

July Notes from the Supervisor

At our July meeting I introduced drafts of two new local laws that would convert the Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk offices from elected to appointed positions. We will hold an Information Session at the beginning of our August 7 Agenda Meeting to explain why we've put this forward and to answer questions. At the August 15 Business Meeting we will hold a Public Hearing. If the Town Board decides to adopt either or both of these laws, it/they would then be put on the November 6 ballot for the voters to decide if the law(s) should go into effect.

Why we are proposing this now: The current terms of Superintendent Whittaker and Clerk Harrington-Lawson run through 2019. Adopting these laws now will enable them to take effect upon the expiration of the current terms.

Why we think this is appropriate: The Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk oversee key services for the Town in maintaining safe roads, managing information and records, receiving taxes, and providing various licenses. These are skill positions that require expertise, experience, and dedication. Appointed offices would allow selection of persons based on specified qualifications. Furthermore, we have the option of tailoring the laws to allow nonresidents to apply, thereby broadening the applicant pool. This might be especially helpful for the Superintendent position. Several of our current highway crew reside across the border of Caroline in adjoining towns.

Operation of Town Government: The duties and responsibilities of the Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk would remain unchanged, as codified in New York State Town Law. As civil service appointments, the jobs would be subject to civil service protections, offering job security, unlike elected offices. Appointed positions would be subject to the Town's personnel policies and allow performance reviews.

All cities and villages in New York State appoint their Highway Superintendents and Clerks. Ninety-one towns have made this change for the Superintendent position and 37 have made this change for the Clerk position. I think the advantages outlined here greatly outweigh any disadvantages and will help us in our future efforts to provide efficient services to our residents. The big change is that the Town Board would fill the position(s) based on qualifications, rather than Caroline residents through a campaign process. As the Highway Superintendent and Town Clerk positions are fundamentally apolitical, I feel that this is appropriate and would yield dividends to our town operations.