



VILLAGE OF AURORA

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Re: The Viability of the Village of Aurora, Cayuga County, New York

April 3, 2025

Dear Governor Hochul,

I am providing an update to my earlier letters of 12/4/2024 and 1/21/25. This provides information on the on-going effects of the closure of Wells College in the Village of Aurora. This has now reached a critical, if not emergency stage.

As you know the Village was forced to assume operation of the municipal water plant from Wells College. Wells was one of the very few private providers to supply a municipality in NY State. At that time there was no financial information on the costs of the operation available to the Village from Wells. Thus, we had to estimate our expenditures for this unforeseen, unbudgeted liability. While the Village's role as the Operator of this critical water plant continues to be supported in theory by the Cayuga County Health Department and NY State Department of Health, the Village is bearing the unbudgeted costs.

Since operating the plant since October we now have a more accurate expectation of costs. In addition to regular operating and maintenance costs we also have expended funds for plant repairs and installation of a heating system (Wells shut off the heat in September).

As we are in the final preparation stage for the 2025-2026 budget one dire fact is becoming clear. **It doesn't appear the Village can provide funding for the water operations without tripling the water user rates.** Losing Wells as a sewer customer as well will also cause the Village to have to double sewer rates. Such astronomical rate adjustments would have a significant impact on commercial and residential homes (the majority are senior citizens on fixed incomes). In fact, there is no doubt that some longtime residents will have to consider selling their homes. That would be devastating to them as well as to this beautiful and historical Village on the shores of Cayuga Lake (largest of the Finger Lakes). The Village was formed in 1795 and our population is now under 300 residents. Wells College comprised 65% of Village water/sewer users.

Attached you will find reports from our consulting financial advisory firm, Fiscal Advisors and our consulting engineering firm, Barton and Loguidice, detailing estimated costs. Please note at the bottom of Page 4 under Summary and Conclusions the following: **"Assumption of WTP operation and maintenance obligations puts the Village in a financially unsustainable position without financial**

assistance." This assistance could be leveraged to help the Village manage its public assets in a financially sustainable manner. They have recommended a total of \$318,879 annually (for two years).

This Village has taken steps to help resolve this. We have engaged Fiscal Advisors, Inc., Barton and Loguidice engineers, village Attorney Tom Blair and our engineering consultant Ken Teter to assist in this. These are all unbudgeted expenditures but are a necessary investment in our future. We have also been awarded a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (combined with two other villages). While this is restricted to certain capital projects (not O&M costs) it will assist in the rebuilding of the Village. There are investors looking at the empty campus and others looking at building 5 - 10 homes. This all will take 2-3 years at a minimum. Thus, we are seeking immediate assistance from NY State. Without immediate financial assistance, it appears we are facing a very dismal future including potential dissolution of this Village.

We are asking for this assistance to help sustain the Village until we are able to fully thrive and move ahead. We are willing to attend web meetings, visit with elected officials and State offices. We are also prepared to meet in Albany to advance this cause. Please advise us of the next step in this process. We are truly appreciative of your time and support for this Village.

Sincerely,

Mayor James Orman



Trustee James Balloni



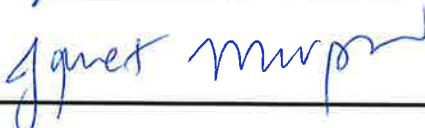
Trustee Matthew Bianconi



Trustee L. John Miller



Trustee Janet Murphy



Cc: Attorney General Ed Thompson
Congressman John Mannion
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Chuck Schumer
Senator Rachel May
Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan
NYSDOH
Cayuga County DOH
Cayuga County Legislature Chair Jonathan Anna