



Mayor: Robert Allen  
Deputy Mayor: Robert Ryan

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

August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear County Executive Steven McLaughlin,

The Village Board is in receipt of your second response letter to the Village Board, dated August 7<sup>th</sup>. It seems you have chosen to lie about what we say, deride us as “unproductive” and “deliberately destructive,” rebrand our intentions to elevate our community’s concerns as “political jockeying,” and continue to claim the moral high ground by providing seniors with “support, protection and encouragement”.

The story you tell is untrue and leaves out the County’s own complicity and culpability for the state of the Murphy Building.

By not reading Village Government officials into the months of preparation leading up to the July 26<sup>th</sup> announcement to purchase the former Dollar Tree, you were able to proactively avoid our thoughts and concerns, blame us for not offering our thoughts, ignore calls and texts asking for a chance to offer our thoughts and concerns, and then vilify us for offering our thoughts and concerns.

Further you chastise us for having concerns over active mold, mildew, lack of basic functionality, and safety concerns present in the Murphy Building all while lecturing us on how seriously the County takes the mission of “maintain[ing] a high level of service for our seniors.”

Perhaps most concerning are the ways you imply how government should operate. We elevate community concerns and you label us as “an obstructionist.” We respond to recent reports of deteriorating conditions in the Senior Center brought to us by residents, and you call our code enforcement responsibilities “unprecedented, highly unproductive...deliberately destructive,” and “an apparent act of retaliation.” You demand an explanation why Village taxpayers, who as Town of Hoosick residents and taxpayers already make “a contribution for services to the county senior center” through the Town, aren’t paying a second Village tax, as though the County expects Village residents to be double taxed to receive County services.

Finally, as evidenced in your most recent letter, you target your animosity and accusations directly and personally at the Mayor. In your rush to paint him as a puppet-master authoritarian figurehead, you manage to ignore the unified and intentional response from the seven-member Board of Trustees, the independence and authority of the Code Enforcement Officer to carry out his obligations on behalf of residents and the Village, and the Village Board’s overall commitment to transparency, procedure, and representation.

You had multiple opportunities to engage with our municipality and its elected leaders who simply requested an intellectually honest discussion about what could be a shared vision of better services and facilities for those we serve. Instead, you chose an arrogant, escalatory, and incoherent response full of lies, victim blaming, and cognitive dissonance.

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Hoosick Falls is very content to let the record speak for itself.

- You had multiple opportunities to read the Village in on the situation, even as late as June 30<sup>th</sup>, the date of the signed letter of intent to purchase. You did not.
- You and Deputy of Operations Rich Crist ignored several calls, voicemails, and requests from the Mayor to have a conversation, most of which occurred during his own family's vacation.
  - This includes text requests on 8/2 ("really hoping to connect with you via the phone"), 8/3 ("still looking to have an imminently needed conversation today, sooner is better...I just need advance notice to make it happen") and 8/7 ("5 days later...still waiting for a call. Still very desperately want to talk. Can we please have a phone conversation"), with responses and excuses that include "...in meetings for most of the day. Would encourage you to put whatever you need to discuss in writing in either letter or text form" and "Thanks. Will do. Had another series of meetings today" and "sending you a letter."
- After the County's July 26<sup>th</sup> announcement about the intention to purchase a new building and move the Murphy Building services out of the Village, many residents approached multiple Trustees with new reports concerning conditions within the facility.
  - Three Trustees, who are themselves seniors, were allowed a walk-through of the facility on Tuesday, August 1st. They witnessed firsthand, among other things, standing water in the basement, mold in multiple locations and floors, evidence of water damage on the ceiling and from walls and windows, a fire alarm system that is only operated by a light switch, and several items that were not functional, including a radiator that didn't turn off and a kitchen washing hose that wasn't operational. One Trustee reported developing a cough.
  - Members of the Village Board brought these concerns to the Code Enforcement Officer, and it is both the obligation of the Code Enforcement Department and in the best interests of seniors and community members to follow up on the potential violations and health risks. To ignore such concerns would be a liability to the Village and its residents, which can be seen played out in the tragedy and aftermath of the March 2015 Jay Street fire, where the grand jury concluded that "numerous failures of the Schenectady City Bureau of Code Enforcement directly

contributed to the deaths and injuries”<sup>1</sup> while the District Attorney highlighted “the importance of the Bureau of Code Enforcement in keeping people safe.”<sup>2</sup>

- The Village followed standard procedures and common practices regarding the inspection and its report. Once the inspection was complete, the report was finalized, and the owner of the facility was contacted.
  - Despite the Mayor’s inability to get a phone call with County Leadership, it should be noted that the call from the Code Enforcement Officer was taken by the County Director of Operations, and within 15 minutes, a separate call was initiated by the County that included the County Executive, County Attorney, and County Director of Operations on the call together.
- Despite no further contact initiated by the County to the Code Enforcement Officer, it was pleasing to hear reports that a county official was at the Murphy Building this morning performing an inspection, much to the surprise of people who use the facilities and did not recognize him. It was also good to hear that some County Maintenance employees were also on site this morning, reviewing the inside and outside of the building addressing concerns brought up by the Code Enforcement Officer. This was all as of 10am this morning.
- There remains a serious disconnect between the suggested number of seniors who “have reacted very positively in recent conversations...regarding the new facility” and the over 200 signatures on a petition that advocates to keep the services in the Village. Your attempt to portray the move as overly positive throughout the community is disingenuous.
  - It is no surprise that the seniors who have continued to use the facility despite the various health concerns present are excited about the possibility of a new facility. That is a natural result of the conditions the County has allowed to exist.
  - It has come to our attention that, while discussing and advocating for a possible new facility with Seniors yesterday at the Murphy Building, our two County Legislators discussed the real possibility of funding for the center going away and the funds being reallocated to another municipality within the County that has advocated for Senior Center services, should this purchase not go through. This was confirmed in a phone call between the Mayor and the County Legislator on the same day. While we appreciate the County Legislator’s advocacy for the new facility and the detailed discussion about why other Village facilities wouldn’t have worked or been a cost-effective approach, this has been the only substantial phone dialogue between Village and County leaders on the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Schenectady County District Attorney’s Office (2018, April 2), ‘Press Release, page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Goodwin, Mike and Nelson, Paul (2018, April 2). ‘Schenectady’s inaction led to deadly Jay Street fire, grand jury finds’. Albany Times Union, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Alert-Grand-jury-slams-Schenectady-for-ignoring-12799395.php>

It should be no surprise to anyone that seniors, having been presented with the possibility of losing a facility in the area, were onboard with the announced plan for a new local facility.

The Village Board is disappointed to conclude that, based on recent statements and actions by County officials and the implication that further delays and discussion could jeopardize the possibility of having a local and improved Senior Center facility, **it is in the best interests of the Village and Town residents that we drop our request for a pause and a discussion about a joint venture on a more robust and shared vision for community services.** The record clearly shows that the County is not interested in a real and honest dialogue with the Village, let alone a partnership, regarding services provided to our community.

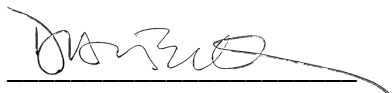
The Village Board of Trustees will continue to strive to serve and represent our community with honesty, transparency, and integrity, and despite the false pretenses of the County Executive, we stand ready and willing to be an active partner in service to our community.



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  
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