

LOCAL

Residents in the Village of Spencer crush dissolution proposal

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The Tioga County Village of Spencer will remain a village.

Residents who turned out for Tuesday's village election overwhelmingly rejected a referendum to dissolve village government and turn governance over to the Town of Spencer.

The final vote was 198 no votes to only 21 who voted yes on the proposal.

The referendum was placed on the ballot after local businessman Cris Pasto, who lives in the Town of Spencer but owns several rental properties in the village, circulated a petition and got enough signatures to put the idea up for a public vote.

Pasto got the inspiration from the previous dissolution of the nearby Village of Van Etten in Chemung County, and also said it didn't make sense to have two governmental bodies in such a small community.

After a consultant study, months of meetings and an original vote that was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of the village decided otherwise.

A study conducted by Albany-based consultant The Laberge Group determined if the village was dissolved, residents within the village probably wouldn't see any savings on their property tax bills unless 100% of state incentive money was applied to tax reduction.

There were also questions about the fate of the village-owned volunteer fire department.

Spencer also has its own police force, which would have been disbanded under dissolution, leaving law enforcement duties up to New York State Police and the Tioga County Sheriff's Office.

Some residents were also concerned about the future of Nichols Park and its lake, a centerpiece of downtown Spencer.

More and more villages in New York state have looked at dissolution since the state changed the law in 2008 to make the process easier and offered a grant program to help make those changes, according to the New York State Conference of Mayors.

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