

Written by Pete Bardunias, President of Southern Saratoga County Chamber – used by permission

Chris Churchill – You are a terrific columnist and a great asset to the Times Union and the Capital Region and I always read your columns with great interest. So I feel really badly in saying that [we disagree on this one](#).

Here's some trivia for you – did you know that [Jack Byrne Ford](#) is in Halfmoon? So is [Toyota of Clifton Park](#) and [Porsche of Clifton Park](#). Heck, by looking at the address you wouldn't even know the Halfmoon Town Hall is in Halfmoon –[the legal address is Clifton Park!](#) In the opinion of this writer, Halfmoon is well within its rights to seek a new ZIP code, and it's not rewriting or breaking rules in any way to give it a try. The town reached out, a US Senator came along to see if he could help, and the process is in motion. It's anybody's guess as to what will come of the request going forward.

It's not Halfmoon's fault that the [US Postal Service](#) has had a rather capricious way of doling out ZIP codes over the course of its history. For example, the hamlet of Rexford (population 2,929) has ZIP code 12148, nearby Alplaus (population 431) has ZIP 12008, while the main chunk of Halfmoon and Clifton Park (population 38,866) share one ZIP code. My wife works for a company that has its own ZIP code – General Electric in Schenectady (approximate population 5,000), ZIP code 12345 (which is incredibly cool, actually, and appropriate for what that company means to the history of the Capital Region).

The neighboring town of Colonie doesn't have its own zip code either. That is true, but still doesn't mean it's wrong for Halfmoon to try and get one. In fact, if such an effort leads to a new way of setting up such codes for municipalities then perhaps it will be helpful for Colonie to get its own ZIP code too. There's nothing wrong with exchanging best practices among communities.

To be fair, changing a ZIP code isn't a simple thing to do. It may affect postal routes, and certainly will cost business owners and residents alike some money in new stationery and a lot of calls to creditors and others who have their addresses on file. It will be as if the entire town moved. So I join with those that advise caution on such a thing and hope that any evaluation of the proposed move would think this through carefully.

With that in mind, what would a ZIP code change provide for Halfmoon that's worth the effort? Here are some thoughts:

(1) Safety – Fire Chief Art Hunsinger of Clifton Park/Halfmoon Fire Department shared his thoughts at the press conference last week, and emphatically stated that it is only a matter of time before someone's life is put seriously at risk because of confusion over the current arrangement. Street names overlap between the two towns, and that has indeed caused emergency personnel to go to the wrong house. Could the Towns simply change the affected street names? Sure, but that incurs a cost too. So the question remains – which change is most cost-effective?

(2) Data collection – in preparing for this blog I went on a site called [zipcode.org](#). Try to find Halfmoon. You can't. Everything is jumbled into [Clifton Park](#). This presents a problem in trying to differentiate the facets of each town for the purposes of identifying new companies to attract to the area. These twin towns, which are the largest and fastest growing in Saratoga County, have some similarities but are quite different in so many ways, and being able to properly collect data on the business communities of both would be extremely helpful to the effort to bring business here.

(3) Community pride – some say this concept has no business in a ZIP code discussion. I beg to differ. With all the effort business leaders, educators and government officials are putting into trying to retain young people who are still heading out of the Capital Region in droves in search of 4 year degrees and careers in faraway places, anything that might help foster a stronger community in one of our most significant towns is well worth it. At a recent student exhibition in a neighboring town I asked young

people to tell me in one word or phrase what came to mind when I mentioned the name of their hometown (it wasn't Halfmoon but this is illustrative) – too often the response was something like, “I’ve gotta get out of here.” Its time to change that!

(4) Connection with other initiatives – its not like Supervisor Tollisen was elected and then said, “I’d like to fix some problems with Halfmoon. Oh I know, I’ll change the ZIP code!” The Supervisor has commissioned several efforts to make a big difference, witness the new business-friendly sign ordinance adopted recently and the work the Halfmoon Business and Economic Development Committee is doing to review commercial versus residential zoning and attract new businesses to the area that compliment the fabric and character of the community. If the ZIP code changes, then its part of a bigger plan for prosperity of Halfmoon residents.

(5) Mail Delivery – Despite their best efforts, the Postal Service still makes its share of mistakes. For example, mail meant to come to my house consistently ends up at my neighbor’s and vice versa because our house numbers are only different by an “A”. I’m not trying to pick on the Postal Service here, just pointing out that they, like me, are fallible. So who’s to say that a change to the ZIP code might not actually facilitate better service? Has anyone checked into this?

In the past, other New York State towns have [sought novel approaches to their identity crises](#), some of which have worked better than others. [Senator Schumer](#) came to town last week and said he wants the USPS to look into the idea of changing the Halfmoon ZIP code. If they examine the situation and decide that the best course of action is to keep Halfmoon in the 12065 ZIP code, then so be it. But if they should decide to do something different, then maybe we will have a chance to capitalize on it and integrate into the effort to make Halfmoon the best possible place it can be for its citizens and business owners.

And that seems pretty serious!