

- **What if New Hartford became a city?**
- **Welcome to the city of New Hartford.**

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- **By BRYON ACKERMAN**

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NEW HARTFORD

Welcome to the city of New Hartford.

How does that sound? Most town of New Hartford officials say you're unlikely to hear it – especially not anytime soon.

But discussion of the topic did come up at a recent Town Board meeting, so it raises the question: What if the town did decide to incorporate as a city?

First off, it could result in the new city absorbing the town and the villages of New Hartford and New York Mills, town Supervisor Patrick Tyksinski said.

The new city would become responsible for plowing and maintaining all of the county roads there, and a new full-time city fire department might have to be established, Tyksinski said.

On the other hand, New Hartford potentially could collect sales tax on its own instead of relying on allocations from Oneida County.

Tyksinski believes that would lead to somewhere in the range of an extra \$10 million in sales tax revenue per year for the town (or city) – something that would allow for a drastic reduction in property taxes, he said.

"It's not an easy thing to do," Tyksinski said of incorporating as a city. "You're looking at some big numbers here. ... I don't think it's going to come about."

So for now, the idea remains hypothetical, and actually becoming a city would require approval by the state Legislature.

But if officials ever seriously mull such a decision, they should fully review how sales tax revenue, road maintenance and other issues would affect taxpayers, said New Hartford property owner Roberta Schiavi, 62, who lives in Utica.

"The only thing I would be worried about would be the cost of the whole situation," she said. "I think they should weigh the pros and the cons and do what's best for the people of New Hartford."

The town of New Hartford was established in 1788. As of the 2010 Census, it had a population of 22,166. By comparison, Utica has a population of 62,235, and Sherrill, the smallest city in the state, has a population of 3,071.

#### Contingency plan

The issue of incorporating as a city was raised during the March 23 Town Board meeting, when Councilman Donald Backman expressed concern with comments made by Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente during his State of the County address on March 10.

Picente's said in the speech that if the state institutes a property tax cap, he would have to call for a discussion of the county's sales tax distribution formula.

Backman said he wanted to talk about whether the town should have a contingency plan in place in case the county wanted to keep all of the sales tax revenue allocated to New Hartford.

Tyksinski immediately responded during the meeting that his contingency plan would be to incorporate as a city. If New Hartford's sales tax allocation from the county would really be decreased from \$5 million to nothing, then New Hartford almost would be forced to collect its own sales tax, Tyksinski said.