



Mayor: Robert Allen  
Deputy Mayor: Robert Ryan

Trustees: Deb Alter, Robert Decker, Kevin O'Malley,  
Dan Schuttig, and Doug Sauer

August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Dear County Executive Steven McLaughlin,

We are perplexed at your recent response to the Village Board's July 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 letter that laid out local leaders' and Village residents' concerns about the July 26<sup>th</sup> announcement of the intended purchase of the former Dollar Tree as a new facility. Our goals were only to ask for a pause in the plan to purchase the property (due to the two-week time span between announcement and purchase), an opportunity to be part of the discussion, and to advocate on behalf of our community that these essential services stay within the Village for a multitude of important and viable reasons. Based on the volume and depth of comments we have received from our constituents, reaching out with concerns was the clear and responsible thing for our local Government to do, as our most fundamental charge is to represent the people and their concerns.

It was exceedingly disappointing to see you reduce our intentions and the concerns of our residents to "political jockeying." Further, you implied things we didn't say while ignoring concerns we brought up. In short, your response reads like an adversarial attack when we are only trying to be a partner in representing our shared community.

For the purpose of clarity, we will address some of the misunderstandings and ask again on behalf of our community for the opportunity for the Village of Hoosick Falls be a partner, in line with the County looking "forward to working with all individuals and entities who endeavor to provide and maintain a high level of services for our seniors."

**The Village of Hoosick Falls is very glad to see that Rensselaer County is looking to move forward with a serious financial investment into services in the Hoosick Falls area.** This is a point where we are in complete agreement. Rensselaer County should be commended in its investment in facilities and infrastructure over the past several years. With well-earned increases in revenue and additional state and federal funding made available due to the pandemic, there is wisdom in making long-term investments that serve our communities. If anything, our July 26<sup>th</sup> letter highlighted the importance of the services made available in the Murphy Building.

**We have known for some time of the County's worthy desire to find a new facility.** As stated in our letter, the Mayor has had many good conversations with Director of Operations Crist, and several of those discussions often touched upon the County's desire for a new facility. The Mayor has continually supported the idea, and has said that the Village would be a ready

partner should the discussion come to us. We never once insinuated that this search was a surprising or new development, but only expressed disappointment that we were not consulted about the possibility of a new location nor the fact that it would be moved outside of the Village until the day before it was announced publicly, a mere 15 days ahead of the County Legislature's decision to invest \$575,000 in a new facility, plus an unknown amount of money to renovate the property. We feel this criticism is fair and honest, and one echoed by dozens of our residents.

**We were unaware that the County was relying on Village Government to be the lead entity to find a new location.** We are unaware of any email or official discussion from the County with Village government officials about specific properties under consideration or review, nor any questions about or meetings proposed to discuss any possible steps forward prior to the July 25<sup>th</sup> call. We had no idea that the County has "spent considerable time reviewing available properties in the village and surrounding areas" because there have been no direct discussions about any of them. Further, "We are sorry the village was unable to identify a suitable and comparable replacement for the current senior center" is a unique position to assert on a Village Government that was not asked to take the lead on this project.

**We worked hard to foster a spirit of cooperation and worked to avoid extended criticism.** Our decision to not mention specific properties in our letter was intentional, as we felt that listing out possible properties in a public letter could have been viewed as escalation meant to embarrass, which we worked hard to avoid. Our only request (to pause proceedings and discuss the matter in further depth) speaks directly to our desire to be a partner and work with the County to consider a fuller solution, in opposition to the suggestion that the County was forced to act due to an absence of Village assistance. Had we been consulted for a list of properties, it would have included currently or previously available buildings at 1 Mechanic Street, 56 Church Street, 72 Main Street, 130 Main Street, and 140 Main Street.

**The County bears responsibility for the current condition of the Murphy Building.** There remains a disconnect between the County's opinion that "the Murphy building has continued to deteriorate" and the County's own responsibility to maintain it. After hearing several comments from local residents, members of the Village Board toured the Murphy Building yesterday. They noted, among other things, water damage from top to bottom, active mold and mildew issues, open ceilings, water in the basement, and basic upkeep, cleaning, and maintenance issues unaddressed. One question we can't understand is why the County has allowed such conditions to persist while continuing to provide services in the building. With so many simple and preventative measures ignored, it makes quotes like "Our seniors deserve support, protection and encouragement and Rensselaer County takes that mission seriously" ring hollow. After yesterday's tour, it is obvious why "attendance at the senior center in the building is also below a level we would envision as appropriate," as one of our Trustees developed a cough during his time in the building.

Despite what your letter asserts, there is only one conclusion that can be reached about the current condition of the building: Rensselaer County is allowing our seniors to "be subjected to substandard conditions". Reducing our concerns to "political jockeying" is a slap in the face to

our community, our Village leadership, our seniors, the employees who work there, and every single person who has reached out to us and to you with concerns.

**The County has not responded to some of the main concerns expressed.** In your reply (and a separate reply from County Legislators who responded directly to a resident) there has been no acknowledgement nor any tangible discussion about the building's poor condition aside that it "has continued to deteriorate" and that the "county no longer has confidence in the ability of" a building that likely will soon be vacant. Perhaps most importantly, there has not been any mention or consideration of the lack of walk-in access for the Senior Center and for Mental Health services. Additionally, in light of our recent discovery that transportation for seniors has been mostly unavailable to seniors over the past several years, we would like to see details on how busing could work.

As the Mayor said to Rich on the phone on the 25<sup>th</sup>, there is a need for more space for services here in Hoosick Falls. The Village Municipal Building itself houses the Village Court, Village Police Department, and Village Offices all under one small roof, and it remains too small for all three essential services. We make due because it is the most fiscally responsible approach, as we do not have hundreds of thousands of dollars available to purchase and renovate a new building.

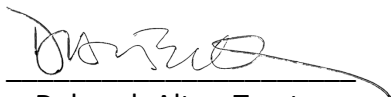
I think there is a chance for the Village, the County, and others to work together for a solution that better fits the community and its growing needs. We remain open to discussion and hopeful that you will pause the proceedings at the August 9<sup>th</sup> meeting so that we can have those discussions.




Robert Allen, Mayor  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Robert Ryan, Deputy Mayor  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Deborah Alter, Trustee  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Robert Decker, Trustee  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Kevin O'Malley, Trustee  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Dan Schuttig, Trustee  
Village of Hoosick Falls



Doug Sauer, Trustee  
Village of Hoosick Falls