

The Times Leader

Village of Smithfield votes to surrender corporate powers

STEUBENVILLE — Most voters approved levy proposals at the polls Tuesday, but some outcomes came as a surprise, including the vote to surrender the Smithfield corporate powers.

Smithfield voters decided to dissolve the village into the township by a vote of 99-84, according to unofficial results from the Jefferson County Board of Elections. The issue also was on the ballot in 2016, when nearly 58 percent of the voters cast ballots in favor of keeping the village status.

Village resident James Lerby put the issue on the ballot this year after village council refused. Lerby said Smithfield has more resources and funding through the township.

“I believe the experience the township trustees have to offer will be in the best interests of the people,” he said.

Lerby said the village has a long history of misappropriation of funds, debt and many years of fiscal emergency. He believed voters had the imposed income tax on their mind when they voted on Tuesday. Voters had defeated the 1 percent income tax issue, but it was imposed by a vote of council. He said voters in the last election on dissolving the village voted down a levy request but kept the village status.

“You can’t have it both ways,” he said. *“You have to have the finances to run the village.”*

Charles Fluharty is a member of Friends of Smithfield Community Development Corp., which was working to keep the village status. He said there were a lot of dynamics in the election, adding that elections have consequences. He said Smithfield has existed for more than 200 years.

“The village needs to reflect and absorb what this means,” he said. “Folks are not fully aware of what this means. Local governance is gone.”

Fluharty said the village needs to continue community well being, something he said the Friends of Smithfield Community Development Corp. will try to foster by collaborating community action for the village.

Smithfield had three levy renewals on the ballot — 3 mills for current operating expenses, defeated by a vote of 93-87; 0.5 mill for maintaining and operating cemeteries, approved by a vote of 112-72; and 5 mills for police protection, defeated by a vote of 89-88.

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