



DELAWARE ENGINEERING, D.P.C.

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September 4, 2024

The Honorable James Orman
Mayor
Village of Aurora
456 Main Street
Aurora, NY 13026

Re: Letter of Engagement
Professional Consulting Services – Wells College

Dear Mayor Orman:

This Letter of Engagement is in response to our recent discussion regarding the potential impacts on the Village of Aurora from the cessation of educational activities on the campus of Wells College.

Understanding

As I understand it, the Village of Aurora has a range of concerns regarding the disposition of the Wells College campus, including but not limited to the College-owned water plant which provides potable water to properties in the Village through a distribution system owned and operated by the Village, access to real property on the College campus that has traditionally been important to the community, including but not limited to the medical center, Dean's Cottage where Peachtown conducts elementary education, and the College Dock, Boathouse and lands to the north the location of the Village's Farmer's Market for many years.

In addition, the Village is a recent recipient, together with the neighboring villages of Cayuga and Union Springs, of a \$10 million grant award through New York State's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). A project has been envisioned for the Village to acquire a Wells College property known as Thomas House through donation by the College for investment of DRI funds to modify the property to become a community center with government offices and space for other municipal and civic functions.

Moreover, the ultimate disposition and future land use of the overall Wells College Campus is of keen interest to the Village's government and residents. While not directly associated with the Village, a number of alumnae and former staff of the College have deep concerns regarding the fate of artifacts of the campus and seek a location to convene and store important documents and materials on the campus.

The Village's leadership has expressed concerns regarding the quality and frequency of communications with the College's leadership. At this time, it is reported that the Village and College have yet to establish a functional means of communication regarding the College's closure.

55 South Main Street
Oneonta, NY 13820
607.432.8073

223 Main Street
Goshen, NY 10924
845.615.9232

548 Broadway
Monticello, NY 12701
854.791.7777

16 East Market Street
Red Hook, NY 12571
518.452.1290

14-20 Willett Avenue, #202
Port Chester, NY 10573
914.939.0380

My Background

As you are aware, I grew up in the Village of Aurora, several of my immediate family members are current property owners and residents, and together with my brothers, I am a property owner in the Village. As a very young person, like many locals, I spent a great deal of my time on the College Campus, at summer programs, swimming, bowling, playing tennis, attempting to learn ballet, and at the snack bar. As a teen, I accessed the library and many of the College's academic buildings and educators to support my secondary education, and I taught swimming lessons at the College Dock. While in College, I worked at the College on the paint and maintenance crew. Many of the people of my youth were and are engaged with Wells College as students, professors, employees or friends and family. Thus, I have a great appreciation for the community's ties to Wells College.

While I no longer live in the Village full time, I am a frequent visitor from my home in Clifton Park, New York where I have lived for nearly 30 years, having lived and worked in the New York Metro area for six years immediately after college graduation. Over the past 35 years, I have been a consultant in the fields of civil engineering, environmental analysis, land use planning, regulatory compliance, public policy, economic development, and municipal finance. I earned a master's degree and I am currently Managing Partner and an owner of a civil engineering firm, Delaware Engineering, D.P.C.

Scope of Engagement

For the past several months, I have been listening to a variety of perspectives of Village residents and officials regarding the closure of Wells College and the potential impacts on the Village of Aurora. It has become clear that the Village wishes to take an active role in the disposition of the College; however, professional guidance and support are needed for the Village to act.

With my background as a professional consultant and based on our recent conversation, this Letter of Engagement is my offer to act as a Professional Consultant on behalf of the Village of Aurora regarding Wells College. This Engagement would be an initiative to address many of the concerns articulated by the Village's leadership, including access to buildings and properties on the Wells Campus that are important to the community and securing the water plant. In addition, this effort would also include supporting the community in considering land uses for the Wells Campus that are consistent with the founding principles of the College and the community's vision. Importantly, these efforts would not be approached in an adversarial manner but as a cooperative exercise.

The Scope of Services proposed for Reimagine Wells College is envisioned to be flexible but to include in general:

- Coordination and communication with the Village Board and Village Attorney, Engineer and other representatives of the Village regarding concerns over the disposition of the Wells College campus.
- With an introduction from the Village as the consultant representing the Village to the College, establishing a line of communication with the leadership of Wells College envisioned to include the College President, Chief Fiscal Officer and members of the Board of Trustees.

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- Work to gain an understanding of the opportunities and constraints presented by the closure of Wells College to find the points where the Village and College can collaborate to achieve mutually beneficial arrangements regarding the water plant and facilities of historic importance to the residents of the Village including the Wells College Dock and related properties.
- Recommend engagement to both the Village and College of other professionals that may assist and support the future re-purposing of the Campus.
- Present objective, fact-based assessments of the opportunities and challenges regarding the future of the Campus to both the Village and College leadership.
- Develop one or more action plans with recommendations for various parties as appropriate to achieve the mutually agreed objectives of the Village and College
- Provide written and oral communications to the Village Board and public.

Deliverables

Products of this Engagement are envisioned to include meeting agendas, summaries of discussions, action plans, and documents for Board and public communications.

Term of Engagement

Initially, I recommend the term of this engagement to be a period of six months. However, at any time during this period, either party may notify the other party that the agreement is terminated for convenience or cause with 5 business days' notice. This Engagement may be extended for one additional six-month term upon mutual agreement of the parties.

Compensation

My 2024 billing rate is \$230/hour plus customary expenses. Billing rates are increased once annually in January of each year with notice. Invoicing is conducted monthly with detailed accounting of hours worked and description of activities conducted. Payment is due within 30 days of the date of the invoice.

For this engagement, unless and until the Village secures a source of funding to support these efforts, the work will be accomplished without compensation.

Closing

I look forward to this opportunity to support the Village of Aurora regarding the closure of Wells College. If you have questions, need additional information or you would like to arrange a time for me to present to the Village Board (ideally virtually), please contact me.

Sincerely,



Mary Beth Bianconi
Partner