

Central NY News

Altmar residents narrowly approve dissolving their village government

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By Debra J. Groom. The Post-Standard



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Dan Ackerman steps out of the voting booth after casting his ballot on whether the village of Altmar should be dissolved. Waiting to cast her vote at left is Marie Cluley.

Altmar, NY -- Altmar residents on Wednesday narrowly approved a plan to abolish their village government. The vote was 80 to 74.

Nearly 65 percent of the village's 239 registered voters showed up to vote.

The next step is for the village board will be to have a study done to find out exactly what will happen when the village no longer exists.

The study will look at whether there will be tax savings for village taxpayers, whether town taxes will go up, what will happen to village-owned property like the fire department and what will happen to village services like street lights and cemetery and sidewalk maintenance.

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Voting was from noon to 9 p.m. Wednesday in the village-town office building on Bridge Street.

"The people have spoken," said village resident Bryan Myers, who brought the petition to the village board asking for a vote to dissolve the village.

"I'm happy," said Debbie Smith, who also wanted the village dissolved.

A small contingent of people turned out at 9 p.m. to watch the votes be counted at the village-town municipal building on Bridge Street. Myers, Smith and another woman sat together at a table. Four other people stood by the door to the village meeting room.

The two election inspectors took about 25 minutes to count the 154 paper ballots and all the stubs ripped from the ballots.

As village Clerk Margaret Bailey announced the results, resident B.J. Allen yelled out her disgust that now taxpayers money will have to be spent to do a study on how to dissolve the village. Estimates of the study cost are from \$20,000 to \$30,000.

"Real good idea," she yelled.

If the study shows there won't be substantial savings for residents, then village residents have 45 days from when the study comes out to file another petition to have another vote to rescind the dissolution vote.

Mayor Corey Holcomb and the two village board members, Mark Bailey and Donald Spearance, were no-shows when the votes were being counted. Later by phone, Holcomb said he'll "continue to move forward and do what's right for the people."

Holcomb said he was hurt by the vote, but "you have to move on. The people voted for what they believed in."

Altmar is the eighth village in the state to vote to dissolve since the law changed in March making it easier for village residents to request a vote to abolish their village governments. But Altmar becomes the first of those to vote to dissolve.

Those who wanted the village dissolved say they receive few services for the hundreds they pay in taxes. Those who wanted to maintain the village say the village would not be as livable without a village government and the services it provided.

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