



# TOWN OF OSSINING

*The Volunteer Spirited Town*

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**Catherine Borgia**  
*Supervisor*

**Geoffrey J. Harter**  
*Council Member*

**Michael Tawil**  
*Council Member*

**Peter J. Tripodi, IV**  
*Council Member*

**Northern Wilcher**  
*Council Member*

To: Town Board Members

From: Catherine Borgia

CC: Town Clerk, Wayne Spector, Connie Cerny, General

RE: Response regarding Councilmember Tripodi's "Memo Number 1" regarding Town Engineer, Tree Removal Policy, Procurement Policy

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This memo is in response to Councilmember Tripodi's memo which was read into the record at the April 27, 2010 legislative session of the Ossining Town Council.

Mr. Tripodi's memo states that it is his understanding that the Town Engineer is a part-time employee of the Town of Ossining. This is factually incorrect. The Town engineer is a contracted consultant, who is paid a retainer of \$5000/month, without benefits to manage the general engineering needs of the municipality. Contracting out these services is less expensive than hiring an employee. Even a first-year engineer would cost more in salary, benefits and retirement system contribution than the \$60,000 paid to Mr. Vanoli for this work. The current estimate for such costs is 44% of salary in 2009.

In addition to the routine engineering service he provides, we have also contracted with Mr. Vanoli to manage our two large infrastructure improvements -- the replacement of two sewer lift stations (Stormytown and Stonegate) with gravity sewers -- due to his expertise and long experience. Mr. Vanoli is paid additional amount for this project. Once this project is complete, he will not longer be paid to the additional amount. Municipalities often hire additional specialized engineering services; we are fortunate to be able to use Mr. Vanoli in this capacity.

Mr. Tripodi points out that Mr. Vanoli's services are also engaged when applicants come before the planning board, and he is asked to review those plans. A pass-through of these services is common practice in municipalities and helps our applicants move more expeditiously through the planning stages of their projects, leading to lower costs and shortened planning time.

The comparison to the cost of Lewisboro's engineering expenditures is not a fair comparison, as it does not take into account the additional engineering services required when a municipality completes large infrastructure projects. A more reasonable comparison would be Lewisboro's \$115,000.00 to Ossining's \$60,000.00 for general engineering services.

Mr. Tripodi also questioned whether or not Mr. Vanoli is actually performing the work for which he is billing, as he “. . . also has a full time job,” and suggests we “keep a more solid grasp on the financial cost of the engineer consultant.” The controls on expenditures Mr. Tripodi suggests are already in place. Because Mr. Vanoli works in close contact with the Supervisor’s office, the Highway Superintendent, and Planning department, we are already aware of the time and services provided for each type of Mr. Vanoli’s work. Mr. Tripodi and any member of the public is welcome to come to Town Hall to view any vouchered expense.

Mr. Tripodi also recommends that our procurement policy require two (2) phone quotes for purchases over \$800, a reduction in the amount of our current policy, which is \$999. Our procurement policy is based on recommendations of the NYS Comptrollers office. The Comptroller recently gave authorization to local municipalities to raise the minimum purchase amount allowed without price quotes up to \$1200; however the Town Board agreed that we would not raise our limit. I do not believe any change in procurement policy is required at this time. We are currently working on the annual bid process, which will address the concerns about routine purchases such as tree services, to take effect in January 2011. Since taking office in 2009, I have instituted a policy of increased vigilance regarding compliance of the existing procurement policy; the fact that last year’s expenses across all funds came in under budget illustrates that this method is effective.

I am forwarding this memo to the Town Clerk’s office so that it may appear as a response to the memo submitted by Councilmember Tripodi as an addendum to the minutes in which his memo appears.