

**BEE ARTICLE: April '08**  
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Government efficiency.

Some would argue the phrase is the text book definition of oxymoron.

And it's safe to say most Western New Yorkers feel government would be a lot more efficient if there were a lot less of it.

Beleaguered taxpayers are begging for tax relief as we continue to bankroll the bloat: 439 elected Erie County officials with an annual price tag of \$32-million-plus. Factor in the cost of elected officials' immediate staffs and during the past decade we've kissed goodbye more than a quarter billion dollars; we've also waved goodbye to 30 percent of our young people.

Meantime, Erie County remains overloaded with ten times the number of politicians compared to similarly sized regions.

Enough.

Or so figured several Orchard Park residents who called me last year wondering how Orchard Park could justify two layers of government; a village and a town.

Those doing the asking were aghast after reading Kevin Gaughan's government efficiency report which concluded in suburban towns and villages, the ratio of citizens to legislators is unnecessary and unsustainable.

So I put them to work.

The 6-member task force I appointed was charged with investigating ways to streamline our local government and recommend ways to save taxpayers money.

They were not politicians, didn't have a clue who belonged to what political party, were professionals from a variety of successful backgrounds, either lived in the village or the town and most didn't know each other.

They just happened to read Gaughn's report and were so disgusted by the status quo they couldn't sit still.

They went to work; immediately hitting a brick wall!

Elected officials refused to talk to them; budget information had to be officially requested thru the Freedom of Information Law and they took a trashing in the local paper from those who perceived their turf was being trounced.

But they didn't quit and not surprisingly the general public....or at least those paying attention ....cheered them on.

The task force's investigation culminated in an 8 page report recommending a single government representing the entire town of Orchard Park.

This was not a power hungry mob looking to abolish anything, just a business minded group of conscientious taxpayers concluding streamlining government is the smartest way to go.

I encourage you to hop on the town's website and read [the report](#).

The task force considers their conclusions "a starting point for constructive dialogue and possible action." They're itching "to meet with any and all to correct any errors and expand on the material presented."

And here's the really interesting part: the about-to-be-released report from the NYS Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness comes to many of the same conclusions as the OP task force.

The Lundine report is due out in a day or two.

You'll find that one on the town website, too, for your consumption, digestion and feedback.

I'm all ears.

Please let me know what you think:

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And if you happen to run into task force members: : Don Quinlin, Michael Crapsi, Pat Curley, John Duffy, Dean Kroll or James Bevevino I encourage you to pick their brains and thank them kindly.

Let the dialogue begin!