

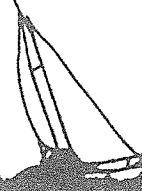


VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK

P.O. BOX 791
12845

ROBERT M. BLAIS
Mayor

DEBRA J. MCKINNEY
Clerk



TRUSTEES
John Earl
Ray Perry
John Root
Joseph Mastrodomenico, Jr.

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Joint Legislative Hearing
Environmental Conservation
Wednesday, January 23, 2019

Subject: Testimony of Robert M. Blais, Mayor-Lake George Village

I am here today seeking a partnership with the State of New York in funding our new \$22M Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The Village of Lake George is under a Consent Order from DEC to replace our antiquated Wastewater Plant constructed in 1932. Our plant serves the entire southern basin of Lake George including the Town Of Lake George's Caldwell Sewer District.

We discharge effluent onto sand beds that eventually seep into streams that find their way to Lake George.

Our small community of 995 residents play host annually to millions of tourists from around the globe. They come to enjoy our pristine lake that is under siege from failing systems including ours.

We have received \$7.5M in grant funding in 2017 from EFC and a new DEC WQIP grant. We have been approved for a \$17M no-interest loan due to our low median household income of \$41,850; well below the State threshold.

This loan, however, will create an annual debt service of \$427,000 in our village budget over thirty years. This amount added to our 2018 budget will create a 15.6% increase in property taxes, double the Town's user fees and exceed the State's Constitutional Debt Limit. In addition our tax rate will exceed the Tax Cap by nine times.

We ask for a partnership of another \$6M because of this unique circumstances. A small village that hosts as many as 18,000 guests overnight in the summer and thousands daily with only a small tax base to support infrastructure that must be sized to protect our great lake.

Our plant services two of the State's largest campgrounds and the new Million Dollar Beach, both rates will double without further State aid.

Our village is presently under a building moratorium due to the plant that is also affecting our growth.

The State owns Lake George, we drink the water, and millions visit us annually generating thousands in revenue for our local, county and state governments.

Our 995 residents, living in one square-mile deserve a partnership with the State on this vital project to protect our lake.

ELIZABETH O'C. LITTLE
SENATOR, 45TH DISTRICT

ROOM 310
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG.
ALBANY, NY 12247
(518) 455-2811

5 WARREN STREET
GLENS FALLS, NY 12801
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WEB ADDRESS:
LITTLE.NYSENATE.GOV



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January 10, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Executive Chamber
State Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Today I met with the Mayor of Lake George, Bob Blaise and the Town of Lake George Supervisor, Dennis Dickenson regarding funding for the very necessary \$22 million wastewater treatment facility, which will preserve the water quality of our "Queen of American Lakes."

They have secured over \$6 million in grants, so the project is going out to bid in February. However, without additional grant funding they will far exceed the tax cap. With the support of the Lake George Association and the Fund for Lake George, the village is requesting a \$6 million grant from the State be included in the 2019-20 Executive Budget. The village would then bond the remaining costs.

The Village of Lake George is a tourist destination. The preservation of the lake is dependent on this project. Furthermore, New York State owns two campgrounds on the lake, as well as the Million Dollar Beach. These state owned sites are tied into the wastewater treatment facility and will benefit from this upgrade.

I am including a fact sheet they provided and I am available to discuss this budget grant request in more detail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth O'C Little
Senator

Cc: Robert Mujica, Budget Director



DANIEL G. STEC
Assemblyman 114th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

VICE CHAIR
Program Committee
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
Environmental Conservation Committee

COMMITTEES
Consumer Affairs & Protection
Local Governments
Social Services
Tourism, Parks, Arts & Sports Development

January 11, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to respectfully request your consideration for funding in the 2019-20 state budget to assist in the construction of a new Wastewater Treatment plant in the Village of Lake George. The Village is looking at an estimated \$22 million to replace the current system which was built in the 1930's with a new state of the art facility.

The Village is under Consent Order from the DEC to correct nitrate emission levels seeping into the Lake George basin. The current plant services the entire southern basin including the State's Million Dollar Beach and the Hearthstone and Battleground campsites.

It is my hope that the Village of Lake George can secure 6 million dollars over the next 2 years from the state to offset this cost. With only 995 year round residents and a median household income of \$41,850, the village simply cannot absorb this cost.

We must continue our vigilance in protecting the beauty of Lake George and more importantly the water quality of the lake. In order to conserve the scenic and ecological qualities of Lake George I am respectfully requesting a partnership from the state to help secure funding in the replacement of this antiquated treatment plant that has served many residents and visitors over the years.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Daniel G. Stec
Assemblyman, 114th District
Essex, Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties



LAKE GEORGE ASSOCIATION

Protecting Our Water. Educating for the Future.

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January 11, 2019

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The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Your record on environmental protection and supporting economic growth in upstate New York is unparalleled in recent memory. The 2,000+ members of the Lake George Association thank you for all that you do for our region and for our Lake, including supporting research and projects to prevent harmful algal blooms from forming in our Class AA-Special Lake George.

We write to you today with a significant request, because time is running out: Please, in whatever way you can, provide more state financial support for the replacement of the Village of Lake George's wastewater treatment plant.

Since 1885, the Lake George Association's focus has been on the health and protection of the Lake George watershed and the communities that surround it. *Because we are concerned about the long-term health of Lake George and the continued strength of the communities that protect it, the Lake George Association is taking this rare step to plead this case directly to you.*

As you likely know, the 1930s-era wastewater treatment plant in question serves the Village of Lake George, parts of the Town of Lake George, and the state's Hearthstone Campgrounds, Million Dollar Beach and the state's Lake George Battlefield Public Campground. The plant is a critical component in protecting the southern end of Lake George from excess pollutants and nutrients which damage water quality, lower water clarity and could feed an algal bloom.

The plant is failing in that job – nitrogen is entering the groundwater and the Lake at an increased level. Members of the LGA and many others are concerned about what the increased levels will mean for the Lake's current and future water quality.

The Village is under a consent order from the state Department of Environmental Conservation to stop those excess levels, and after decades of Band-Aid fixes, the Village (and Town) have decided the only way to properly comply with the order is to **replace the 85-year-old plant. At a cost of nearly \$22 million.**

Why so expensive? Because in addition to handling the flow from the homes in the sewer districts, it also supports the comfort, safety and sanitary needs for hundreds of thousands of visitors a year.



PROTECTING OUR WATER. EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE.

With a cost of \$22 million, neither municipality will be able to complete the project and comply with the order without **doubling the citizens' tax load and creating an unworkable debt problem** for the two small communities.

The Village is prepared to go out to bid shortly on the project and will begin construction this year, even though the project has the potential to bankrupt the municipality.

The small tax base, and relatively low income level of the full-time citizen taxpayers, combine to create a potential economic disaster for them while the municipalities and citizens continue to support an outsized responsibility.

According to the Lake George Watershed Data Atlas¹, an exhaustive report that details community infrastructure which the LGA developed and paid for, the Village of Lake George is a very small community hosting that outsized responsibility – only 900 full-time residents (in 600 full-time homes) pay for that wastewater treatment plant and its antiquated processing that supports hundreds of thousands of visitors.

That visitor traffic is well documented, and one of the reasons for updates to the Lake George Visitor's Center, the upgrade for the Lake George Park Commission's offices^{2 3}, an increase in the occupancy tax collection for Warren County⁴, and the upgrade in the rest area at Exit 18 on the Northway⁵ (*thank you, by the way, for creating that traveler oasis and including a boat wash station there to prevent the spread of invasive species*).

At least 67,000 people used Million Dollar Beach this past summer, according to news reports⁶. That total number of visitors to Million Dollar Beach in the Town of Lake George is nearly twice the entire population of the watershed in the summer, the busiest time of the year!

Beyond the financial and tourism aspects are the environmental concerns. **Lake George is drinking water: About 75% of the homes** in the Lake George watershed get drinking water directly from Lake George or from private wells.

That makes the need for the upgrades all the more necessary and all the more critical – but doesn't help to pay the cost of construction or engineering.

The Village and Town are committed to building a new plant because they know that it is needed to protect the Lake's water quality. The municipalities and

¹ <https://www.lakegeorgeassociation.org/protect/lake-george-watershed-data-atlas/>

² https://poststar.com/news/local/visitors-center-new-park-offices-coming-to-lake-george-battlefield/article_fa99fd18-f310-54cc-ba5c-ed26462b721e.html

³ <https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Public-comments-sought-on-Lake-George-Park-12855604.php>

⁴ https://poststar.com/news/local/huge-occupancy-tax-surge-in-warren-county/article_8a5f5fc3-cc3a-5025-861a-610d3e060a2f.html

⁵ <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Adirondacks-Welcome-Center-opens-at-Northway-rest-13245192.php>

⁶ https://poststar.com/news/local/lake-george-officials-business-owners-say-tourism-season-was-mostly/article_cf40dd4b-d6c0-5991-b612-f645ca23cbe3.html



PROTECTING OUR WATER. EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE.

nonprofits have been working on (and advocating for) ways to pay for the project since the very beginning of the process.

Even with the major cost-savings that comes from sharing municipal services between the Village of Lake George and the Town of Lake George, the property and school taxes are significant.

And without state help to defray the final costs of the new plant, the increased cost would cause widespread hardship and would put the Village budget nine times over the mandated tax cap level.

We know that as Governor of a large state like New York that you have interests all around the state competing for your attention and, frankly, your financial support. What the Lake George Association wants to emphasize is that without your assistance, a **virtually impossible financial burden** will fall on a **small population** that is **supporting infrastructure** and water quality protections for **tens of thousands of visitors** from all over the state.

Lake George is the cleanest large lake in New York State. Indeed, the Lake's condition has come from decades of hard work by the Lake George Association, Lake George Park Commission, state DEC and many others in the watershed.

The Lake's needs are many – and the organizations around the Lake are working every day to meet those needs. In 2017 alone, the LGA invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to stop harmful stormwater, reduce salt, manage invasive species and prevent new ones from entering, monitor water quality (via the state's public data project Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program), and many other projects. Many projects were possible because of state assistance and advice.

Local communities step up in every way – but the wastewater treatment plant replacement will be a virtually impossible burden because of the costs.

The Lake George Association fully supports the requests from Lake George Village Mayor Bob Blais, Lake George Town Supervisor Dennis Dickinson, state Sen. Betty Little, Assembly Member Dan Stec and others for your help in providing additional funding for a new wastewater treatment plant that is fully protective of Lake George's exceptional water quality.

Please help us so we can continue to provide the cleanest, clearest Lake to our visitors and our residents.

Sincerely,

C. Walter Lender
LGA Executive Director

Carla Burhoe
LGA President

January 11, 2019

To: The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capital Building
Albany, NY 12224

From: Town Supervisor John Strough
742 Bay Road
Queensbury, NY 12804

Re: Needed: Additional funding for the Village of Lake George's

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Lake George's water quality is of great importance to all of us; public health, tourism, fish habitat and much more. Unfortunately, the under DEC consent, failing, current wastewater treatment plant that has been the suspected cause of recent algal blooms and beach closures.

As a Town Supervisor of a community adjacent to the Village of Lake George and has 13.5 miles of Lake George's shoreline within it township, I am asking you provide additional funding, possibly discretionary funding from your budget.

It is not fair to the folks who live in the Village of Lake George to burden just them with such a huge expense. This wastewater treatment plant benefits all of us in New York.

Please partner with us in helping to fund this very important project.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Strough

Cc: NYS Assemblyman Dan Stec
NYS State Senator Elizabeth (Betty) Little
Village of Lake George Mayor Robert Blaise
Lake George Town Supervisor Dennis Dickinson
Executive Director of the Lake George Association Walter Inder
Executive Director of the Fund for Lake George
Warren County Chairman and Town of Bolton Supervisor Ron Conover

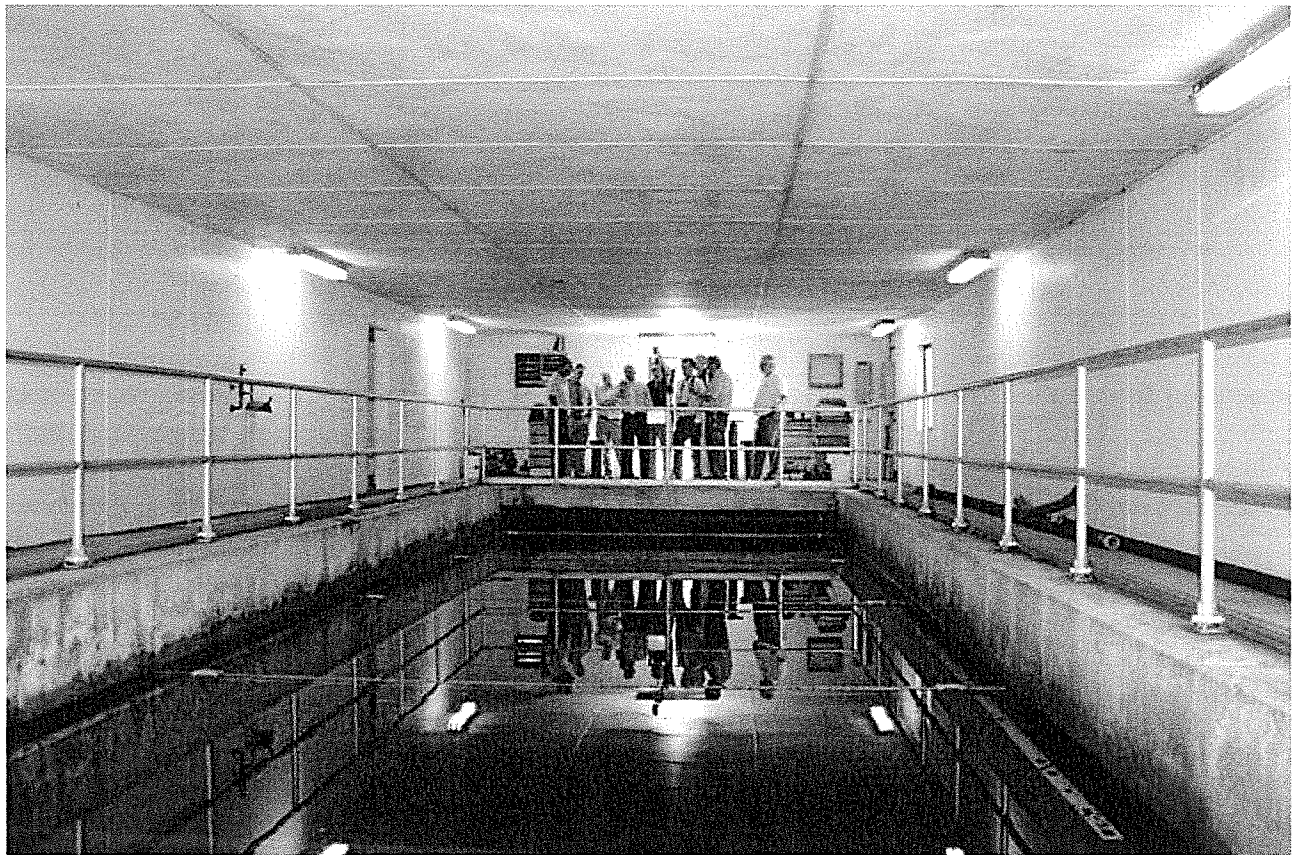
BREAKING Congress to probe report that Trump directed lawyer to lie in testimony

https://poststar.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-gov-cuomo-should-fund-lake-george-plant/article_52b4e1cf-06e4-5809-a857-f663ac646d6d.html

Editorial: Gov. Cuomo should fund Lake George plant

Jan 11, 2019

TRY 1 MONTH FOR 99¢



A group of local municipal environmental protection and economic development officials examine a secondary settling tank at the Lake George Wastewater Treatment Plant.

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Post-Star file photo

If Gov. Andrew Cuomo and his fellow Democrats want to show they care about upstate New York and the well-being of its citizens, they will listen to Lake George Mayor Robert Blais.

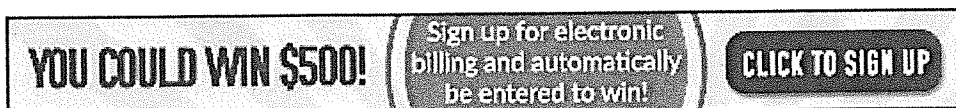
We suspect even the city-dwellers in the Legislature have heard of Lake George, its natural beauty and its economic impact on our region.

OUR VIEW

Gov. Cuomo should fund water treatment plant in Lake George.

Earlier this week, Mayor Blais, a Republican who has been serving as mayor for nearly a half-century, appealed to Gov. Cuomo to rescue the village by funding the remaining \$15 million of the \$22 million needed for a new wastewater treatment plant.

This wasn't just a request for a handout for the village and its 1,000 or so full-time residents, but a plea to secure the tourist economy of the entire eastern end of the Adirondacks.



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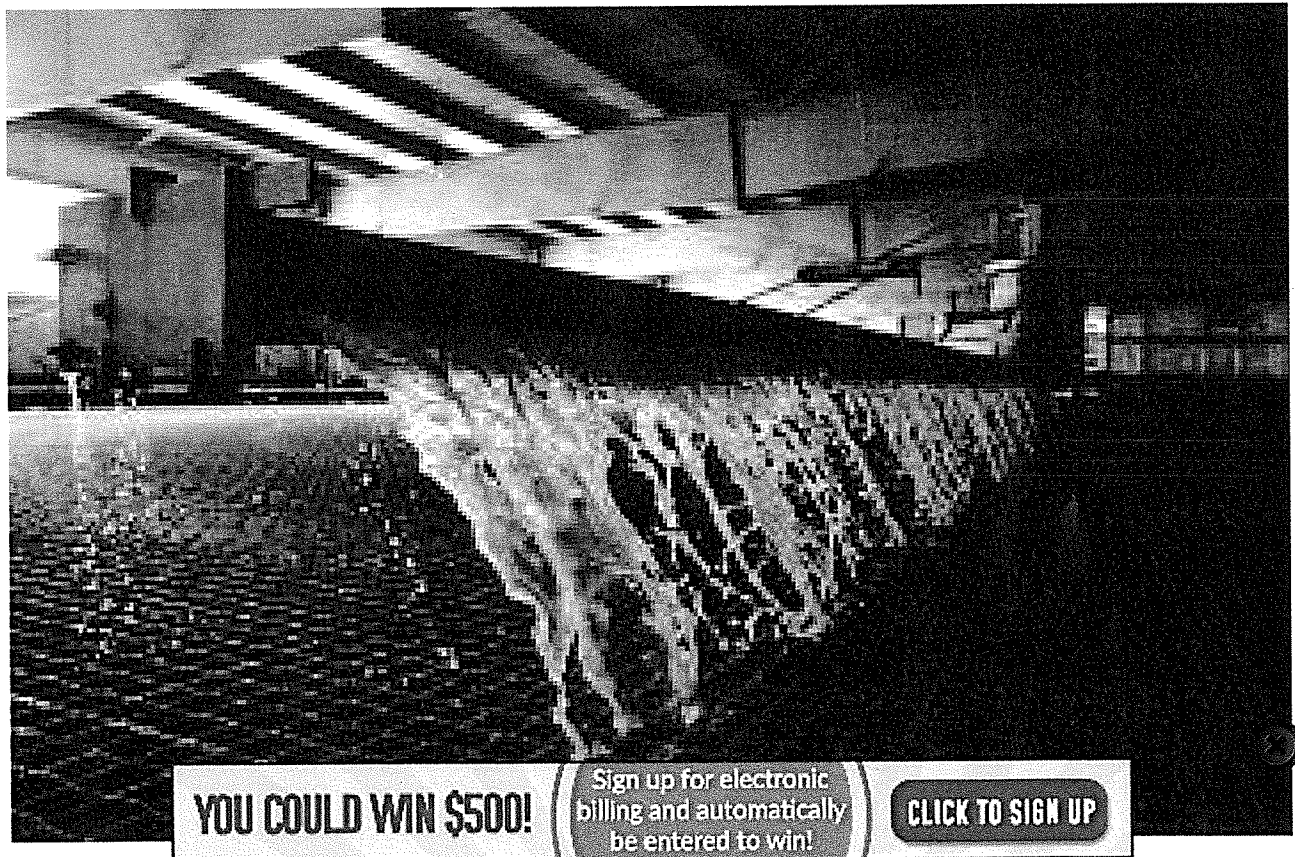
The problem is that the current wastewater treatment plant is 85 years old. It releases excessive amounts of nitrates, contributing to algal blooms in the lake. It is a problem that should have been addressed long ago.

The amazing panoramic views and the pristine waters are what bring tourists here year after year, and without the water treatment upgrade, that reputation could be at risk.

The village has been beating the bushes for funds to build a new plant for years. It has secured \$7.5 million in grants so far, but Blais says that if the village takes on the rest of the debt itself, taxes will double on homes valued at \$240,000.

That could be catastrophic for homeowners and businesses alike and could especially hinder further upgrades and investments in business and tourism.

That is a concern.



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Blais: Sewer plant upgrades could bankrupt village without more state funding

We also want to point out that the state technically owns the lake, so they do bear a significant responsibility for ensuring its quality.

Mayor Blais explains that the governor often funds important infrastructure projects in the state budget. With the deadline for the new plant to be operational by August 2021, that means the governor would have to act this year.

We believe there is a great case to be made that this impacts tourism and the upstate economy, from Albany to the Canadian border and not just one tiny village, but we also know there are many infrastructure projects upstate in need of funding.

We suggest dangling a carrot; that might give the governor some incentive.

Gov. Cuomo has been trying to entice municipalities across the state to consolidate since taking office. He has even provided funding incentives to move forward.

We believe

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If the governor agreed to fund the rest of the water treatment plant in exchange for the village government dissolving, there may be a way forward.

Mayor Blais would be the perfect leader to guide the village through this process, and he could retire as the last mayor of the village.

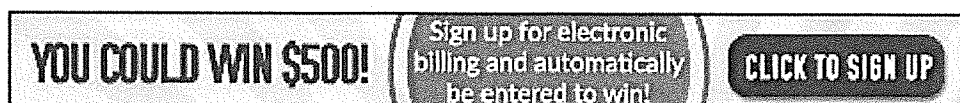
The village and town already share many services that benefit taxpayers and that would make any consolidation easier. Unfortunately, the village has far more debt than the town. That is a sticking point for town residents.

Maybe the governor could step in with additional funds to smooth out the debt problem and provide a win-win scenario for the village and the town.

The village and region get desperately-needed infrastructure funding, and the governor can point to a success story of two local governments coming together for the benefit of all.

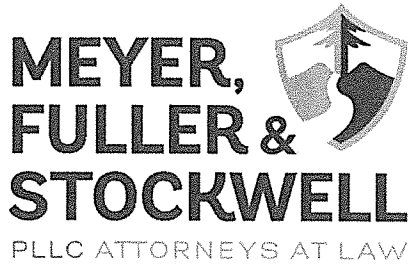
We urge Gov. Cuomo to give Mayor Blais' proposal the highest priority in the next budget.

Post-Star editorials represent the opinion of The Post-Star's editorial board, which consists of Publisher Robert Forcey, Controller/Operations Director Brian Corcoran, Editor Ken Tingley, Projects Editor Will Doolittle and citizen representatives Connie Bosse, Jackson LaSarso and Barbara Sealy.



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January 18, 2019

Joint Legislative Hearing
Environmental Conservation
Wednesday, January 23, 2019

Subject: Testimony of Matthew F. Fuller, Esq.

I am here today on behalf of the Village of Lake George. Mayor Blais set forth the practical and fiscal impacts of the Village's sewer plant on the Village, as well as the Village's full time residents, and the millions of visitors that join us each year. I want to focus on a couple of the legal issues facing the Village.

By the end of this year, pursuant to our Consent Order with the DEC, we are legally required to commence construction. By August of 2021, the Village must have completed the construction of its replacement sewer plant, while also hosting the millions of visitors that we welcome each year with open arms. That is no small task. On the same site where the current plant is located, less than a quarter mile from the Lake, we have to construct a new sewer plant, remove the old plant, and commence lawful treatment of our waste. We need your help.

The Village's work does not end with the construction of the new sewer plant. As with any new Sewer plant, we will have a new SPDES permit. That permit, the State Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit, is going to require that within 8 years of our commencement of operations, the Village's total dissolved solids meet 500mg/L. Currently we seasonally hit numbers approaching 760 mg/L. What are total dissolved solids? Well as it relates to our situation, that is salt. More bluntly, road salt. Surface water, i.e., melting snow, rain, etc. enters our collection system, ultimately ending up in our plant. Our plant ultimately discharges to beds were the effluent is absorbed into the ground where or Earth treats it before ultimately it ends up in the groundwater system.

Where do our total dissolved solids originate? Our roads. Our biggest road systems are the Route 9 road system, and I-87, which we know as the Northway. So our state and local highways add to our situation at the plant. As you can imagine, reducing the introduction of salt to our sewer plant, and ultimately Lake George, is no small task. It is a task that we have already begun, and through partnerships throughout the Lake George Basin, we will continue. We are turning the tide on salt use, but ultimately, given our legal obligations under our SPDES permit, it will turn to the Village of Lake George to continue to be at the forefront of this environmental challenge in the southern Lake George Basin. That is a continuing cost we will incur that is not included in this plant replacement.

We are not deterred. DEC has worked with the Village throughout this process, and we look forward to continuing that work. In addition, our local partnerships with the Towns of Lake

George, Queensbury, the FUND for Lake George, and the Lake George Association will help us carry the day.

It doesn't only take a Village to help our Queen of lakes, it takes the Empire State, and we hope you join us in this crusade. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Fuller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew F. Fuller, Esq.
mfuller@meyerfuller.com