

# Vernon Township Road Consolidation Study Committee Report

**February 2018**

**Chair:**

Holly Kim

**Members:**

Daniel Didech

Jonathan Altenberg

Adam Broad

Scott Linn

## Background

With the passing of a state statute sponsored by Rep. Sam Yingling, Vernon Township voters now have the ability to consolidate the position of highway commissioner.

Per the September 13, 2017 Township board meeting, the Township trustees and supervisor unanimous voted yes to the resolution below thereby creating the entry of a study committee to look into any possibility of consolidation.

**C.A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE VERNON TOWNSHP ROAD DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION STUDY COMMITTEE FOR VERNON TOWNSHIP, LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

It was moved by Trustee Broad as seconded by Trustee Altenberg to approve the resolution as presented (copy on file).

A discussion was held as to the cost of consolidation and whether it is feasible. A committee will be formed to investigate consolidation. If a referendum is presented to the electorate of the township and it is passed the township would take over the road district.

### Ordinance/referendum

As displayed, this exact wording is legally required per state statute. However, the committee has made it clear although the wording is general and broad, the only consolidation would be at the level of an elected official. Everything else in place shall remain the same.

The referendum would appear on the ballot exactly as written below.

<p>Shall the Road District of the Township of Vernon be abolished with all the rights, powers, duties, assets, property, liabilities, obligations, and responsibilities being assumed by the Township of Vernon?</p>	YES
	NO

## The effect of the referendum: Estimated cost savings

Salary	\$93844.08
Health Benefits \$31.59 dental and \$7.13 vision x 12 months	\$464.64
EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION \$643.87 x 12 months	\$7726.44
EMPLOYER REIMBURSEMENT \$361.28 x 12 months	\$4335.36
Mobile phone reimbursements \$115x12 months	\$ 1380.00
<b>Total annual savings</b>	<b>\$107,750.44</b>

## Committee hearings

No public hearing is required for the Township board to vote on the consolidation referendum, but in the interest of transparency, the board decided to hold three hearings by the consolidation committee. These hearings offered the community the ability to ask questions, voice concerns, and give feedback.

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### Open meeting 1

Township attorney Ann Williams gave an overview of the goals of consolidation. If a referendum is passed by the electorate nothing would change until the end of the term in 2021. At that point, the township would assume all responsibilities of the road district including budget and taxing.

62<sup>nd</sup> district State Representative Sam Yingling gave testimony as to the feasibility of the consolidation and his firsthand experience as Avon Township Supervisor. Rep. Yingling stated that had the option been available at the time, he would have taken steps to consolidate the Avon Township Road District.

Mr. Lasik of Krisview subdivision asked if the services to unincorporated areas would then be contracted out to private or other municipalities for the services. Supervisor Didech told Mr. Lasik the supervisor would maintain the highway department and services would not diminish.

George Yaeger of Long Grove asked if there would be a public hearing and if the referendum is binding. No public hearing is required but the township is holding three hearings, and the referendum is binding if passed by the township electorate.

Trustee Broad would like to see a cost analysis and accountability study before a referendum.

Trustee Altenberg reiterated that there is a property tax crisis and the township should look at all options to lessen burden on taxpayers.

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### Open meeting 2

Alyson Feiger, West Deerfield Township Supervisor, communicated to the committee the township's reliance on Vernon Road district to service the West Deerfield roads. She had accolades for the Vernon road district in their professionalism, communication skills, and job performance. She would highly recommend the Vernon Road district remain.

Keri-Lyn Krafthefer, Attorney, addressed the committee with her concerns regarding consolidation. It has been known to produce higher costs rather than lower costs. The Cox report was an example of the costs. She feels the budget process is a way to control the highway department rather than consolidation.

Bill Kruckenberg, Ela township Highway Commissioner, cautioned the committee to take a hard look at consolidation.

Roberta Hiatt of Krisview acres subdivision would like the committee to reconsider taking away the powers of highway commissioner abruptly. Maybe over a three year period would work.

Ed Walters has lived in the area for 42 years and feels the road district does an awesome job. He feels if something needs to be done, maybe restructure the highway department rather than consolidation.

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### Open meeting 3

Several residents of the unincorporated areas of Vernon Township addressed the committee with their concerns of continued services in their respective areas, i.e.

- What effect consolidation has on tax bills
- Why was resolution to abolish road district on regular meeting agenda when the third committee meeting has not been held or discussed with residents.
- What are the pros and cons?
- Want the committee findings of fact for perusal
- What happens if new officials get elected in?
- Is outsourcing going to be implemented?
- The residents were very appreciative of the road districts continued good service to their areas
- There was high praise for all projects: resurfacing, culvert updates, signage, street lighting, snow removal, etc.
- Whatever the outcome of the consolidation, their main concern is to maintain the excellent service they receive.

The Supervisor and the Board assured the residents

- That service would not be compromised
- That there would not be any effect on taxes until 2021
- Reducing layers of government is cost effective to the taxpayers
- No layoffs of personnel
- There will not be a vote on consolidation at this regular board meeting.

## Study committee recommendation

Upon hearing the testimonies, the recommendations, and addressing questions and concerns of the residents, a vote was taken by the committee. It was clear that there will need to be a campaign for disseminating information to the township residents that there will be no reduction in service. There will also be no outsourcing to private contractors and neighboring government entities. It is solely in the consolidation of an elected position.

A vote was taken by the committee. Vote in favor of recommending the referendum to the township board was unanimous, and will move forward.

### Recommendation:

The Highway Consolidation Study Committee recommends the Township board approve the referendum thereby placing the measure on the ballot for the residents to decide on the consolidation of the position of highway commissioner.