New police district in Monticello?

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By Patricio Robayo - staff writer

THOMPSON — Due to financial constraints in the Village of Monticello, Village Mayor Gary Sommers wrote a letter in December, 2019 to the Town of Thompson about creating a new police district.

During March 3, 2020, Thompson Town Board meeting, Mayor Sommers, along with Village Trustees Carmen Rue and George Nikolados, attended the meeting to see what that answer was.

According to Mayor Sommers, the cost of the Police Department in the village makes up more than half of the village's yearly budget.

"This is something we had to do [the letter], so we can do our due diligence, and your answer is whatever your answer will be, we just had to ask the question," Sommers told the Thompson Town Board.

Furthermore, in the letter, Sommers said the Police Department expense "continues to push our constituents beyond their limits and is causing a major deficit in the village finances."

To combat this, Sommers suggested that a new district be created to cover the business district, Thompson Square Mall and the surrounding area, where Sommers said sometimes the Sheriff's Office and New York State Police are not available.

"We are not saying they do not do a good job; this is to help when they cannot be there," said Sommers.

According to Sommers, a police district has not been created in New York State in over 60 years. Sommers said that last year, the Resorts World Catskill Casino saw 160 calls and also saw many calls to the business district.

Thompson Town Supervisor Bill Rieber Jr, said, "We don't have a really major issue with police coverage, and we have reassurance recently from the Sheriff's Office and New York State Police that they could adequately cover us."

By creating this district, Sommers said the expense of the Village Police Department could be shared with the town.

"As a taxpayer, I don't want this," said Rue. "I think it was premature to bring it up to you [Thompson Town Board], we have not even discussed it as a board," added Rue.

According to Rue, out of the $5.4 million Village of Monticello budget, the expense for the police accounts for almost half at $2.4 million.

"We need to talk to law enforcement first, the board has not discussed it yet, we only discussed [the letter]," added Rue.

"As a taxpayer, I have concerns; if you create a district, you will need more officers. Do I want that as a taxpayer? Absolutely not, I don't want to pay more taxes to the village and the town," said Rue.

After a quick discussion with the board, Rieber said, "We are probably not really considering it at