



GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING AND REGIONALISM

History Has Proven: It's Important to Keep an Open Mind

By Mayor Sam Teresi

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The recent progress report from the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) and the Public/Private Task Force studying the possibility of consolidating the Jamestown Police Department with the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office, has brought to mind the rich history of successful, mutually beneficial government restructuring efforts involving the City of Jamestown, its municipal neighbors and Chautauqua County Government.

The following is a summary of services, that had previously been the exclusive domain of the City of Jamestown, which are now being provided directly by County Government, or are being shared through various contractual arrangements.

CITY SERVICES CONSOLIDATED WITH THE COUNTY

1. Department of Social Services
2. Department of Health
3. Public Landfill
4. Commercial Airport
5. Industrial Development Agency (IDA) / Economic Development
6. Public Transportation
7. Tax Foreclosure/Sale Process
8. Emergency Dispatching (E-911) and related records management services
9. Ownership and Maintenance of all City Bridges
10. Local Funding – Community Colleges
11. Election Administration
12. Civil Service / Personnel Functions
13. Police Services (Under Review)

CITY/COUNTY COLLABORATIONS

1. Development of Industrial Parks
2. Highway and Bridge Improvements

3. Shared purchasing and procurement activities
4. Expansion of the public safety mutual aid system
5. Provision of space in City Hall for County Offices
6. City processing of solid waste from the South-Center Sewer District
7. City treatment of leachate from the County Landfill
8. Construction of County Landfill leachate pipeline by the City
9. Billing and collection of County property taxes by the City
10. Regionalized sponsorship of Jamestown Community College

CITY SERVICES SHARED WITH MUNICIPAL NEIGHBORS

1. City Electric (Ellicott, Celoron, Falconer)
2. City Water (Ellicott, Busti, North Harmony, Kiantone, Harmony, Falconer, Celoron, Lakewood)
3. City Wastewater Treatment (Ellicott, Busti, Kiantone, Falconer)
4. Public Safety services (Ellicott and Lakewood/Busti)
5. City Assessment operations (Busti, Carroll, Kiantone, Harmony, Chautauqua, North Harmony, Ellery and Ellicott)

As one might suspect, all of these efforts required months or years of planning to accomplish. In each instance, dozens or even hundreds of individuals were involved. And the process was extremely difficult, at times slow moving, filled with thousands of details and, quite often, controversial and thankless.

Clearly, as outlined above, both the City of Jamestown and Chautauqua County governments are vastly different today than they were thirty or even five years ago. I also have absolutely no doubt that they will continue to evolve and be different five years from now and beyond.

Although it is sometimes human nature to sell ourselves short and fail to appreciate the magnitude of one's own progress, the significance of the strides made over the past three decades has not been lost on observers from the outside. In many respects, due to the notable efforts of hundreds of visionary leaders over the years, Jamestown and Chautauqua County have become a model for those now trying to enter the regional governance process for the very first time.

As with all of the previously listed examples, the current discussion regarding the consolidation of the Jamestown Police Department with the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office has prompted a wide array of questions, concerns and public debate – both pro and con.

During the coming months, as both the state-sponsored consultant and the members of the public/private task force work to finalize a model and implementation strategy, it is vitally important that we, as concerned and vested citizens, remain informed and keep an open mind. As was the case with all of the previously mentioned examples of beneficial

regionalism, we must see what this process yields and let the facts, not our raw emotions and fears, guide the ultimate decision making process.

CITY RESTRUCTURING EFFORTS

On a related front, over the past decade, the City has also invested a tremendous level of energy in the restructuring, streamlining and rightsizing of its own internal operations.

Since the year 2000, City policymakers and staff have implemented 60 significant restructuring initiatives that have literally changed, for the better, the face and efficiency level of our local government. It should be noted that these 60 efforts do not include similar restructuring steps taken on the Board of Public Utilities side of City Government.

The 60 referenced items, some monumental and others relatively “small”, are the product of the good, hard work of City Council Members, the City’s administrative management team and our highly trained and capable general work force. The combined, reoccurring annual value (savings and/or additional revenues) of these 60 initiatives has grown to **\$5,033,200!** These efforts have also enabled a 20% reduction in the City’s total work force during recent years.

In these cases, a tremendous level of creativity, collaboration, negotiation, litigation, and in some instances, pain and sacrifice were required. It stands to reason that if the 60 items on this list were so truly “simple and easy”, someone would have certainly thought of and put them all in place before!

The year 2012 has been a particularly active “chapter” in this ongoing and impressive “story”. During the past twelve months, City Council Members, in a cooperative and bi-partisan fashion, have approved and/or brought to fruition 14 additional initiatives, which have already or will produce a projected annual, reoccurring value of \$566,600 for the residents, businesses and taxpayers of this City.

A complete outline of the 60 City of Jamestown internal restructuring initiatives and the corresponding employment report, may be viewed at **www.jamestownny.net**.