

VILLAGE OF CORNWALL-ON-HUDSON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

September 2, 2008

The Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees and Cornwall Town Council was called to order at 8:10 P.M by Supervisor Quigley, at 1 Clinton Street, Cornwall, N.Y.

The following Board Members were in attendance:

Mayor Joseph J. Gross
Trustee Mark J. Edsall
Trustee William T. Fogarty
Trustee Barbara J. Gosda
Trustee Richard Gioia

The following Town Council Members were in attendance:

Supervisor Kevin Quigley
Councilwoman Mary Beth Greene-Krafft
Councilman Kerry McGuinness
Councilman Al Mazzocca
Councilman Randy Clark

Also present was: Police Chief Charles Williams, Interim Deputy Village Attorney Mark Taylor, Town Clerk Elaine Tilford-Schneer, and Village Clerk Jeanne Mahoney

POLICE CONSOLIDATION

Mayor Gross thanked Supervisor Quigley and Town Council for inviting the Village Board to this meeting to discuss shared services. He provided a timeline and Village Board meeting dates where this topic was discussed.

Interim Deputy Village Attorney Mark Taylor was asked to clarify a memo he prepared for both boards regarding available options.

Mr. Taylor stated that there are three options to consider.

1. The Village Board may abolish the police force through local law and referendum.
2. A consolidation of the town and village police forces which also requires a referendum.
3. A cooperation agreement between the town and village for shared services, which is not subject to referendum. This option offers flexibility in adoption implementation.

Discussion followed regarding other municipalities that have either considered or been through a consolidation.

Councilman McGuinness asked if the board is considering consolidation as a way to save money, to which Mayor Gross replied that money is not the prime factor. The board is also considering the benefits and disadvantages.

Councilman Clark asked which option the Village Board prefers. Mayor Gross replied that the board is looking for direction from the town since it is ultimately their decision.

Supervisor Quigley stated that the Village Board needs direction from within; another municipality should not tell them what to do. In addition, having two boards run one department will make it difficult to make decisions.

Mayor Gross stated that he spoke privately with Supervisor Quigley and feels that the Town Board should run the department.

Supervisor Quigley indicated that they could do it because the village is located within the town.

Councilman Mazzocca stated that the terminology of consolidation is not appropriate and he will vote against it as a village resident.

Councilwoman Greene-Krafft asked if the village board conducted a local/internal study regarding budget numbers. Mayor Gross replied that the last study was done in 1984 and needs to be updated. Ms Greene-Krafft stated that she did research and found that the Town of New Paltz had a joint force, as a result of a state study, with ten (10) administrators. After 18 months, it has proven unsuccessful.

Mayor Gross stated that no outside consultants have been brought in yet.

Supervisor Quigley feels that the state should not be brought in; the town and village should do the study. In addition, he will not support both boards running a single police department.

Discussion regarding a possible joint study followed.

Mayor Gross stated that while he was campaigning in 2007 he spoke with many residents interested in saving money through police consolidation. He feels obligated to pursue it as a result. If the town board is not interested, it cannot go any further.

Trustee Edsall stated that a joint study by DCJS is needed to provide basic facts and figures to form an opinion. It is necessary to first determine if there is a potential cost savings without reducing services and/or coverage for him to support.

Trustee Gioia stated that without proper data this becomes an emotional vs. practical issue. The 1984 study concluded that consolidation is not advisable.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Pat Welch (Village) stated that during the 2007 elections, the Village's \$8,000,000 was a major issue. He was told that a feasibility study could be done on police consolidation at no cost. Now, 18 months later, no facts/figures are ready for discussion.

Bob Gilmore (Village) stated that a study is subjective. The Village police department is doing a great job. The Village Board should appreciate that and not pursue consolidation any further. He further asked if cost is the only factor here; to which Mayor Gross replied the board is looking for value without compromising safety.

Bill Cumming (Village) stated that he is disappointed in the town board. They seem to be waiting for the village to do all the work.

Graham Kelder (Town) stated that this is not a town proposal. The village needs a long term study (at least 5-10 years) and do it right the first time.

Peter Russell (Village) stated that the village board should have been more prepared for tonight. Several locations in Rockland County have gone through consolidation and the boards should look into those results.

Tom Doyle (Town) stated that he has seen these studies done in other places. They are done in two (2) parts – (1) budgetary and (2) supervision/operation (response times).

Andrew Argenio (Village) feels that more data is needed with a look toward the future.

Kate Benson (Village) stated that additional facts are needed before it goes to referendum or it will be an emotional issue. In addition there will be management issues that must be addressed.

Doug Vatter (Village) stated that there will be no savings in manpower, only supervisory. Without gathering facts, we are simply “chasing our tail”.

Vicky Kiernan (Village) asked what prompted this request for study. If it is because of existing village debt, consolidating the police departments will have no benefit. The majority of village debt is in the water fund. The police department is paid out of the general fund.

Sue Lennon (Town) stated that it is admirable to see the two boards getting together to discuss issues.

Howard Protter (Village) is disappointed in the village board. Tonight he heard the town board ask questions but heard nothing concrete back. Each village board member should give his/her personal opinion on this issue. They were elected by village residents who felt they could best represent everyone. Also, it is important for them to make a decision quickly or the force may lose good officers who fear their job(s) will be eliminated.

Trustee Edsall replied that at a board meeting several months ago, he analyzed each department. He must be convinced of a significant cost savings without a loss of services in order to support consolidation.

Trustee Fogarty replied that he is looking for value without sacrificing response time.

Peter Neuman (Village) asked if Village residents will pay a higher rate to town; to which Councilwoman Greene-Krafft replied the cost of a joint force would be shared equally between the Town and Village.

Ted Dobias (Town) complimented both the Town and Village police departments for their fine work.

David House (Village) asked why the Village cannot do the study on its own.

Chief Williams explained that the Department of Justice and Criminal Services (DJCS) will compile statistical data from both the Town and Village police departments. It does not consider community events or quality of life issues. This takes about 6 months to accomplish. This study can only be done if requested by both the police chiefs.

Barbara Farabaugh (Village) stated that the town does not appear to be concerned. The village must convince them of the need for consolidation.

Susan Gagliardo (Village) stated that facts are needed before proceeding. She likes the fact that village police are visible.

Dan Degroat (Village) stated that the village police do a good job. They are part of our “structure” and should not be abolished.

Joe Suto (Village) doesn’t want to see police morale diminish. He appreciates what they do.

Lee Murphy (Village) stated that the Mayor said earlier tonight of village residents interested in police consolidation because they are concerned about saving money. He doesn’t hear these same concerns.

Supervisor Quigley closed Public Comment. He stated that discussions will continue on the possibility of future shared services.

Having concluded the business set before them, Trustee Gioia moved to adjourn into Executive Session in the Village Hall to discuss police personnel at 9:45 PM which was seconded by Trustee Edsall and upon a vote of 5 Ayes and 0 Nays, the meeting was adjourned.