

The Dissolution of the Village of Odessa

A portrait of the community without village government

Introduction

Incorporated in 1903, the Village of Odessa is approximately one square mile contained within the Towns of Catharine and Montour, in Schuyler County, New York. With a population of 617, the village is governed by a mayor and a four member board of trustees. Operating under the General Village Law of New York State, the Board oversees a 2010 budget of \$612,310, providing administrative decisions and fiduciary responsibility for the volunteer fire department, water system, code enforcement, village clerk and justice, and road, street and other public infrastructure services. The village has no police, public trash or sewer service.

In March of 2010, New York State law was changed under General Municipal Law Article 17-A, streamlining the process for dissolving and consolidating local government entities in New York State. It was under this new law in late summer of 2010 that an elector initiated petition (appendix A) was pursued in order to force a referendum on whether or not to dissolve the Village of Odessa.

The petition, requiring 20% of the voting population or 73 registered voters, contained 116 signatures as verified by the village clerk on September 1st. In accordance with Article 17-A, the village board then had 30 days to set a referendum date between 60 to 90 days from the date the board convened. On September 28th, the village board set the referendum date for December 7th, 2010.

On December 7th, registered voters in the Village of Odessa will be asked to cast a ballot on the following question, or a slight variation of, “Shall the village of Odessa be dissolved?” If the referendum passes, Article 17-A provides up to 180 days to develop an implementation plan, theoretically allowing the administrative, fiscal and legal questions to be answered and a plan developed to formally begin the transfer of duties and services to the two towns—although more time may likely be necessary and permissible. If the referendum does not pass, than the village government shall remain in place. Four years are required to pass before an elector initiated referendum may be allowed to reoccur.

Report Methodology and Process

The process outlined within Article 17-A does not provide opportunity to evaluate the consequences, either beneficial or detrimental, of dissolution. A referendum of such long term, local historical significance seems best decided on known consequences and known impacts. Therefore, the forthcoming referendum compelled the village board to conduct an analysis of what and how services would be offered in the absence of village

government – a report and analytical task normally taking several months to years and thousands of dollars to produce, neither of which being a luxury afforded this process.

While village services are limited, considering the time table, the scope and task of developing this report has been both daunting and considerable. To accomplish this report, a Dissolution Scoping Working Group (Working Group) was established, the efforts and results of which are this document.

The analysis conducted by the Working Group needed to meet two base criteria. First, the report needed to provide honest, accurate, impartial analysis regarding the impact to services and taxes. In order to accomplish this first task, the Working Group needed to include an elected official representative of both Montour and Catharine. Secondly, the Working Group needed to complete the analysis in a matter of weeks to allow community and public outreach and education to be conducted before the date of the referendum.

The Working Group was comprised of:

- Dave Scott – Supervisor, Town of Montour
- John Van Soest – Supervisor, Town of Catharine
- Tom Bloodgood – Director of Schuyler County Office of Real Property
- Tim O’Hearn – County Administrator, Schuyler County
- Danielle Hautaniemi – Director of Planning and Community Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County
- Kristi Pierce – Clerk and Treasurer, Village of Odessa
- Randy Deal – Former local assessor
- Keith Pierce – Mayor, Village of Odessa
- Tim Hicks – Trustee, Village of Odessa

In addition to this core group, additional consultation was solicited from the NYS Department of Health, Department of State, NYS Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials, town highway departments and clerks, and the volunteer fire department.

The Working Group met on five separate occasions in September and October (full meeting notes attached as Appendix B). The Working Group has produced a good faith assessment of the services currently provided by the Village of Odessa—discussing if, how, and to what degree services would be provided by the Towns of Montour and Catharine. In some cases, consideration was provided by the Town concluding that current resources were insufficient, such as staffing or finances. In these cases the resulting tax levy and service cost analysis includes this difference. While the comparative analysis may be viewed as inequitable, the Working Group concluded (after considerable discussion) that the included analysis is the most honest and probable outcome of the municipal service and taxing landscape in the event the referendum is passed.

As in any municipal budget, political and fiscal decisions are subject to change based on the available information and the political decision makers. Therefore, forecasting of this nature, either within village budget or town budget lines, is inherently difficult. The analysis within this document is and has been agreed upon as the most likely scenario.

Elective Representation

Currently, residents of the Village of Odessa are also simultaneously residents of a Town, depending on where they live within the village. According to the *Local Government Handbook*, produced by New York State Department of State (5th Edition), “Villages were originally formed within towns to provide services for clusters of residents, first in relatively rural areas and later in suburban areas around large cities.”¹ New York State’s “nesting” of municipalities is a significant feature of the local political landscape, and may contribute to perceptions of duplicative and unnecessary layers of government. Village residents pay property taxes to the Town to cover certain expenses. Registered voters in the Village may vote in many Town elections and are eligible to fill elected and appointed board seats. Dissolution would not alter the representation Village residents have at the Town level, but it would remove the more localized legislative body of the Board of Trustees that was originally put in place to provide services to the “cluster” or residents and businesses. Political representation would shift in whole to the Town Boards.

Registered voters in Odessa considering dissolution may be curious about the relative strength of their representation at the town level. In August of 2010, there were 2,554 total registered voters, or “electors” in both towns, including the Village. The Village has 364 electors total. If dissolution were to proceed, 310 of these electors would shift their political representation to the Town of Catharine, where there are 799 out-of-village electors. Fifty-four electors would shift political representation to the Town of Montour, with 1,391 out-of village electors.

Evaluation of Services

Duties and Roles Shifted and Services Discontinued

The dissolution of the Village of Odessa would mean that certain positions would no longer be required, although the services provided may or may not be accommodated by the Towns. Chief among the redundancies are the positions of Village Clerk, Village Justice, and the Code Enforcement Officer. For the purpose of this report and after some discussion, the Working Group assumed that the Towns would assume these functions.

The Village of Odessa currently employs a Clerk at 30 hours per week and an assistant for 15 hours a week. The Clerk also assumes the role of Bookkeeper for the Village and

¹ P. 71.

the Water District. Both Towns currently employ Clerks and a Deputy or Assistant Clerk, and contract for bookkeeping services. The Town of Montour Clerk position is filled by appointment and is for 23 hours per week, with additional assistance by a Deputy Clerk during January and February for 20 hours per week and then in other months as needed. For Montour, the anticipated additional workload would be negligible, as relatively few residents of the Village would have to turn to Montour for services under the dissolution scenario. The Town of Catharine has an elected Clerk position for approximately 28 hours per week, with a part-time assistant. There may be a more significant increase in workload within the Town of Catharine, as the majority of the current Village residents would fall under the Town's jurisdiction. The best available estimate is that Catharine would incur an additional cost of \$2,000 to service the increased workload, with anticipated revenues of \$400 to help offset these costs. Residents of the former Village of Odessa would probably not experience significant changes to level or availability of service under the dissolution model.

Building code and land use regulation enforcement is provided within both Towns and the Village, but no municipality employs a full-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO). The Towns currently provide varying levels of enforcement. Ten percent of the Highway Superintendent's position is dedicated to codes and zoning in Catharine at a cost of approximately \$4,000 a year, and Montour budgets \$8,400 for their CEO position for an expected eight hours per week. Odessa currently employs a CEO for approximately 7.5 hours per week at an annual cost of \$3,600.

Community expectations and standards are often unspoken yet important factors in code enforcement and zoning administration and under the dissolution model residents of the former Village may need to adjust expectations depending on the practice of the Town that would assume these duties. Generally speaking, building code standards are consistent across New York State, and the letter of the law will not change upon dissolution. Land use regulations, however, are unique to the municipality to which they apply, and all three municipalities have a set of existing regulations. Article 17-A, provides for a minimum two year period in which the existing regulations of the dissolved municipality will remain in effect, unless the receiving municipal board goes through the normal local law adoption or amendment process. Under dissolution, residents of the former Village could reasonably expect the existing land use regulations (primarily zoning and site plan review) to remain in place for a least this two year period of time as the Towns go through administrative adjustments required by assuming new duties and functions. Under any new town land use regulations designed to accommodate the different land use patterns, infrastructure and density of the former Village, new districts could be crafted to preserve the character of a village/hamlet setting. Adoption of these new regulations would be the responsibility of the Town Boards. Reviews and appeals would be heard by the Planning Board or Board of Zoning Appeals in the town holding jurisdiction over the property in question, both before and after any adjustment of local land use regulations. As such, for a period of time these boards and the CEOs would need to be familiar with multiple land use laws, and feel comfortable applying differing standards, depending on the location of the proposed

action. As with building code enforcement, former Village residents may need to adjust expectations regarding land use regulation administration, application and interpretation.

Article 17-A specifically addresses transitioning a dissolving municipal court to the new jurisdiction. The Town Court now having jurisdiction would assume the current caseload, and all pending cases and actions would proceed at the Town Court level. In the costs and expenses projections for the Town of Catharine under the dissolution scenario, the Town anticipates \$1,700 in new expenses but \$4,500 in potential revenues, as the Village Court handles more cases. Increases in the Town of Montour Court caseload would most likely be negligible.

There are a variety of other services that Village residents have approved over the years, either directly or indirectly through the annual budgeting process, state mandates, or through specific requests. These services include monthly curbside recycling, street lighting, frequent seasonal leaf and brush pick-up, a street-tree maintenance and replacement program, Christmas tree pick-up, free mulch, and use of the community room in the municipal building. Under dissolution, some of these services would be retained because of mandates or existing infrastructure obligations, although most likely in an altered form, and some services would be discontinued. The receiving Town Boards would have to weigh the benefit to all tax payers against the costs of services provided.

Providing for recycling options for residents is a NYS mandate, but neither Town currently contracts for curbside pick-up, and both Supervisors indicated that this expansion of services is unlikely. Residents of the former Village would most likely need to make use of the existing drop-off options provided to current Town residents.

Street lighting could be continued through the formation of a special improvement district, so that the full costs of operation, maintenance and replacement of the system would be paid for by the benefiting properties. This district fee would be included as a separate line item on the annual tax bill for the property. The Working Group included this line item, as it is anticipated to remain. Costs for this service were carried over from the 2010 village budget, estimated at \$15,500 in the post-dissolution scenario.

Neither Town Supervisor indicated interest in continuing the existing leaf, brush and Christmas tree pick-ups. Street tree maintenance and replacement may have to be accommodated through the creation of a special improvement district, or the costs of tree maintenance and removal would be financed by the general tax levy. Neither Town Supervisor was willing to commit to a tree-replacement program that would benefit a limited portion of their municipality, but that was funded through the general levy. However, these and other community maintenance decisions would need to be decided by the full Board of each Town. Neither Town currently provides mulch to residents.

Under the dissolution, the current municipal buildings would most likely be sold as part of the liquidation of all Village assets. Proceeds would be distributed proportionally to the Towns, and continued use of the community room would be dependent on the eventual purchaser of the property. Neither Town has indicated any interest in maintaining the property as a municipal building.

Water System

The Village of Odessa provides and maintains a public water infrastructure which has been in place since the 1938. There are 280 total service connections, 247 of which are within Village boundaries. Of those within Village boundaries, 36 are within Montour and 211 are within Catharine. All costs associated with the operation, maintenance and debts incurred are the responsibility of these service users, regardless of administrative and/or municipal distinction.

Current Rates and Staffing

The water rate is currently set at \$56/unit for a service connection, and \$0.52 per 1000 gallons consumed. The rates are set by the village board. These collected monies go to pay off debt and pay for operation and maintenance (personnel, equipment, supplies, etc).

The Village water system is operated and maintained by the Public Works Department. Current staffing is one fulltime superintendent and one 20 hours per week worker, only a portion of which is spent on the water system. The superintendent is a NYS Class C Certified Water Operator, having passed mandated education, service and testing requirements, and oversees the operation and maintenance of the water treatment and distribution system. Both the superintendent and worker track their hours and bill their time back to the water users. In addition, all billing and administrative activities are handled by the village clerk and the deputy clerk. Health benefits are not provided to any village employees.

Post Dissolution

The passage of the dissolution referendum leaves multiple administrative options, all requiring additional legal and regulatory consideration. The preferred option within the Working Group (and discussed herein) would be to create a Town Wide Water District for both Montour and Catharine.

Under this structure the entire Town is created as a 'water district', and within each water district are 'special improvement areas', i.e. those properties with availability of a water service connection. Both Towns would have a special improvement area for the existing service areas and only those properties within the special improvement area incur any water related costs. This model also allows a tiered rate allowing for equitable cost distribution for future growth areas.

The creation of a Town Wide Water District requires a Town board resolution, subject to a town wide permissive referendum. Assuming this passes, an intermunicipal agreement could establish common administrative and operational facilities management. If the permissive referendum does not pass, a quagmire of legal and regulatory complications would create significant difficulties for the affected owners and an alternative solution would become necessary. Failure to resolve these issues could jeopardize the continued provision of public water.

The Town of Catharine, with the vast majority of service connections, would take over the governance, administration, operation and maintenance of the water system. The Town of Montour would likely enter into an intermunicipal agreement with Catharine, ceding authority to Catharine to maintain current equitable user rates and fees. Additionally all incurred debt would be carried over to the 'special improvement areas' and repaid according to the rates established by the Catharine Board.

The Working Group in consultation with the Catharine Highway Superintendent and Clerk discussed additional work load and staffing issues. This acquisition of the operation and maintenance of the water system by the Town of Catharine requires additional staffing and/or time within both departments. Also, the Town of Catharine provides health insurance for its full time employees. To compensate for these added costs to the operation and maintenance increases to the water system rates will be necessary. It's anticipated that the increased costs be reflected in the usage rate, increasing from \$0.52 per 1000 gallon, to \$3.00 per 1000 gallons (see Appendix C). This increased rate would lead to anticipated annual cost increases for a typical four person household from \$373 to \$552, an increase of \$179/yr.

Historical Context and Qualitative Account of the Existing Water Infrastructure

The original source water consisted of two springs approximately 3 miles north of the Village off State Route 228. In the late 1960's an additional drilled well was constructed to meet increased demand. In the late 1990's the findings that the springs were under the influence of surface water contamination and provided insufficient quantity during the summer months, coupled with a changing regulatory climate, required either an elaborate and expensive water filtration facility or the construction of an additional ground water well and the discontinued use of the springs. In late 1999 early 2000, the Village board chose to abandon the springs, develop an additional drilled well, upgrade several sections of water mains and improve portions of the water treatment system. These system upgrades were bonded for a total amount of \$1,851,078, with \$982,500 outstanding debt, set to be repaid by 2020.

While from a fiscal and regulatory perspective these upgrades were absolutely necessary, it was at this time the aesthetic quality of the water diminished. The bedrock and geology of the village's drilled wells produce elevated iron and manganese content in the water—purely an aesthetic issue, not a public health issue. To account for this,

the treatment system adds a blended orthopolyphosphate which keeps the iron and manganese in solution, or soluble in the water. In stagnant pipes (i.e. dead end mains) or when the water contacts the older cast-iron water main and service lines, the manganese drops out of solution (or becomes insoluble) creating the dark staining or dirty water indicative of the majority of the complaints received.

Under any administrative or municipal model, the aesthetic quality issues will remain and should be addressed and improved upon over time. The costs associated with these improvements will only be incurred by the users, not others within the Town.

Fire Department

Odessa and the surrounding community are served by the all-volunteer Odessa Fire Department (OFD), which operates under the auspices of the Village as an incorporated fire company. According to guidance documents available through the Department of State and NYS Town Law, fire protection is not a municipal function authorized to Towns. Instead, it is "... provided by a fire district or pursuant to contract in a fire protection district."² Accordingly, under a dissolution scenario the existing Odessa Hose and Chemical Company would no longer function as an arm of village government, and would have to pursue contracting with served municipalities under a different administrative structure. There are many uncertainties about the process necessary to provide an appropriate legal and administrative structure for the Company, although their commitment to providing continued protection in their service area clearly remains.

Despite the unknowns related to administrative structure of continued fire protection, conversations with representatives of the OFD clarified several impacts of Village dissolution. Currently, the Village owns the building and all assets associated with the provision of fire protection and emergency services. The working groups understanding is that under dissolution these assets would need to be transferred to the Company providing these services, the OFD/Company would be required to acquire the equipment and facilities. It is unclear how the proceeds of the purchase of equipment would be distributed as assets under dissolution. It was the assumption of the Working Group that no significant costs would be incurred with the transfer of these assets. This is an issue for more in-depth discussion and investigation in a dissolution implementation study.

Other fiscal impacts of dissolution to fire protection include building maintenance, lawn care and snow removal, bookkeeping and insurance. Currently the Village provides these services to the ODF. While some costs may simply be shifted, the Working Group felt safe in assuming an increase of \$26, 716 in the OFD budget under dissolution. For more detail, please refer to the following Tax Levy Impact section. Purchase of equipment and building replacement were not included in this figure.

² "How to ' Consolidate Fire Protection in Fire Districts Fire Protection District and Villages, New York State Department of State, http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lg/lge-public_safety.html.

Street Maintenance and Snow Removal

The Village of Odessa maintains just over six miles of road network within the village limits, while New York State maintains 1.6 miles of state highway. The Working Group met with the Town of Catharine Highway Superintendent to discuss the fiscal and operational impacts of village dissolution, and the Town of Montour Supervisor brought the thoughts of his Superintendent to the group. Overall consensus was that like other areas, the Town of Catharine would see the greatest impact, while Montour's responsibilities under dissolution would be less. During the scoping meetings of the Working Group, both towns expressed concern over the increased personnel costs associated with street maintenance and snow removal. As discussed in greater detail in the Tax Levy Impact Section, employees in both Towns are paid higher hourly wages and receive health benefits. Water District needs were also part of this discussion, as Village Public Works employees provide support to the water system and the Town of Catharine would look to continue this model, recouping some costs from the District to pay for these services. The Town of Montour felt that an additional half-time highway department employee would be required to meet the additional workload, and the Town of Catharine would expect to hire an additional two employees. Priority for street maintenance and repairs as well as for snow removal within the former Village would be balanced against the needs of the entire network of roads within both Towns. The Town of Catharine Highway Superintendent reminded the Working Group that the Town did provide snow removal for the Village in the past, but that eventually the arrangement was terminated when Village residents expressed dissatisfaction with the service provided.

Tax levy impact

The dissolution of the village would result in the shifting of some expenses from the village to the towns, with associated budget implications. To better understand the nature of these implications, it may be necessary to view their impact by program area.

Personnel

Dissolution would necessarily result in the elimination of village positions including the Mayor, the Village Board, the Village Justice and the Village Clerk. In addition, the cost associated with the services of an auditor would also be eliminated. Public Works employees would presumably become employees of the towns.

There are currently one full time and one part time public works employees in the village, a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 1.5. Conversations with the respective town supervisors and highway superintendents have indicated that the Town of Catharine would need to employ an additional 2.0 FTEs to meet this increased obligation, while the Town of Montour would have to add another 0.5 FTE. Thus, the likely outcome of village dissolution would result in an increase of 1.0 FTE devoted to public works, some of which would involve water system maintenance.

That personnel increase, coupled with the higher wages paid by the towns along with the availability of health insurance which the village doesn't offer, results in a net increase in the overall property tax levy of \$70,852. (See the table below)

Services

Elimination or reduction of some services outlined above such as curbside recycling and brush pickup would yield a savings. For example, the current village levy attributable to snow removal is \$9,400. Post dissolution budgets in the towns would see an accompanying increase in that line item of only \$3,550. The overall net affect in this program area is a decrease of \$12,616.

Building Maintenance & Other Expenses

Funding for Buildings & Grounds, legal services, elections, records management, public health, SCOPED, the Joint Youth program, historian, association dues and contingency would all be eliminated, yielding a net savings of \$44,749, with \$31,200 coming from building maintenance.

Fire Department

The current department budget is \$166,440. The group came to consensus that a post dissolution fire department budget would be in the neighborhood of \$200,000, with the increase attributed almost entirely to the added cost of building maintenance. The combined levy in the two towns and the village for fire protection is currently \$115,284. The post dissolution fire budget would result in a net levy of \$142,000, an increase of \$26,716.

Loss in Budgeted Revenue

The village currently budgets \$78,655 in revenues, primarily coming from sales tax distributions, utility gross receipts and franchise fees, mortgage taxes and state revenue sharing. Most of this revenue would continue to be apportioned to the towns if the village were to dissolve, although certain items would disappear resulting in a loss of revenue of \$17,650. Of that, \$9,100 can be attributed to the expiration of the Sydney Place Apartment Payment In Lieu Of Tax (PILOT) agreement, making the actual loss in revenue attributed to dissolution to be \$8,550. That loss could be further mitigated if the towns were to enact their own respective utility gross receipts taxes, which would reduce the loss in revenue to \$3,550.

Net Result

The net levy result attributed to dissolution is projected to be an increase of \$43,753 when adjusted for the expiring PILOT. The table below depicts the net result by program area.

Levy Impact By Program Area				
Program Area	Current Village Levy	Post-dissolution Catharine	Post-dissolution Montour	Net Effect
Personnel	\$80,859	\$114,170	\$37,541	\$70,852
Services	\$41,375	\$24,101	\$4,658	-\$12,616
Building & Other	\$44,229	\$0	\$0	-\$44,749
Fire Department	\$115,284	\$116,440	\$25,560	\$26,716
Revenue	-\$69,555	-\$59,939	-\$6,066	\$3,550
Total				\$43,753

It appears that dissolution of the village would result in an overall increase in the property tax levies of the affected municipalities. This increase is being driven by higher personnel costs at the town level.

Distribution of the Levy

While the overall tax burden is projected to increase, that increase would fall disproportionately among the taxpayers. Increased personnel costs would be borne by the entire town of Catharine and the portion of Montour outside the village of Montour Falls. Increased fire department costs would be borne by all the residents of the district, including those who reside in the towns of Hector, Cayuta and Veteran. The projected impact to median value homes in the towns of Catharine of Montour is outlined in the table below.

The net result is a redistribution of an increased tax levy, rather than a tax levy decrease. Consequently, dissolution would cause a shift in the tax burden from former village taxpayers to taxpayers in the towns. The magnitude of that shift is dependent upon the segment of the village in each town and the relative proportion of that segment to the overall taxable value. Consequently, the greatest tax relief would be seen in that portion of the village included in the Town of Montour because that segment of the village is so small in relation to the rest of Montour, while the greatest tax increase attributed to dissolution would be in the Town of Catharine which has to absorb the costs of a village that is almost entirely in that town.

The net effect would result in a projected annual tax decrease of \$236.55 for a median valued home in the Montour segment of the village. The median valued home in the Catharine segment of the village would see a projected annual tax decrease of \$141.95.

In the Towns, the median valued home in Montour would see an increase of \$50.63, while the median valued home in Catharine would see an increase of \$104.55.

Median value residence in Catharine = \$85,000				Projected Levies After Dissolution			
Current Levies				Projected Levies After Dissolution			
	<u>Inside</u>	<u>Outside</u>	<u>Outside no Light</u>		<u>Inside</u>	<u>Outside</u>	<u>Outside no Light</u>
Town	4.18	5.64	5.64	Town	6.39	6.39	6.39
Fire		0.91	0.91	Fire	1.39	1.39	1.39
Light		0.47		Light	0.74	0.74	
Total				Total			
Town	4.18	7.02	6.55	Town	8.52	8.52	7.78
Village	6.01			Village			
Total	10.19	7.02	6.55	Total	8.52	8.52	7.78
Tax on Median	\$866.15	\$596.70	\$556.75		\$724.20	\$724.20	\$661.30
				Difference	-\$141.95	+\$127.50	+\$104.55

Median value residence in Montour = \$83,000				Projected Levies After Dissolution			
Current Levies				Projected Levies After Dissolution			
	<u>Inside Odessa</u>	<u>Outside</u>	<u>Inside MF</u>		<u>Inside Odessa</u>	<u>Outside</u>	<u>Inside MF</u>
Town	3.48	5.22	3.48	Town	5.82	5.82	3.48
Fire		0.81		Fire	0.82	0.82	
Total Town	3.48	6.03	3.48	Total			
Town				Town	6.64	6.64	3.48
Village	6.01		8.23	Village			8.23
Total	9.49	6.03	11.71	Total	6.64	6.64	11.71
Tax on Median	\$787.67	\$500.49	\$971.93		\$551.12	\$551.12	\$971.93
				Difference	-\$236.55	+\$50.63	\$0.00

Conclusion

The content of this document is the result of weeks of meetings and hundreds of hours of review and discussion. It is intended as the most probable outcome regarding taxes and services based upon all available information. The Working Group conducted an impartial analysis and attempted due diligence on all major governance, service and tax implications. The Working Group attempted to minimize these limitations, such as town involvement and state consultation. While conceding these limitations, the resulting analysis still reflects the best available portrait on the ways, means and costs associated with municipal operation if residents choose to dissolve the Village of Odessa. This portrait reflects an increase in water rates, a reduced tax levy for village residents and a tax levy increase for properties outside of the village within the affected towns. Some services would be eliminated, such as curbside recycling and brush and leaf pickup, while others would be shifted to the towns. In the end overall cost of government to residents in the affected municipalities would increase slightly.

All of these aspects should be considered by the electorate prior to casting a vote in the referendum. Regardless of the referendum outcome, the buildings, landscape, and people will still be present on December 8th – and our common problems, whether aesthetic water quality or a depressed business environment on Main St, will also still be unsolved. This vote allows the electorate of the Village of Odessa to determine the municipal structure best suited to meet these needs.