

**Chaumont Dissolution Study Public Informational Meeting #1**  
**October 24, 2019, 7:00 pm, Chaumont Fire Hall**  
**Meeting Notes**

**Attendance**

**Committee Members:**

Scott Aubertine (Town Supervisor), Ed Demattia (Town Resident), Robin Grovesteen (Village Resident), Fred Jackson (Village Resident), Bill Johnson (Town Resident), Jim Morrow (Village Trustee), Valerie Rust (Village Mayor), Marcie Travers-Barth (Town Resident)

**Consultants:**

Development Authority of the North Country: Star Carter, Warren Salo

**Public:**

27 public attendees signed in (please see attached sign-in sheet)

**Meeting started at 7:00 pm**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

S. Carter opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming to the first Public Informational Meeting for the Chaumont Dissolution Study. S. Carter introduced the Development Authority of the North Country staff and the members of the Dissolution Study Committee introduced themselves.

**2. Presentation**

S. Carter gave a presentation summarizing the Draft Existing Conditions Report and the next steps in the dissolution study process.

- i. Slide 15: S. Carter noted that the Village Clerk provided updated description details about the property owned by the Village, but not in time for the printed materials for this meeting. The parcel descriptions will be updated in the final Existing Conditions report and on past presentations.
- ii. Slide 19: Question from the public regarding General Fund versus Water and Sewer Funds. S. Carter explained that water and sewer financials are managed and reported separately from the General Fund financials and are discussed in the full Existing Conditions Report.
- iii. Slide 22: Question from the public regarding retirement benefits and if the Village and Town staff positions are civil service. S. Carter explained that state retirement benefit costs are listed on slide 22 and in the Existing Conditions Report. The Village does have a deficiency that they are currently making payments to the State Retirement System to cover years that the Village was not paying into the system. In a dissolution scenario, the Village would need to pay off this deficiency before dissolution, or it will be transferred to the Town. The Town would arrange for only

- former Village tax-payers to continue paying the deficiency down. The Village and Town positions are not civil service positions.
- iv. Slide 32: Question from the public about the DPW services and what will happen to those services if the Village dissolves. S. Carter answered that the committee has not discussed the alternatives to Village service delivery yet, and those discussions will happen in the next phase of the study.
  - v. Slide 34 and 36: Question from the public about why there are two fewer sewer users compared to water users. Was this due to the Outside Users? S. Carter responded that she would check the customer numbers with the Village Clerk after the meeting. After review, it was determined that there are only 17 Outside Users on the water system, and there are two properties in the Village that have water service but do not have sewer service: the Town water facility and Joe Bearup Marina. The Existing Conditions Report and the presentations have been updated with this information.

### **3. General Public Questions and Answers Summary**

Q: Why does the state want to give the Town the CETC tax credit if the Village dissolves?

A: (S. Carter) The CETC tax credit, equal to 15% of the combined Village and Town tax levy the year before dissolution, is a tax credit paid to the Town to further reduce the property taxes in the newly combined municipality; it is an incentive and a reward for making local government more efficient.

Q: The CETC is awarded annually, but for how many years? Forever?

A: (S. Carter) The law states that the tax credit is awarded annually in perpetuity.

Q: The last dissolution vote was defeated in 2012, so why did dissolution come up again?

A: (V. Rust, Village Mayor) Employee benefits are very high, and that is just one cost in how much it costs to run the Village. Costs keep increasing and it becomes more difficult to work within a budget every year with a finite amount of money, without raising taxes or rates. There would be a healthier budget line if the Village combined with the Town and all the costs are in one budget.

Q: At end of study, will the Village residents get to vote on whether or not to dissolve the Village?

A: (S. Carter) If one of the recommendations of the dissolution committee is to pursue dissolution, and the Village Board accepts the report and the recommendations, the Village Board will set a date for a referendum the registered voters of the Village will be able to vote.

Q: The dissolution committee will make many determinations on what dissolution will look like – so whatever the conclusion is, that becomes reality for Lyme?

A: (S. Carter) The dissolution study committee is made up of 5 members from the Village and 5 from the Town, including Village and Town officials. This ensures that the Town has equal representation on the committee and can have input and buy-in to the

recommendations the committee is making on Village and Town services and costs. It doesn't make sense to do the study in a vacuum without Town input; the committee wants the Town to participate in the process.

Q: The 2012 study showed Village taxpayer savings of 49 percent and a Town increase of 8%. Since the Town residents do not get a vote on dissolution, please be fair to the Town.

A: (S. Carter) This study may have different conclusions than the 2012 study. The Dissolution Study Committee meetings are scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of every month and are open to public. Village and Town residents are encouraged to come and bring comments/questions to the committee.

Q: Could the Town change the way things are done after the Village dissolves, even if they say they will do something?

A: (S. Carter) Yes, the Town government can change services and budgets in the future, but this is always true, regardless of dissolution. The Village and Town elected officials you have now are doing their best to make decisions they think are right for your community, but they may not be the same elected officials in 5 or 10 years. Future officials may make different decisions about budgets, services, etc., and that is the case whether the Village stays or dissolves.

Q: If there is a vote on dissolution, does it require a majority of Village registered voters to pass? No matter how many people vote?

A: (S. Carter) Yes, no matter how many people vote, the dissolution will only pass if a majority of the votes cast are in favor of dissolution.

Q: If the Village residents vote to dissolve, does the Town have a choice not to accept dissolution of the Village?

A: (S. Carter) If the referendum is in favor to dissolve the Village, the Town does not have an option to refuse the dissolution into the Town. Villages have the option to incorporate or dissolve without Town input.

#### **4. Conclusion**

S. Carter and the committee thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and invited them to attend the monthly committee meetings and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Informational Meeting. S. Carter also encouraged the public to call or email her if they have more questions or feedback on the Draft Existing Conditions Report. The report will be finalized in 2 weeks, unless there is feedback to be discussed at the next committee meeting in November.

**Meeting ended at 8:25 pm.**



**Village of Chaumont  
Dissolution Information Meeting  
Thursday, October 24, 2019**

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