

Good evening. I would like to take a few minutes to discuss the issues that led the Village Board to consider eliminating the Water Board of Commissioners. After I review these points, we will open the public hearing so that everyone has an opportunity to respectfully share their comments.

Once everyone who wishes to speak has had an opportunity to do so, the board recommends keeping the public hearing open until our workshop meeting on August 26 at 6:00 p.m. This will provide the public with another opportunity to offer comments before the hearing is closed.

- First, I want to address a concern that we have heard from some residents. This proposal is not about eliminating the Village Water Department or shutting down our water plant. It is solely about the governance structure of the Water Board of Commissioners.
- Next, I would like to address what we believe are concerns stemming from misinformation regarding the Village's water finances. Over the past several years, we have experienced challenges in retaining a Village Treasurer and maintaining stability in that position. As a result, there has been uncertainty due to inconsistent financial reporting and the lack of complete information—not because of careless spending. There have been questions regarding interfund transfers. The reasons for those transfers were clearly explained during our April 29th Village Board meeting. There have also been public statements suggesting that the Village Board has improper intentions regarding the water fund, and I would like to clarify a few important facts.
 - Whether or not the Water Board exists, the Water Fund remains separate from the Village's General Fund, just as the Sewer Fund and Garbage Fund are maintained separately.
 - The Village Board has always been responsible for approving the annual Water Budget. The Water Board administers that budget within the limits established by the Village Board.
 - Water Department vouchers are reviewed and signed by the Water Board Commissioner before being submitted to the Village Board Finance Committee for review and approval. Those vouchers are then included with

the total warrant, which is approved by the full Village Board during its regular public meetings.

Another important consideration is that our current Village Code does not clearly define the powers and duties of the Water Board. Eliminating the separate Water Board would create a single governing body responsible for all Village operations. This change would:

- Increase accountability by placing responsibility for all Village funds with one elected governing body.
- Improve communication and establish more consistent policies across all Village departments.
- Simplify communication between residents and Village leadership.
- Make it easier to coordinate grant applications and pursue funding opportunities.
- Enhance transparency by ensuring that water system decisions are discussed during regular Village Board meetings, which are recorded and available to the public.
- Reduce administrative costs by eliminating the need for a separate board while maintaining the same level of service.
- Eliminate the monthly stipends paid to Water Board members.

It is also worth noting that every current member of the Water Board has an affiliation with the Village Board. Members are either current or recent Village Board members or are employed by the Village.

Finally, our Village is the only municipality in Dutchess County that continues to operate with a separate Water Board of Commissioners.

We appreciate everyone taking the time to participate in this process. We encourage all comments and ask that everyone speak respectfully so that all viewpoints can be heard. Your input is an important part of this public hearing, and the Board will carefully consider all comments before making a final decision.