

**TOWN OF DELHI
PUBLIC HEARING**

**March 13, 2023
6:50PM**

**A Local Law Changing from Elected Board of Assessors to Single Appointed Assessor for
the Town of Delhi, Delaware County, New York**

Those present:

Councilmember's: William Cairns, Matt Krzyston, Christina Viafore and Margaret Baldwin
Highway Superintendent Daren Evans

Residents: Cynthia Cobbe, Brad Lockwood, Kimberly Cairns, Mathew Burkert, Vicky Klukkert,
Kali Barnhart, Ann-Lis Glen, Kathy Mario, Eileen Kline, David Kopecek, Matt VanBuren, Josh
Morgan, Will Outsen

Supervisor Tuthill called the public hearing to order at 6:50 pm.

Supervisor Tuthill gave the description of the Local Law stating the purpose of the law was to change from a three person panel to an appointed single assessor position with the other being the clerk.

Kathy Mario asked if they were going to explain what would happen if they voted "yes." She questioned if it would be put on the ballot or would it take place immediately. Tuthill stated the way the local law is drafted would terminate the elected positions the end of March, April 1st we would go the appointed positions. Our intentions are to appoint Joseph Gifford as the assessor and have Jim Corcoran as the clerk to the assessor. What we will do is take the three salaries and add them together and divide them in half; the two are happy with that. Tuthill added they are both certified already we will not have to go through any long drawn out thing with the state and it does not have to be put on the ballot but we must have a local law.

Dan Kennedy stated he had a problem with "hiring" an assessor as we are a government for the people, by the people for the people; as soon as you hire them they work for the town. What is going to incentivize them to work for the people and not for the town. He further stated the longer they stay there the more incentive they have to raise taxes. That pressure will come from the town; instead of being elected we can do away with someone we disagree with here we are locked into that. Supervisor Tuthill stated it would be an appointed position which would be at the discretion of the board and could be terminated. They don't raise the taxes they just assess the market value of the property; it's whatever spending the town board agrees on is what raises your taxes. Kennedy said when you raise spending you can pressure the assessor if he works for the town and we can't vote them out. Tuthill stated we can't pressure the assessors to do anything, they have a whole set of guidelines they have to follow with the state and they have to be certified; that's the reason we are headed in this direction. Tuthill then said the vast majority of towns in the state can't get people to pass the test and be certified. If someone is elected and doesn't make it then the board would have to remove them from office. The state would remove them from office if they can't complete their training. Kennedy added if we don't like the

direction that something is going we can vote someone out rather than count on the board to let them go. This person may pass the test but we might disagree with the assessment of the property values. Tuthill informed Kennedy there is a process to grieve an assessment. Tuthill discussed after a six year term the board can either re-appoint that individual or not re-appoint them.

Dave Kopecek stated he had sent things to several board members about going forward with this. In NYS a great majority of towns have moved from an elected assessor to this system. The one thing he would think though is we are going from three positions to two positions it might be an opportunity for cost savings. Tuthill added in Delaware County most of the towns are having trouble getting people that can pass the tests; our assessor Joe Gifford has been helping in different areas. Gifford added there are only four municipalities left in the county that are elected positions, and there are only 47 municipalities left in the state that are elected the rest are appointed. Gifford then stated he has worked for Delaware County Real Property for 34 years and he has seen towns go from elected to appointed and it seems to run more efficiently from the county level. He further stated he has been elected in Delhi by the people for 29 years for which he is grateful, he worked with Frank Bovee for that long. He has learned a lot in that manner and has had the opportunity to serve the people with their trust as being elected; he is hoping that continues to appointed, if not it is a six year term and there are ways to go about removing from office. He looks forward as Delhi is his home town and he is looking forward to continuing my future in the town of Delhi and to serve.

Amy Randall questioned the three to two; do the people that become appointed do they become employees of the town with the full benefits of being employed (health insurance, 401K); Tuthill stated it is an appointed position they are eligible for state retirement and that is it. Technically they are an employee of the town with a lot of strings attached by the state. Randall than stated the cost of having these people being employees of the town is there something above the salary that they get; Tuthill stated there is very little overhead. The assessors did need a new computer which the town paid for through the ARPA funds as we are doing upgrades throughout the town and also the phone system, this does not cost the taxpayers. Our two assessors also do the Village of Delhi which is a joint service which we pay their salaries but the village pays indirectly through the "A" account which is levied across everyone in the town and village.

Kennedy then asked if their health insurance costs anything; Tuthill said the Town does not cover their health insurance.

Jim Corcoran, Town Assessor added in the job being elected as an assessor you really don't make too many friends. Every time you go out to see an addition added to someone's home or something built without a permit and you raise their assessment you are never going to get their vote again no matter how good a job you do. He added it should not be a political position.

Kennedy added this may not be that big a deal but what is next; what position is then changed from an elected to an appointed one. Tuthill didn't see that happening with other elected officials.

There being no further public comment the public hearing was closed at 7:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elsa Schmitz

Elsa Schmitz, Town Clerk, Town of Delhi