

http://www.fltimes.com/news/local/article_08a03830-24fa-11e2-a5c3-0019bb2963f4.html

In Lyons, words of advice on dissolution: Seneca Falls officials offer insights into process

- [Story](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Image \(3\)](#)

PreviousNext



David L. Shaw photos / Finger Lakes Times

Lyons dissolution meeting

Lyons Mayor Corrine Kleisle asks a question during last night's village dissolution meeting hosted by OneLyons, a group in favor of the measure. The meeting was held at the Community Center.



Posted: Friday, November 2, 2012 10:31 am

In Lyons, words of advice on dissolution: Seneca Falls officials offer insights into process By DAVID L. SHAW dshaw@ftimes.com | 0 comments

LYONS — A Lyons village resident asked the contingent of Seneca Falls officials if they would “undo” dissolution if they could.

The Seneca Falls group was emphatically united.

“No, absolutely not. I wish had it had happened sooner,” said town Supervisor Donald Earle.

Seneca Falls Town Board member Emil Bove agreed.

“No, I would not go back to two levels of government fighting. It was a learning experience, but I’m proud we did it,” he said.

Consultant John Condino called it an “amazing transition.”

Former Town Supervisor Peter Same said he’s lived in the former village for 64 of his 68 years.

“Nothing has really changed. It was the right time to do it,” he said.

The Seneca Falls group was invited to Thursday night's dissolution information meeting at the Lyons Community Center by OneLyons, a group that supports doing away with the 179-year-old Lyons village government.

Lyons village residents will vote on the measure Tuesday.

At Thursday's meeting, it was acknowledged up front that there are differences between the two communities that complicate comparisons. Such as:

- Seneca Falls is a larger community than Lyons. To date, it is the largest village in the state to dissolve.
- It has Seneca Meadows Landfill, which will provide \$2.8 million to the town in 2013 as part of a host agreement. Lyons has no such thing.
- The process being used is different. Seneca Falls did a merger study first and then put the issue to village voters who knew of the plan.

Lyons, due to a change in state law, will vote Tuesday without a dissolution plan. A plan will be developed only if the vote is to dissolve. Once the plan is finalized, a petition from village residents could force a second vote on whether the plan should be adopted.

Bove, Condino, Earl and Same talked about their experiences with the dissolution process and answered questions from OneLyons member Andrew DeWolf and the audience.

They were asked if the town "protected" village residents by reducing taxes and offering the same services under dissolution.

"Because only village residents could vote, there was some fear on the part of the town. And some village residents weren't happy when we had to raise water and sewer rates, which the village hadn't raised since 2003," Earle said.

"All the town board members lived in the village before and now. That helped protect village residents," Bove said.

Same said the Town Board had a goal of treating everyone equally in terms of water and sewer rates. Previously, town residents paid 1.5 times what village residents paid.

Same said the village didn't address infrastructure issues and didn't raise water and sewer rates to pay for needed upgrades. He said that forced a large rate increase in 2012 to catch up with revenues and make needed upgrades.

"We followed the dissolution plan but had to deal with reality. The bottom line is the town offers the same services as before," Same said.

The impact of \$2.8 million in landfill revenue on taxes was discussed.

Earle said the town had no town tax for some eight years up to 2011 because of the landfill. But when the town had to take over village services in 2012, it had to impose a town tax for all. The tax rate was \$2.35 per \$1,000 in 2012 and is projected to be the same in 2013.

"Without the landfill, the tax rate would be around \$9.18 per \$1,000. Landfill money has also helped us build a community center and buy highway equipment," Earle said.

"You would not save as much here without a revenue source like Seneca Falls gets from the landfill," Same added. "Savings and taxes depend on services the town provides, but village residents would see a decline in taxes and town residents would likely see an increase."

Everyone in the Seneca Falls contingent said the dissolution process resulted in efficiencies, streamlining and savings that would have saved money even without the landfill money.

Lyons Mayor Corrine Kleisle noted that the Lyons and Seneca Falls processes are opposite. She asked what budget changes were made that Lyons could consider to reduce the village tax rate.

"It's hard to say. You need a plan. I think a way for you to get a plan is to vote yes and then develop a plan and look at services, savings and taxes," Same said.

He said having continued police protection for the former village is important. Same noted Seneca Falls looked at a special police protection district, but the village board did not support that. He said they looked at having the county Sheriff's Department provide coverage and that was found lacking. In the end, a town police department was established.

Same said trash collection was put to bid and money was saved. Police expenses were cut and efficiencies were found in the street department.

Earle said a new Dumpster service is in place this year and has proven popular, rather than having crews come around to pick up refuse.

Bove said the town and village talked about shared services and consolidation. A few steps were taken, but not enough cooperation led to dissolution talks.

Terry VanStean, a Lyons village trustee, noted that a second vote for Lyons residents is not guaranteed if they vote to dissolve Tuesday and a plan is developed. He said a petition with signatures from 25 percent of the voters is needed to force a second vote.

"It's not automatic," he said.

Condino, of Barton & Loguidice Engineers, said he was impressed by the Seneca Falls process.

"There was no loss of services. Things are being done in a cost effective way and the town is still looking to do better. When the transition occurred Jan. 1, 2012, it came quietly and smoothly. It's not a bad idea to look at this," he said.

Earle said the town received \$525,000 from the state as an incentive for the dissolution, and he expects to receive the same amount in 2013

He said Lyons would likely get an amount as well, based on a formula.

Same noted village taxpayers saved 60 percent in taxes under dissolution.