. This resolution is an easier way to go.
2. Voter Initiated Resolution: A flow chart would be created showing a time frame of how long it would take to complete the study, which can be paid for before you vote. There would be a petition and then a vote.

Maya stated that we have never done a formal study before, so they feel there is no risk in doing this and stated that we can change our mind at any time during the process.

She advised there are up-to \$150,000 grant funds available to us for this study and that all grants are matching grants.

1. Re-organize Grant: Study is done by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party company, who will advise where we are inefficient in areas. The Grant would pay \$50,000 towards this.
2. Legal Fees: Village of Delhi would pay 50% and the Grant would pay 50% of the fees. The cost would be about \$50,000.
3. Voter Initiated Process

Maya reported that she has been in touch with Carl in Albany to get information on this grant and can provide to us the notes from their conversation.

Raegan stated that a lot of towns-people utilize our sidewalks and village services and that the Village of Delhi has been the county seat for over 200 years and it is a long time coming to give up too much of our land to not-for profit.

Trustee Lamont asked who this grant was coming from. Jessi stated it is from C.R.E.G. (Community Reorganization Empowerment Grant). Trustee Lamont also asked if we decide to do the study and they come back and don't recommend a dissolution, do they provide ideas to us for saving money. Jessie stated that the study is conducted by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party and they will show us ways to also save money. Ex: like combining the Highway and Street Departments.

Jessi Raber reported that if the dissolution is voted yes and it is implemented, they will pay for 40% of our share, so we would only be responsible for 10%.

Jim Thomson, Economic Development Agency spoke and said that Delaware County consists of: 19 towns, 11 villages and 13 school districts, with 45,000 people. Jim advised he has been in touch with C.G.R. (Center for Governmental Resources) in Rochester and is waiting for a proposal from them. Jim stated that the C.G.R can see some things that the Village needs help with, in regards to both the revenue and expense side of things.

Mayor Samudrala stated that Delaware County is one of the poorest Counties in the state.

Jim Thomson stated that C.G.R is currently doing a study with Cobleskill to see if they should become a city. The last new city was formed in 1958 in NY State.

Trustee Gearhart spoke and said that Delhi is unique as we start with 3,500 residents and then during the work week, we have an influx of 10,000 people with the college students and the county and college employees, all of which use the Village of Delhi services. With the influx of people through-out the day, more police are needed and we need to accommodate more for our water and sewer usage.

Also, the state has cut out \$200,000 of funding that we were receiving annually since 2016.

Raegan Reed spoke and said that they have discovered that it only takes the Village to decide on a dissolution and that the Town cannot vote on this. "Although because of the nostalgia feeling, we don't want to do it, but we need to look at the saving possibilities over-all."

Jessi Raber stated that if we do combine, we will have to expand the water/sewer accounts and have a special district as we are already busting at the seams.

Harold Eustis, Village Resident spoke and said in regards to dissolution, "We won't need to go much further than Andes as they did it." Harold mentioned that Downsville and Roxbury did it too.

Discussion was had in regards to this. Raegan said not much will change, except saving money overall.

Trustee Gearhart said he spoke to someone in Andes and they thought it would save money but in the end, it didn't. Trustee Gearhart said there would need to be a benefit to the town to do this and that not everyone in the town can benefit from our services. Ex: brush pick up.

Trustee Fitch stated that he has talked to Andes and they are not happy having done this and that there wasn't much of a savings to the hamlet people. Andes taxes didn't decrease and they were not happy as there wasn't much of an overall savings and that he is not in favor of dissolution of the Village.

Raegan Reed spoke and said that Andes traffic doesn't compare to the traffic in Delhi and that Delhi has way more of a bigger population than they do so it's not a good comparison.

Dave Truscott, Village Resident spoke and said this problem is a bigger problem than just Delhi. He said that everyone that lives in the Town of Delhi also lives in the Village of Delhi and that it's a city problem, not just a village problem.

Mayor Samudrala applauded everyone for coming and presenting the idea. Samudrala stated that the town has a Highway Department and the village has a Street Department, however they both have a similar mechanism and that they both need to work together. "It's Delhi, both the Town and Village, no one knows the difference. We should be one entity and move forward with this." Samudrala doesn't see any hesitation if the villagers want this and with time, energy and money, he is sure it will all work out.

Jessi Raber asked where do we go from here. Trustee Lamont spoke and said that the next board meeting is on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and that he wants to see notes on the grant and breakdown of costs before making a decision. Lamont wants to see what the options are and the savings for dissolution and shared services and to see what the study says.

James and Cynthia Smart, Village Residents spoke and said “They are impressed with the three musketeers and that they have taken a serious and smart approach to a serious problem.” James and Cynthia left the meeting at this time as they had a prior engagement.

Dave Truscott spoke again and urges us not to give away our sewer district as the sewer district keeps everything together. Dave reported that Delside Acres will have a sewer issue down the road and that these properties would need to be annexed in to our sewer. Mayor Samudrala has met with the CWC (Catskill Watershed Corporation) regarding this and unless the septic fails, they won’t go for it, it would be up to them to decide.

Trustee Gearhart spoke again and said the Village needs to look at ways to bring businesses into the village. He recommended that the zoning codes need to be changed. Gearhart stated that from Family Dollar down to Clinton Street is a prime business location and that there is a great interest in this. Jim Thomson spoke and said if the Village wants to grow, we do have to take a hard look at the zoning codes.

Jessi Raber spoke and said that parking is an issue as well, especially on Main Street and Elm Streets. Jessie recommended that the Village do away with the no overnight parking law and make it alternate parking on each side of the street instead.

Trustee Lamont motioned for the meeting to be adjourned at 7:52 p.m. Trustee Fitch seconded the motion and was approved by all.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Yager  
Deputy-Clerk