



VILLAGE OF FREDONIA

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DUNKIRK / FREDONIA SHARED POLICE FACILITY ANALYSIS

May 24, 2016

At yesterday's workshop we explored, discussed and finally put to rest the possibility of a shared police facility with the Dunkirk Police Department (DPD). It was a long process but at the end a surprisingly easy decision. The whole idea was very interesting to me from the beginning and definitely one I wanted to explore. I had extensive conversations with our Police Chief, our Administrator, all of the trustees, our grant writer, representatives from the County Executive's office and Mr. Horrigan himself, the mayor of Dunkirk, members of the Regional Solutions Commission as well as members of the public. I also researched it extensively and read reports from villages and towns that went through either a study or the whole process. I had questions; the questions that I posed on my power point presentation last night; questions like:

- Will there be an improvement in the quality of services to the people of Fredonia? If so, will it be due to the fact that the 2 PD operate from the same location or due to the fact that this will be a brand new building?
- Will monthly expenses increase, decrease or remain as they are?
- Our officers have a different salary/benefits package than the officers of DPD. How will this affect their morale if they have to operate within the same facility?
- How much would that new facility cost, who will pay for it and how?
- Are there any Grants we can access?
- Who is going to be the lead agency to bond the rest of the money and what will happen if one of the parties cannot make their payments?

I posed those questions to everyone with whom I had a conversation. The answers were not very complicated; the quality of services may fluctuate, expenses will probably increase, it will most likely lower the morale of our officers (in a future post I will discuss morale and how important it is).

Now about the money; a conservative figure will be about \$5,000,000. That is a lot of money! We found a specific grant, the one the mayor of Dunkirk was referring to on last Sunday's paper. It's called "Local Government Efficiency Grant Program" (LGE) and is offered through the Department of State (DOS). Although it sounds really good (they do pay 90% of the expense!!) there are problems I discovered while I was researching it.

- The whole pool of money for the State of New York is \$4,000,000
- It is a competitive grant
- Full consolidation of the two departments gets more points
- It is a reimbursement grant, which means we will have to somehow front the money, the State will reimburse us as they see fit

- Most importantly, there is a cap of \$200,000 per Municipality. And that's the best case scenario. No matter how much money we will spend they will reimburse up to \$200,000 per municipality!

To avoid any misunderstandings, I personally called the DOS yesterday and asked the person responsible for the grant; he assured me, that I was not mistaken.

Now, for the last question. Sharing facilities with another municipality is like going into business with a partner. We need to know that they are financially sound. Although I looked, I wasn't able to find enough information, and whatever I found didn't give me enough confidence. My responsibility as the Mayor of Fredonia is to treat the taxpayer's money with respect, to invest wisely in their name and to think 10 times before I spend a single penny. My conclusion is, that this is not a partnership we can afford.

The Board of the Trustees discussed it extensively last night and their conclusion was the same. I used my last two posts to try to explain our decision and answer as many questions as possible and I hope I did.

One last note; this should not be the end of our discussions with the city of Dunkirk as to other ideas of shared services or even consolidations we could pursue. One such idea would be the Waste Water Treatment Plant.