

Tender and Discussion of Suggested Terms of Office Revisions
April 28, 2020

Friends and Neighbors:

I have requested that the attached two proposed Local Laws be added to our April 29th Town Board's discussion under the New Business topic, "Appointed/Elected/Term Extension Proposals."

Town Board action on any proposed Local Law within this category has not yet been requested, and I do not expect the Town Board will take such action until a later date.

The two proposed Local Laws I've added would "complete the circle" and provide a more comprehensive discussion of alternatives for potentially changing the way we in Enfield do business. As I have stated in other forums, I believe now stands as an inappropriate moment to consider structural change in our Town Government of the kind that others propose.

We face a national pandemic, and I sense the people of our Town value permanence and stability, not sudden change. Accordingly, I will oppose those proposals already advanced which would transform the Offices of Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent from elective to appointive positions. Not only is now not the time; but also such a transformation would insulate our Town's two most important operational offices from electoral oversight. They would reduce the valuable "separation of powers" that now exists within Enfield government, and would place too much operational control into the hands of whatever three persons at any moment controlled the Town Board's majority. As such, a change to an appointed Town Clerk and Highway Superintendent stands, long-term, to endanger, rather than enhance, Enfield Democracy.

The two supplemental proposed Local Laws I tender—without endorsement—have been proposed in years past by both our Highway Superintendent, Barry (Buddy) Rollins; and our former Town Clerk, Alice Linton. These proposals would extend the terms of office for each of these elected positions from two (2) to four (4) years, effective, here, with terms of office beginning in January 2022.

Of Tompkins County's eight towns with elected Town Clerks and Highway Superintendents (the Town of Ithaca, alone, has made such positions appointive), as many as six (6) towns have established four-year terms for these offices. Only Enfield and Danby retain two-year elected positions for each office.

Make no mistake; I am not necessarily endorsing this change-of-office at this time. But our Supervisor has called for discussion of transitioning Town Offices during this time of emergency. I believe we must consider all viable options as we reach toward responsible change, whether now or in the future. Of the alternatives advanced for our discussions, these are the two—and the only two—that I would potentially support.

Robert Lynch
Enfield Councilperson