

The Seneca Falls Town Board held a Joint Meeting with the Citizens Advisory Committee on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at the Seneca Falls Community Center, 35 Water Street.

Present were Supervisor Michael Ferrara; Councilpersons Dawn Dyson and Doug Avery and Councilmen Dave DeLelys and Steven Churchill (by Zoom). Also present (or by Zoom) were Committee Members Gerald Macaluso, David Clark, Robert McKeveny, Leah Ntuala, Steve Gleason, Charles Cappelino, Danielle Bonafiglia Wirth, Dave Swenson, Fred Capozzi, Tara Montoney, Dawn Dyson and Ted Novak.

Supervisor Ferrara called the Meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. A roll call of Board Members was taken and all were present; the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso noted that at the last Meeting, there was a request for an Organizational Chart for the Town of Seneca Falls - the Town Clerk has copies. It was also noted that a third party was needed to address this issue. Mr. Macaluso said he was directed to contact the Center for Governmental Research to make a presentation. Tonight's Meeting is to enable Paul Bishop and David Riley of CGR to explain how the Committee can address the issue of analyzing the Town's current resources, both Capital and Personnel.

Paul Bishop, Principal, and David Riley, Senior Associate, gave a brief description of CGR. It was founded in 1915 by George Eastman to improve local government. They are non-profit, non-partisan and independent, and are primarily funded through fee-for-service contracts. They have extensive experience with local governments in New York on the same issues that Seneca Falls faces.

Recent Experience with Government Operations: Mr. Bishop mentioned some of the municipal dissolution impact studies that they worked on. They did an analysis study for the Town and Village of Massena who chose not to go the dissolution path. Dissolution Impact studies were also done for Cazenovia, Medina, Sherman, Van Etten and Seneca Falls. Mr. Bishop said they did an extensive organizational assessment analysis for Cayuga County, and worked with NYS Financial Restructuring Board for an outside review of financial and general operations – they worked with them to identify ways to work more efficiently to save money.

Mr. Riley stated they will discuss in detail how they will approach the process. They will do a baseline review of data collection and analysis – what you do, how you do it and why you do it that way, etc. They will look at budget and expenditures, staff counts, salary and benefits, policies and procedures and physical assets. As far as benchmarking with similar communities, Mr. Riley said they would work with the Board to pick out towns they would compare with. He said they also do interviews – talk to Department Heads, Management and Workers as to what they see and do day-to-day.

Mr. Bishop stated in the first phase, they will put together a report from their observations. The purpose of putting together a report is to understand what the facts are; once they share that with the Board, they start talking about and looking at what changes should be made as to operations and structure to improve efficiency. Mr. Bishop said cost savings is only one consideration. They will provide initial options and realistic estimates of what costs would be involved. They will then deliver a final report. Mr. Riley stated that he and Mr. Bishop will provide regular updates to the Committee and the Town Board, and they have a number of tools to hear from the public. They can post on the website, and people can come to meetings and ask questions – also there is a survey option.

Mr. Bishop stated the question is did the Town Manager position work in other communities and how will it work for Seneca Falls. Town Manager is not a common form of government in New York towns – there are about ten towns that have used this form of government. The Town Board has the authority to create a Town Manager and assign duties. Mr. Bishop noted that the NYS City, County Managers Association has sample job descriptions which they are willing to share.

Mr. Ferrara thanked Mr. Riley and Mr. Bishop for being here tonight. He asked – in their experience, how long is the process of evaluation for a typical town. Mr. Bishop replied about 90 days to gather all information and pull together a draft and leave room for some editing – the whole process is about 90 days. Mr. Ferrara said they mentioned that there is cost associated with this which would be determined by how much we go into the whole process. Mr. Bishop replied it's based on what the scope is of the organization. He said if you are looking for assistance to be able to explain the Town Manager position, that would influence the price. He added the Town can come up with what they believe the scope is and they can work on that and work on an agreement. Mr. Swenson said he knows they have done this quite a few times. They must have an estimate of what it will cost – can you give us a ballpark figure. Mr. Bishop replied it would be somewhere in the neighborhood between \$2,500 and \$3,500 with one or two public meetings; if it goes beyond that, it goes upward. He added they can lay out a scope of what you are looking for and give you an estimate of what it would cost. Mr. Bishop said the

risk is they want to make sure they are scoping out the right thing for you.

Danielle Bonafiglia Wirth: Mrs. Wirth asked if they could share some of the observations they encountered when studying other communities or maybe some examples of the recommendations made to other communities. Mr. Riley replied the approach is to find out how your government works – identify people leading the departments; what their experience is; are they working efficiently; are they doing the same as when they were put in that position; understanding how they operate since a merger; is the government working pretty efficiently. He said there has to be an assessment of your organization and how it functions. Mr. Riley said he would be happy to share with all the work they did recently for Grand Island. They identified how they can operate more efficiently and how they are structured, and the recommendations they had for them.

Robert Markel: Mr. Markel asked if they would project cost vs. analysis so that we can understand where the savings would come from to pay for changes. Mr. Bishop replied it's not only about the analysis; sometimes it's a working investment to provide something that is more efficient.

Charles Cappelino: Mr. Cappelino asked if they have ever done a project where a town or village wanted to know whether or not it would be a benefit to add an administrator to their organization. Mr. Riley replied for a village – no. They have done work on departmental restructure. When they worked in Cayuga County, they did some pretty substantial adjustments as to how to restructure their administrator position. Mr. Bishop added once they did their analysis, they found that both village and town were over extended and both municipalities benefited by recommended some professional management.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso said once they decide that perhaps a new management position was needed, what were the variables to make that suggestion as a viable option. Mr. Riley said we know we are going to have changes and we want to prepare for that. Succession to get this done is to create that position. Community expectation has changed and Local governments have gotten a little more complicated, and we want to make sure that we have someone to meet those challenges. He said should you consider a town manager? They would want to look at your organization. Mr. Bishop added they need to look at functions for when there are a lot of needs or community goals that have not been able to advance.

Robert McKeveny: Mr. McKeveny stated he wonders if they had a chance to look at the dissolution report for Seneca Falls to see if it's a baseline for approach. Mr. Riley said it will provide a benchmark to see what has changed or what has not changed, and if the changes have been successful. They want to acknowledge those things, and they will know what was there before. Mr. Riley said they will have an understanding of what the challenges were, and look forward to the opportunity to help you as you face different challenges.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso asked Mr. Riley and Mr. Bishop what time frame do they need if, in fact, the Board decides it wants to engage CGR with the following benchmarks – what time frame do you need for them to get to you in order to have somewhat a workable schedule. Mr. Riley replied they have the capacity to begin immediately. He said a week is all they need to request information and pull it together. Mr. Macaluso stated he is not speaking for the Committee or the Town Board at this moment – he is trying to synthesize what he is hearing. He named three things that need to take place:

1. Obviously, discussion between Town Board Members and Committee Members as to what the scope would be for the study.
2. There has to be an agreement as to what the scope would be for the study.
3. Present that scope of work to CGR, who will then develop a proposal, and then the Board will act upon that proposal.

Mr. Riley said if you begin the process, and based on the conversation with the Committee and Town Board, they will begin with a draft scope of work and share that and you can have that as a starting point.

Mr. Ferrara asked Mr. Macaluso - based on what happens tonight, you have their contact information – right? Mr. Macaluso responded yes. Mr. Ferrara said basically, we would reach out to them and summarize the scope, and we can answer questions they may have so they can formalize some type of proposal. Mr. Swenson said he needs a firm number for time and materials. Mr. Riley said they would not want to work for time and material – they work for a fixed fee. He added their process is to make sure they are upfront and the Committee and Board understands what they are looking for. Mr. Macaluso explained: they would get a scope from the Committee; CGR would say - here is the proposal, and the proposal would cost "x" amount of money. That proposal would come back to the Town Board, and the Town Board could say yes, no or they want it modified. If they say modify it, that would basically be a change order, and that would change the price. Mr. Riley stated they can build changes into the contract.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso said the Committee and Board appreciates Mr. Bishop and Mr. Riley taking the time to address this. He thanked them and said he would be in touch with them in the near future. Mr. Riley thanked the Board, and said they look forward with the opportunity to work for the Committee and Board.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso asked the Committee and Board to take about 1 or 2 minutes to reflect as to what you heard and what your thoughts are, and then it will be discussed as a whole. He said is this the type of presentation that the Board initially directed him to inquire about. Was this anticipated, or are there questions that you thought were going to be answered.

Doug Avery: Mr. Avery stated this is a much deeper dive if we go with their proposal – it comes with a huge price tag. Mr. Macaluso stated based on what he listened to tonight, as well as discussions, they took his question and expanded it to fulfill what he believes is what the Board and Committee was looking for. He added they also said – you tell us what the scope is and they will go forward. Mr. Avery said he came close to asking them if there was a light version of what they are proposing, but they said the scope will come from us. Mr. Macaluso said they will develop that scope according to what we would want that scope to be.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso stated he thinks whether or not it's accepted, one of the issues he heard from the organization is whether or not a Town Manager is essential. Do we have the resources to provide a sustainable future? He thinks one of the items that has to be answered is that we dissolved the Village of Seneca Falls in 2011, and we have been a combined entity since 2011. Unless someone here can tell him otherwise, there has not been a detailed analysis as to whether or not our current resources are addressing those issues. Are we sustainable; are we efficient; are we prepared to meet the future; or are we addressing issues on a one to one basis. Mr. Macaluso said he is not saying the Board cannot do it with the current resources, but he has not seen any evidence that the current resources will address those issues.

Steven Churchill: Mr. Churchill stated what he heard, or he believes he heard, is that Mr. Bishop said he can present within 24 hours a document that defines what we might need and a price with it. He suggested that we get that and see what they are offering. He added they sound very professional and they have been down this path and know what they are doing. Let's format the request and get the proposal instead of getting a scope ourselves, and we can see if we can add or subtract from it.

Fred Capozzi: Mr. Capozzi stated since they were involved in dissolution, he would like to see the document that was presented at that time. He thinks it would be beneficial for the Board Members to take a look at what their recommendations were. He added they said they have the plan and will take a look at it – we need to look at the plan, too, because there may be something there that we need or should be doing.

Steve Churchill: Mr. Churchill stated Mr. Bishop offered to share with the Board and Committee some of the reports they did for other communities. He thinks it will be good to see those reports.

Tara Montoney: Ms. Montoney said she thinks working with something like this presents a real positive opportunity. The question – should we have a Town Manager or not. What problems are we trying to solve by having a Town Manager. She said it's interesting to see from their slides that only 12 towns in New York State have a Town Manager. Ms. Montoney asked what was required to ensure we are efficient, stable and sustainable. It is up to them to include what our areas of improvement are. She personally sees working with people like this as real value. Mr. Churchill mentioned that there are 932 towns in New York State. Mr. Ferrara stated he thinks there are 9 towns in Seneca County, but Seneca Falls is unique. He said out of the 932 towns in New York State, you have to look at towns who have a Police Department, Water and Sewer Department to make an accurate comparison. He added probably the most similar town in our area is Camillus – they have a Police Department, Water and Sewer Department and a landfill. The Town Supervisor is the Town Manager. She is a full time employee with a salary above and beyond Supervisor salary.

Robert McKeveny: Mr. McKeveny said he was intrigued by what they said that Grand Island was through a structural review. He is wondering if this is kind of what we are looking for with some kind of essential questions in there like what are we looking for, or what are we not looking for. Mr. McKeveny said certain things come to mind – the ability to implement certain things of promoting the Town; long term efficiencies; day-to-day operations; communications; look at more closely the organizational structure; revenue generating. Mr. Avery agreed with Mr. McKeveny and said the thing they might have done might be the closest to what we need.

Steve Churchill: Mr. Churchill said he thinks there are some benefits to employee new and updated technologies in the Town. They know what's out there, and he thinks the employees would benefit from what's out there.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso asked Mr. McKeveny if he was suggesting CGR utilizing Grand Island. Mr.

McKeveny said it may be a good approach to a study for the first step, and include the piece of technology in the 2021 World.

Steve Churchill: Mr. Churchill stated some good points have come up. Perhaps we could pass on to those folks this discussion so they could hear what our concerns are, and it would help them with their scope. Mr. Macaluso said would it be advantageous to share the 15-30 minutes discussion the Committee and Board had related to questions that were raised. Mr. Ferrara said he is not saying not to hear the discussions, but he doesn't think it will be enough to give them a specific game plan to look at Seneca Falls. He thinks we still have to narrow the scope down as to what are we looking for – we want to evaluate the current government of Seneca Falls. To do that, you would start talking to department people and figure out exactly how it all comes together – it all comes back to the day-to-day operation of the government. It comes down to what's the most efficient way to operate a municipality on a day-to-day basis. Mr. Ferrara said these are the things he would be looking for from a consultant. He added certainly, it would not hurt to have them hear the conversations.

Leah Ntuala: Rev. Ntuala referred to the job description for Town Manager and said she has been diagramming all of the things she heard with the description of a town manager like they did for the scope. She would be happy to copy it so people can see it.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso said Rev. Ntuala has the job description; he will get her an organizational chart. He said a few things have to occur simultaneously:

1. Give us a scope as to what they perceive to be our need.
2. What are the resources for us to be sustainable and what recommendations would they have.
3. Share the dissolution process document.
4. Share an example of a final report that they did for a town showing benchmarks, what they did and what their observations were.

Mr. Macaluso mentioned Mr. McKeveny's discussion related to the organizational structure from Grand Island as an example. He said each one of these has value and each one has a little bit of a different curve.

Mr. Macaluso said he will send an email to each of the Committee Members and Town Board with what he just stated, and asked that they respond as to whether or not what he copied down was correct, and if not, he will change it accordingly. He will get a copy of the dissolution report and get it to the individuals. Mr. Macaluso said it all comes down to the initial question – what is going to enable Seneca Falls to be sustainable and efficient in the future.

Steve Churchill: Mr. Churchill stated tonight's meeting is whether or not we want to hire CGR. He suggested we get their scope document, read it over and decide, and send it back to them. Mr. Avery said if it's the recommendation of this Committee that we should hire CGR, the Board should know that in time to approve the expenditure at the Board Meeting in two weeks – the Board would act on their recommendation. Mr. Ferrara said he is not sure the Committee feels comfortable in making that recommendation. He thinks the Town Board, in a more public meeting, has to make that decision. Mr. Avery said the recommendation starts from the Committee; the Board has not been involved in the whole process, but they have.

Robert McKeveny: Mr. McKeveny stated the cost would be a concern for him. He wondered if it is worth a reference check before spending that amount of money. Mr. Macaluso said they could do two things at the same time – do a reference check and request a scope. Mr. Ferrara said he will check with Diana Smith with her experience with them leading up to dissolution.

Gerald Macaluso: Mr. Macaluso said the Committee is in agreement as to what the format will be. He mentioned sending the goals to Mr. Ferrara. At the same time, he will contact some individuals and get some references, and see if they are as good as the money it costs. Mr. Macaluso thanked everyone, and said we want to make Seneca Falls the best town there is. He will be sending out a survey as to when the next meeting will be. Mr. Swenson said they need to meet after they get a proposal so that they can give it to the Town Board. The date of Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> was set for the next meeting; Mr. Macaluso hopes to have a proposal at that time. Mr. Ferrara thanked the Committee for all the effort they put into this.

Being there was no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the Meeting at 7:30 P.M. by Doug Avery and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 nays.

Respectfully submitted,

NICALETTA J. GREER, Town Clerk

