

## OUR VIEW

### A bid for transparency

Following months of appeals to open meetings of the Capital Planning/Grants group to the public, it appears resistance to doing so has given way to political reality. Councilman Gordon Gooding has support from both of his Democratic colleagues, Councilmen Albert Dickson and Benjamin Dyett.

With three votes from the Democrats, Supervisor Amber Brach-Williams said Monday the Town Board is “researching” the group to end its ad hoc status, converting it to an official Town committee.

It’s likely few ever knew it was not an official Town committee since it has functioned much as those bodies typically do, including having two Town Board members serving as liaisons to what has long been referred to as the Capital Planning/Grants Committee.

Ms. Brach-Williams has from time to time reported on its activities at work sessions. Only the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Ethics, Board of Assessment Review and Licensing Board can make final rulings, only a few of which can be appealed to the Town Board and others, reversible only by appeals to courts that can uphold or reverse such decisions.

When former councilman Jim Colligan chaired the group, meetings were open and provided a glimpse into thinking about the Town Board’s priorities for issues and projects. Then, as now, the group had no decision-making power, but simply functioned in an advisory capacity. One change we recall from several years ago was to reverse the function from pursuing grants that appeared on the horizon, to instead deciding on Town priorities needing outside funding.

We understand not everything the government does is appropriate to be publicly discussed in early stages. The New York State Open Meetings Law provides exceptions for those issues that should rightfully be discussed in executive sessions. But we believe every level of government should be as transparent as possible and see no reason why this group should not be an official Town committee with open meetings.

In its current status, it functions as a shadow government, discussing issues that should be a matter of public discourse.

There should be no delay in making the necessary changes for this group to function with the transparency required of other boards and committees.