

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Surrounding Area

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SPECIAL DISSOLUTION MEETING NOTES

Monday February 22nd, one of the required meetings, necessary in the “process” of dissolution, was held at the Port Henry Village Hall. Every seat in the Hall was taken, filled with interested residents of both village and town, even though the public was not allowed to ask questions or make comments. Before the dissolution plan was presented, the Board met to award the Rice Lane engineering contract to the Laberge Group.

At this meeting, the Laberge Group presented the Port Henry Board with a 45 page plan for dissolution which it had developed from meetings and interviews held with representatives of both the Village and Town. After the presentation, the Board could either accept it or reject it. If they rejected it, then Laberge would make changes in the plan and present it again. The Board chose to pass a resolution of acceptance. Therefore, now the “process” continues with the Board setting a date for presentation of the “plan” to the public, at which time the public is encouraged to ask questions and make comments. I, as a resident of Port Henry, have questions, maybe even a few comments, depending on the answers to my and others’ questions.

I, personally, found the presentation to be confusing. There seemed to be few solid facts (particularly those associated with numbers) that didn’t have some caveat attached which would or could change the printed information in the plan. The future is, even with the best projective abilities, a shape-shifter, a trickster to be wary of and as such be respected. So why knowingly choose a future with few known certainties and with some of the known certainties being negative, such as winter streets being unplowed except for the village’s Broad and Main Streets and the garbage becoming each village resident’s own responsibility?

The some of the dissolution plan’s specifics were presented by Nichole Allen of the Laberge Group. Village employees would find jobs within the Township, the Village Clerk would transition, however the Village treasurer would not because of Civil Service requirements. If the village were dissolved, Port Henry would become part of the Town’s third water district with little detectible change except for time of billing which would be adjusted to the Town’s billing schedule.

The plan’s suggestions for the fire department brought forth the most questions and discussion from the Board members. Laberge recommended forming a joint fire district, prior to dissolution, between Village and Town that would exist whether dissolution took place or not. I did not really understand their reasons for doing this. They kept saying this way the public would always have fire protection. I did not see how the public ever would **not** be protected, particularly if the village did not dissolve. It seemed that Mayor Guerin saw it similarly. Mayor Guerin’s questions brought answers that made it seem a poor choice until, and if, dissolution became a reality. If a joint fire district were to be formed, it would be an irreversible decision and would become another layer of government over which the board or boards would have no direct control over this new district’s budget. Mayor Guerin pointed out the irony of this, in that, supposedly, this dissolution process was set in motion for **this very reason**, to get rid of a layer of government and thus reduce taxes. It was projected that there would be a savings, from \$1.71 to \$1.57.

If dissolution becomes a reality, a debt district would be setup for Port Henry, and here there is a plus for the village. The remaining debt on village equipment, which now will be used by the township, this cost will be spread over both village and town residents

The timeline for the State's proposed annual tax credit offered to dissolved villages and townships was discussed. Although the State seems to have plenty of money in this fund, the fact, the reality is that this fund is a budgeted item for the State and subject to annual appropriation.

If the village were dissolved, clarification for the plans for ongoing maintenance of village's sidewalks was requested. In the plan, the amount the village now budgets for sidewalks would continue to be budgeted and, as now in the village, a broken sidewalk will be mended.

After much discussion of the tax savings under several differing circumstances, and realizing that garbage removal and possibly snow removal would become a necessary expense for many residents of the village, the projected savings for an individual would come to about \$300. or \$400., possibly \$500. per year, but it could be less, depending on what the future brings for this area.

The public hearing on the dissolution plan is set for April 5th at the Knights of Columbus Hall, time to be announced later. Also, a hard copy of the "plan" is available at the Village Office, during normal business hours. I would recommend that each and every resident read this document, so you may more clearly understand the importance of what can happen in the near future, judge what you want for yourself and actively participate in getting what you think best for yourself.

The whole proceedings were videoed and may be viewed by going to Youtube and entering "Port Henry dissolution." Be sure it is the meeting of February 22, 2016 you choose. It was not necessarily the first choice listed.

The next monthly meeting of the Village Board will be March 12th in the Village Hall at 7 PM. However, a Public Hearing will be held prior to this meeting at 6:45 PM on proposed Local Laws #'s 1 – Tac Cap Law, to override the Tax Levy Limit of Municipal Law 3-C and extending the Moratorium on Street Level Residential Development in a portion of the Village of Port Henry.

NEW LOCAL BUSINESSES

What used to be King' Corner in Moriah Corners is now **Fleury's Deli and Grocery**. Today, Friday the 27th was their first day open for business in their new location. Lorie said they had had a very good day. Many people had dropped by and picked up menus and a good many seafood and fish dinners were ordered.

Fleury's Deli and Grocery will not be in full operation until their new pizza oven arrives, hopefully next week. The oven was ordered over a week ago, but its delivery had to be delayed by the company making it. I asked why they had to purchase an oven, as King's Corner had made pizzas. They wanted a bigger gas conveyer oven which could make pizzas more quickly.

The Deli part of the business offers subs, different salads (fresh tossed, chef, potato, macaroni) and various dinner choices. The Grocery part stocks basic necessary items such as milk, bread, orange juice, soda and goodies (yes, these *are* necessary).

Fleury's Deli and Grocery is open **seven** days a week, Sunday-Thursday – 11 am – 8 PM and Friday and Saturday – 11 am – 9 PM. Phone: 546-3151. The ribbon cutting and official opening will be when the pizza oven arrives.

Sleeper's hasn't opened as yet, but it has become a staple of interest in Port Henry for motorist driving by what was known as "the old Wheelock Garage." The transformation from a

big motley brown structure to a large fine looking white building has been interesting to follow as well as being pleasing to the eye.

When asked when his comprehensive automotive-business would open, Rick Sleeper would not give a specific date, not even a possible month. He has become a bit shy about projecting dates. Frozen water lines under the building's floor made having to bring in heavy machinery a necessity. For we watchers it was the question, "How long are they going to have to dig and how deep will that "hole" have to go?" Rick did say that when it is ready to open there will be a ribbon cutting and a party. He certainly has the space for a *big* party.

WARNING: March 4th is the last day individuals may register with the Essex Co. Board of Elections. If you wish to vote for Village Trustees March 15th and are not registered, you are herewith forewarned.

Look for the next issue on **Saturday, March 12, 2016** at Mac's, Moriah Pharmacy, Sherman Free Library, George's Restaurant, John Eisenberg's Service Center, Ken and Paula LaDeau's Champlain's Best Wash, Don Foote's "Miss Port Henry" Diner, and TFCU. **NOTE:** The Fact Finder may also be found on-line at porthenrymoriah.com. "Fact Finder" is the first item on the third drop-down menu.