



VILLAGE OF AURORA

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Janet Murphy, Deputy Mayor

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Name

Title
email

Greeting,

My name is Janet Murphy and I am the Deputy Mayor of Aurora, New York. I am writing to seek your support as Aurora deals with the sudden closure of Wells College. Specifically, there is a lack of communication from Wells College that feels increasingly urgent.

If the Board of Trustees of Wells has a strategic plan for their exit from the community, the Village Board feels strongly that this simply cannot and should not be executed without a member of Village governance in attendance. The exodus of Wells will have a major impact on the character of the Village and we must be involved to ensure a positive and sustainable outcome.

As I'm sure you know, together with Union Springs and Cayuga, the village of Aurora recently received a ten million dollar Downtown Revitalization Grant. Optimistically, the Village of Aurora partnered with Wells College putting forth four transformational village projects. Very soon afterward, Wells announced their closure. As we regrouped, following the advice of the state agencies involved, we decided to move forward with one particular project proposal that includes a Wells College owned property-Thomas House. The project also includes the boathouse and Glen Park lakeside lawn. It would provide multiple public uses of the land and building with bathrooms, swimming, a dock, pickleball and tennis ball courts, indoor and outdoor recreational and gathering places as well as municipal office space. It would allow for the continuation of the Aurora's Farmer's Market and the Village local swim program. However, this property is now for sale and this transformational opportunity for Village residents, tourists, and surrounding communities will be lost.

Additionally, Wells College operates the water plant that services village residents, businesses, and properties in the Town of Ledyard. Since the announcement of Wells closure on April 29, the Village has frantically worked toward an agreement with Wells to take over operation of the plant to ensure safe water for all the recipients and a seamless transition once Wells dissolution is finalized. The Village finally received a draft agreement on June 28 from Wells attorneys and, though not an ideal document from the village perspective, understood the urgency of needing something in place asap.

This represents the discordance of communication that we as the Village Board of Trustees feel necessary to address. And we need your help. Despite our many attempts to establish communication and engage in a planning process that is a consensus approach, Wells College is moving forward seemingly without a strategic plan, and certainly with no input from the Village and our residents who will ultimately bear the consequences of decisions made.

Finally, we find it necessary to adjust the wording of a resolution that we shared on June 25, 2024. We believe it is in the best interests of the Village of Aurora, its residents, property owners, and constituent-businesses, to see the Wells College campus remain as an education campus, *and only parceled off to allow for the continued operation of Peachtown Elementary School, and the Community Medical Center, both long standing businesses that have been independently operated on the outskirts of campus.*

I am asking that you do anything in your capacity to encourage Wells to work with us planning the future of the Village in a way that provides Wells a graceful exit from our community, a continuation of cherished institutions, and sustainable transformational opportunities for Aurora.

Thank you for your consideration.

Janet Murphy