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## Herrings dissolution moves ahead

By ELAINE M. AVALONE [eavallone@lowville.com](mailto:eavallone@lowville.com)

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**HERRINGS** — With no petition calling for a public vote presented to the village clerk by the Sept. 23 deadline, the town of Wilna and village will move ahead with implementation of the dissolution plan.

According to village mayor Christal L. Loeffler, who facilitated the circulation of the petition, it came up 0.5 percent short of the required number of signatures. They gathered 15 signatures but one more was needed to make the 25 percent of the village's 61 registered voters.

A year ago, the Village Board was presented with a petition calling for the dissolution of the village. Residents approved the proposal, 19-9, in the November 2015 general election, which triggered the dissolution plan. A committee consisting of representatives of the village and town with assistance from the Tug Hill Commission and state Department of State studied the situation and formulated a plan as to what could happen if the village were to dissolve and the town take over services for the former village. The Village Board approved the final plan in August. However in a last-ditch effort not to have dissolution take place some residents circulated a petition to bring the question to a public vote, estimating the dissolution could be more costly to taxpayers and that villagers would lose control of their local government.



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Moving forward the town does not have to follow the dissolution plan.

During a conference call Tuesday, several points arose concerning the transition.

Present for the call with the village mayor were town of Wilna attorney Mark Gebo, Village Attorney James Burrows and Robert Roeckle and Kevin Schwenzfeier from the state Department of State. Town Supervisor Paul Smith, along with Town Council members Susan Storms and Patrick Britton, Town Clerk Michel Camidge and supervisor's clerk James Yuhas were also on the call. Representing the Tug Hill Commission were Executive Director Katie Malinowski, Carla Malmgren, Matt Johnson and Kathleen Amyot.

The main points of the conversation were the timeline for the transition of the village assets to the town, formation of districts for sewer, water and lighting and the running of the village until the proposed March 31 transition date.

Mr. Burrows said he would continue to work with the village and if possible would have "a shorter date" as "there's no reason not to."

Mr. Gebo will begin to work on the creation of the special districts and to adjust town laws to include the village. To that end public hearings will be set. As reflected in the dissolution plan, the sewer rates are subject to change as they were offset by the village's general fund. In addition since the town does not provide sewer it was discussed the new rates may include a reserve fund for future renovations and for repairs.

At this time David Arnold operates the sewer plant and during the meetings for formation of the dissolution plan there was talk of keeping him on in that capacity, although no formal arrangement can be made until the transition.

Recently, Bernier, Carr and Associates of Watertown conducted a study which indicated repairs are needed to the plant's filtration system, which is approaching the end of its life expectancy.

Emergency services were also discussed during the phone conference. In the past, the village has contracted with the village of Deferiet for fire protection. Mr. Smith said it will have to be brought up at budget time, but he previously told the Deferiet Fire Department the town would probably continue with its emergency services. The only other option would be to extend the town's contract with the Carthage-Wilna Fire District to include the former village. At this time the Carthage-Wilna Fire District ends at the Herrings village limits on Route 3.

Ms. Loeffler asked about the upkeep of the village's park and the plowing of the roads. The consensus was these would remain the village's responsibilities until the final dissolution date.

The mayor also asked about archived historical documents and memorabilia, which include trophies and a chief's helmet from the former village fire department. She asked if such items could be auctioned off.

Mr. Burrows pointed out these and all village assets were to be turned over to the town and that it would be up to the town what would happen with them.

Mr. Gebo suggested a list of such items be compiled.

He also noted some of the fire department items could be displayed at the Jefferson County Historical Society museum in Watertown or at the town offices.

Mr. Smith said under municipal law, the village laws are in effect for two years and questioned which laws were on the books.

According to Mrs. Amyot, their research found only a few local laws.

Zoning enforcement had been deferred to county laws. It was the consensus that town laws would need to be adopted to have zoning fall under the town's requirements.

With no village officials, the local law concerning residency requirements for village clerk, treasurer and registrar is a moot point.

The village's laws concerning dog control, taxation, sewer and water will be incorporated into town law.

Following the meeting, Mr. Smith said the phone conference seemed to "address a lot of the Herrings mayor's concerns."

"We tried to put things in perspective," he said. "We need to place things in place — I don't have a crystal ball. I don't know what will happen. However it will still be Herrings. I am a firm believer in individual identity."

Mr. Smith pointed out that even though the hamlet of Natural Bridge is no longer a village it is still Natural Bridge.

With much work to be done during the next six months, a meeting for town and village representatives along with interested parties was set for 4 p.m. Oct. 18 in the town offices, 414 State St., Carthage.

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Elaine Avallone