

January 9, 2019

Honorable Christopher Moss
Chemung County Executive
203 Lake St.
Elmira, NY 14901

Honorable Daniel Mandell
Mayor – City of Elmira
317 E. Church St.
Elmira, NY 14901

Mr. Michael Collins
Elmira City Manager
317 E. Church St.
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Gentleman:

While campaigning for Chemung County Legislator - (Ninth Legislative District) the number one issue voiced by my constituents was the absence of a good working relationship between the County and City. Each of my five town hall meetings as well as on the door step concern was voiced about this poor relationship as well as the City's downward economic trend.

As the County and City move forward it is imperative that we maintain a healthy working relationship with the goal of upgrading the City's junk bond investment rating. In my opinion the key to reversing the City's dire financial status is the City and County to mutually develop a long term plan. The items below are suggestions that could be part of the plan.

City/County Tax Agreement: This agreement improves cash flow for the City and guarantees collection of the tax levy over twelve months rather than fifteen months. Additionally the twelve month guarantee reduces the need for short term borrowing. In year one (2019), the County also reimburses the city for 2018 uncollected taxes. The payment from the County to the City typically occurs on or about April 15th. However, if the County pays the City in February rather than April the City can claim the 2019 revenue as 2018 revenue and either (1) enhance any 2018 surplus or (2) reduce any 2018 deficit. **(Moody's will like this)**

LECOM: The neighborhood immediately adjacent to the new medical college needs assistance. Many of the residential dwellings suffer from physical and functional obsolescence. Although there is a move afoot to address this issue over the long term it is possible for the County and City to join forces to clean up the neighborhood in the near term. Would Elmira College be a participant?

A possible scenario might be to create a developable parcel for future construction of a private student housing complex. The purchase and demolition of several parcels and subsequent assemblage of the vacant lots would create a very attractive private investment opportunity. Taxes generated from the privately owned student housing complex could be earmarked to repay the County and City for development expenses. I believe this project is located in a census tract that may provide opportunities using Community Development funds.

Depending on the plan this could be viewed favorably by **Moody's**.

Mark Twain Golf Course: The Mark Twain Golf Course is a weather dependent business. Warm and dry summers typically drive a positive net income while wet summers may produce a net loss. Over several years the income and expenses result in a break-even operation. Because the golf course is located outside the City limits it is a taxable entity. Should the county assume title to the golf course it would become exempt increasing potential revenue by \$30,000.00 (estimate). In exchange for the transfer of title, the county reduces city debt owed the county equal to the value of the course. If there are additional monies owed the county, the county may amortize the balance over 3 to 5 years. This is a win/win: The community now has a Donald Ross golf course which is owned by an entity that can maintain a quality course and the City's debt reduction will certainly increase chances for a **Moody's** bond upgrade.

I believe this would require home rule legislation.

City Road Program: Would the County consider matching the City road program funds? There are approximately 126 miles of City roads. Many of the roads are in poor condition. Could the County assist the City with its annual road program with a matching road funds program for a specified time period? The matching fund program could have a "not to exceed" upper limit.

Should the City transfer the roads to the County, how would a transfer impact funding sources?

Tax Exempt Property/Special Districts: This is a nonstarter unless the exempt property voluntarily makes a donation. New York State Real Property Tax Law sections 420-a and 420-b sets forth exemption qualifications.

RPTL 420-a Mandatory Class: Examples: Colleges, Hospitals, Churches, Government buildings

Past administrations have attempted to receive funds from the College and Hospital. A plan was presented where the college would add a public safety fee to the tuition and the hospital charge a minimal user fee (\$1) for outpatients. The public safety fee would be used to buy a Police Officer and the user fee would be used to cover the cost of public services.

Although the plan had minimal or no financial impact to both the College and Hospital it was rejected. Both entities have new administrations which may be receptive to renewed conversations.

RPTL 420-b Permissive Class: Examples: Glove House, Catholic Charities, Artic League, Meals on Wheels

It is my understanding that a municipality can pass a local law rescinding exempt status for 420-b property. Rescinding this exemption would certainly generate additional tax revenue however this would be very controversial.

Bridges: The county pays for the operation and maintenance of bridges throughout the County except the major bridges located in the City. Simply treating the City the same as other county municipalities will reduce City borrowing and corresponding debt service. I believe **Moody's** would look favorably with this transfer of maintenance cost.

Sanitation: Should the City consider privatizing sanitation?

Long Term Borrowing: Should the City implement an annual (not to exceed) borrowing policy.

Riverfront Park: The conversion of parks for an alternate use requires NYS approval. NYS approval may require that other lands equal in size be designated park lands and/or proceeds from the sale be used for capital improvements in existing parks. Both of these contingencies could be met by the City if Riverfront Park became a development site.

I am very proud of our community and a passionate supporter of our City and the Ninth Legislative District. Please contact me if I can be of assistance as we work together for a goal of creating a financially stable and vibrant County Seat.

Respectfully;

John J Burin
Legislator -Ninth District

cc: Mr. David Manchester, Chairman - Chemung County Legislature
County/City Legislators
Elmira City Council