

March 31, 2025

Circumstances have come up preventing me from attending this evening's public hearing to discuss the idea of having the Lysander Highway Superintendent go from an elected position to one that is appointed by the Town Board. If I might, I would be grateful in this note which I have asked Supervisor Rode to read, to give you reasons why I think the idea a good one and for which I would respectfully ask you consider positively as well.

Perhaps the best place to start is to address the immediate reaction that the Town is taking my vote away from me and they, meaning the Town Board, will then be able to hire someone they like, or worse even a relative!

I would suggest that we as residents however, have more democratic say in having it become an appointed position versus keeping it an elected position. How could that possibly be? First, what choice do we really have in who is running for the position to be elected by us residents? These individuals are picked by political parties in terms of their electability. The political protocol also allows for people to challenge who the parties pick through a primary election procedure. To run for the Lysander Highway Superintendent position, all one has to be is eighteen years old and a resident of Lysander to be qualified. That's it. There are no resumes to review or to be considered and no proof whatsoever that the person running has any experience overseeing such an organization including personnel management, budgeting and knowledge of even what a highway department's responsibilities are.

Secondly, once elected, the Superintendent is independent of the Town Board. While it is true the Board establishes the budget, the Superintendent is responsible to no one except ultimately the public during the next election. If it is apparent that mistakes are being made with a budget of over \$3.5 million, or not being a good manager of highway employees, or not getting the roads snowplowed or maintained in a proper fashion, there is nothing the Board or anyone can do in the matter. Imagine if you owned your own business that was so big that you hired an operations manager to run the operation. But after you hired that person, you couldn't oversee his or her work, but they were independent of you. Hard to imagine that, but that essentially is what having an independently elected person in this job means. That is why County governments, such

as Onondaga, all have appointed people in these crucially important positions.

When the position is appointed, that person works for the Town Board and is answerable to the board so that when roads aren't plowed in time, or potholes not fixed, or ditches not maintained, etc., instead of calling the highway superintendent who may or not provide an answer you desire and legitimately have a right to have, you would call the Town Supervisor and/or each of the members of the Board to rectify the situation. That ought to answer any question anyone might have in terms of insuring that only the highest quality individual is hired for the job. No one on this board, or past boards, or future boards wants to get phone calls of complaint regarding something they can't do anything about. But with an appointed position, that person is always accountable to the Board for his or her actions. And if we fail to rectify the situation, then any of us ought to never expect to be supported when we run for office.

Third, instead of the let's keep our fingers crossed and hope that someone qualified runs for the elected position, as an appointed position, the Town is then able to advertise for the job and look for someone with experience who can compete in an interview process. We can look beyond the idea of just being eighteen and a resident of Lysander, but seek seriously minded individuals who have done this or similar work before. And guess what, while I have full confidence that the right person would be hired, because they are appointed, they can be disciplined or even let go if they fail to do their job properly, something that is impossible to do with an elected position.

I hope that you would agree with me that the person who would be chosen is someone that has the highest of abilities to run the department that we all depend upon. If you are concerned or wondering about the person who is doing the job as we speak being able to be considered for the position, the answer is that person has something no one else has which is the chance to do a great job from now until an appointment is made in January of 2026. But once they are appointed they know they are there because of their qualifications and not because they won an election. And from their vantage, they would want to be judged for how good a job they do versus having to run for an election every four years. It is the latter situation which has led the Town of Lysander to struggle with uninterrupted, solid

leadership in that department, something that will not be an issue with an appointed slot.

Finally, I hope that you will consider how non-political this issue is with respect to the members of the Town Board who are all in agreement in support of this idea. The Democratic, Conservative and Republican parties are represented by the four current members. You don't often see that type of agreement in most elected boards or legislatures for issues as important as this one.

Thank you for considering all of the above.

Bob Geraci