

August Notes from the Supervisor

My notes this month are devoted to the proposal to make the highway superintendent and town clerk offices appointed positions. This change requires enactment of a local law by the town, followed by a majority endorsement by the public in a referendum vote. I began consideration of this proposal by introducing draft local laws for each position at our July business meeting. At our August agenda meeting we held an Information Session on this proposal and at our August business meeting we held a Public Hearing on the topic. The town board plans to vote on the two laws at our September 4 meeting. If either or both laws are adopted by the board, it/they would then be put on the November 6 general election ballot. Only if passed by the public would either law go into effect.

Please note that the local laws we are considering to create appointed positions are limited to exactly that. They would not allow non-residents of Caroline to be appointed. That could be accomplished by a separate local law now or in the future, if we decided that was desirable.

As I explained in my July notes, I have brought this forward because I think appointing our highway superintendent and town clerk would offer real advantages to the town that the elected system does not. A key advantage in an appointed system would be the ability to select on the basis of specified qualifications. This would establish objective criteria for evaluating candidates for these skilled service positions, and it could encourage qualified applicants who might otherwise be deterred by a political campaign process. The duties of each office would be prescribed by New York State Town Law, as they are now. My handout summarizing the pros and cons of elected versus appointed systems and the Information Session Presentation are available on the town website, along with each local law.

Both the Information Session and the Public Hearing were well attended. Many people felt that the decision was best left to the public in a democratic process, rather than the town board functioning as their elected representatives. Associated with this philosophy was the concern that by removing the opportunity for the public to select these town officials, public involvement in local government would be dampened. Others thought the proposal was worth considering and urged that it go forward to a public referendum on the November 6 ballot.

I appreciate the feedback and constructive dialogue we have received so far. I encourage everyone to keep an open mind as we consider this proposal.