

Town of Tusten Department of Public Works

FAQ

If it's not broke why fix it?

It is broke. The cost to taxpayers for municipal services continues to increase. Rural areas like Tusten are especially vulnerable to budget increases because there is less of a population to pay for operations and upkeep. It is the Boards position that we must look at the ways that services have been traditionally provided and come up with ways to reduce expenses to the taxpayer.

What changes will there be in the highway, water and sewer departments?

The current highway budget is 1.01 million dollars. Because the superintendent is an elected office the expenditure of that budget is subject to administration by a person with no qualifications or hours of work. These standards cannot be set for elected officials by state law and the position is not accountable to the Board but is an equal to the Board. By changing the highway superintendent position from elected to appointed, performance standards can be established and adhered to despite the changes brought on by public office.

The direction is to join the highway, water and sewer departments in to a department of public works. The current administrators will remain the same, but some of their duties will be expanded and altered. There will be a commissioner and a deputy commissioner of the new public works department. The deputy commissioner will be the highway superintendent. The position of highway superintendent is required by the Town Laws of New York State. The commissioner will have administrative oversight of budgets and expenditures. The deputy commissioner will have direct supervision of the workforce and equipment. Both administrators will work together to plan improvement and construction projects, allocate workforce, purchase and maintain equipment and facilities in a more coordinated and effective manner. There will be no increase in salaries for either the highway or water and sewer superintendent in their new positions.

We currently have good people in office who work together well. They have the ability to build on each other's strengths and eliminate weaknesses. The sharing of manpower and equipment will save taxpayer monies and future purchases will be shared to eliminate duplication and maximize effectiveness.

How will the budgets and monies be separated?

The town budget is comprised of many line items. The accounting systems and management principals are already in place to keep monies allocated for each department separate from one another. The Town judge's budget is not spent on highway. The water budget is not spent on sewer. The costs to operate each department will be allocated in

the same manner and with the same fiscal controls as required by New York State as it is currently.

Will I lose my vote for a public official?

The current position of the highway superintendent is an elected position. In order to set standards for hours of work and qualifications for the job, the position is required to be appointed by the Board and not elected as it is currently. The Town Board as elected by the voters of the Town of Tusten will appoint the Highway Superintendent. Your vote will continue to be as important in the election of the Town Board and their role in the selection of this position and the other qualified and diligent appointed officials that perform the daily duties of Town business. You will gain a highway superintendent who will continue to be qualified for the job and accountable to the Board's policies.

How will this save taxpayer money?

The immediate advantages of combining the three departments (water and sewer are already combined) are the sharing of workforce and equipment. Should one department need additional equipment or manpower, the now common administration will automatically assign the workforce and equipment in a more efficient and coordinated response. Generally each department will have their own daily responsibilities but as the need arises resources will be shared to minimize the fiscal impacts of having to hire additional manpower or machinery to perform the work that is required. Two specific examples include a second shift during snowstorms and the coverage of manpower during the construction season.

Currently highway personnel provide ice control and snow removal during the entire course of a snowstorm. If the manpower of the water and sewer departments were combined into a Department of Public Works the labor can be allocated to reduce the labor costs associated with the storm. An example of this would be by instituting two shifts overtime in certain long duration storms can save over \$ 1,500 each storm event.

As a long-term advantage- it has been determined by the current administration that one person can be reduced by attrition by combining the two departments. This will save over \$50,000 per year in salary and benefits.

What is the process for combining the departments and starting a DPW?

The Board has drafted a resolution, which was sent to the County election officials requesting a vote to change the highway superintendent position to be appointed instead of elected and to form a Department of public Works from the current water, sewer and highway departments. Voters will cast their ballot in this November's election on this issue. If the voters indicate that the position is to be changed to one that is appointed the Board will draft a resolution to combine the highway, water and sewer department to a unified department of public works.