



WRVO 89.9
PUBLIC MEDIA

Donate

Village of Bridgewater faces decision whether to dissolve

WRVO

Published January 31, 2014 at 7:30 AM EST



LISTEN • 3:28



Gino Geruntino / WRVO

WRVO FM
Q

Nestled in the rolling hills of southern Oneida County sits the Village of Bridgewater. To the average eye, it looks the part of most upstate villages, but come March, the village and its two centuries of history could dissolve into a thing of the past.

Gary Comstock has been mayor of Bridgewater since the 1990s, but because of financial struggles, he wants to dissolve the village. he says the time has never been better to merge with the surrounding town, especially following Gov. Andrew Cuomo's clarion call for streamlining state and local governments.



Credit Gino Geruntino / WRVO / WRVO

Village of Bridgewater Mayor Gary Comstock poses with a letter sent to Everett Holmes, the first African-American mayor elected in New York state.

"We've been fairly closely consolidated with the Town of Bridgewater for a number of years," Comstock said. "We pay the town to plow our village roads, village streets. We

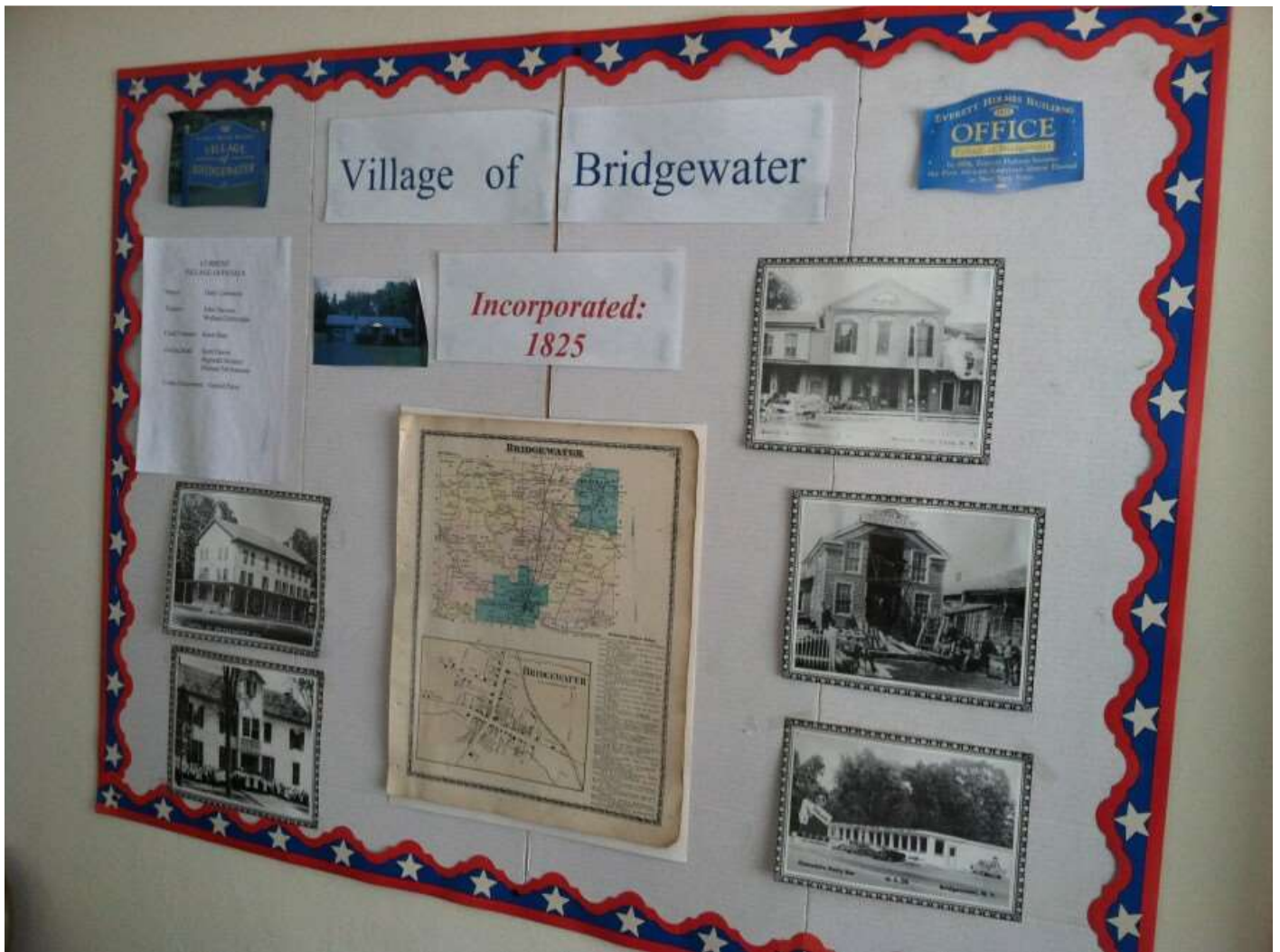
use the town's tax assessor and we do not have our own village justice. We use the town justice."

Cuomo has supported consolidation and shared services, saying streamlining on the state level has saved money and time and would also be beneficial at the municipal level.

"We do consolidated services, we have a smaller workforce, we renegotiated our labor contract," Cuomo said. "We renegotiated our pension system. So we made these kinds of reforms. We have to do it on the local side because there are 10,500 of you."

In November 2012, Comstock asked the state to help the village create a dissolution plan. Sean Maguire, a regional project manager with the New York Department of State, performed the dissolution study.

"We did, in our model, determine that there would be savings to the town and village through the dissolution of the village," Maguire said. "But there's another side of it too that is certainly weighed in this whole process and that's the amount of public participation that has occurred within the village."



Credit Gino Geruntino / WRVO / WRVO

A bulletin board hung in the village's municipal building gives visitors an opportunity to look at Bridgewater's past.

Or lack thereof, in this case. Neither Comstock nor Maguire think there's going to be much of a fight to keep the village in tact.

If the village residents do decide to dissolve during a referendum on March 18, taxpayers in the village will save about \$150 a year in property taxes on a \$75,000 home, according to the state's study. A town resident in the same value home would see a smaller discount - only about \$50 dollars. Those savings could rise even higher depending on what kind of tax credit the town gets from the state after reorganizing.

And the village of Bridgewater is not alone. Upstate villages have been fighting dwindling tax bases for years. Professor Alex Thomas, director of the Center for Small Cities and Rural Studies at Utica College, says before World War II, residents of places like Bridgewater would run errands in their village, rather than travel to larger cities

But times have drastically changed over the past 70 years.

"What happened is after World War II, in Bridgewater, and countless other communities just like it, because you had really easy access to the car, people started driving further for even basic goods and services," Thomas said.

Thomas says New York state may see more villages opting to dissolve, though there is a case for keeping some villages together.

"Because it is such a small area, incorporated villages are able to do things in terms of say zoning regulations and in terms of very basic services like providing sidewalks, that often times town governments don't want to provide," Thomas said.

Comstock says most in the town and the village are excited about the possibility of coming together, and that he sees little reason for the referendum to fail. If it does, though, he says he'll look through the list of voters and ask each one if they'd like to run for office.

Tags

- Politics and Government
- Andrew Cuomo
- Dissolution
- Oneida County
- government consolidation
- Bridgewater





WRVO 89.9
PUBLIC MEDIA



Your weekly news update

'FONELESS FEBRUARY'

Donate now
to hear less
on-air fundraising
in March.

WRVO FM
Q

Regional News

Village of Chaumont votes against dissolution



Politics and Government

Can local governments save money by consolidating?

What do you think?

0 Responses



Like



Funny



Love



Surprised



Angry



Sad

WRVO Public Media Comment Policy

Be respectful when commenting. WRVO reserves the right to delete comments with inappropriate language or themes.

Please read our Comment Policy before commenting.



0 Comments

WRVO Public Media

Disqus' Privacy Policy

Login ▾

Favorite

Tweet

Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

Stay Connected

© 2022 WRVO Public Media

About

Schedule

Employment

Contact

Public File