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Franklin County town dissolves charter, melts into county

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CENTERVILLE, N.C. — The Franklin County town of Centerville will soon be no more.

The 52-year-old town, about a dozen miles northeast of Louisburg on N.C. Highway 561, has fewer than 100 residents, and the Town Council voted unanimously last month to dissolve the town charter.

Sen. Chad Barefoot, R-Franklin, filed a bill in the General Assembly on Wednesday to provide the needed legislative approval to formally erase Centerville as a municipality.

"It's one of the smallest incorporated towns in North Carolina," Mayor Margaret Nelms said.

The town has a Dollar General store, but not much has changed there over the years.



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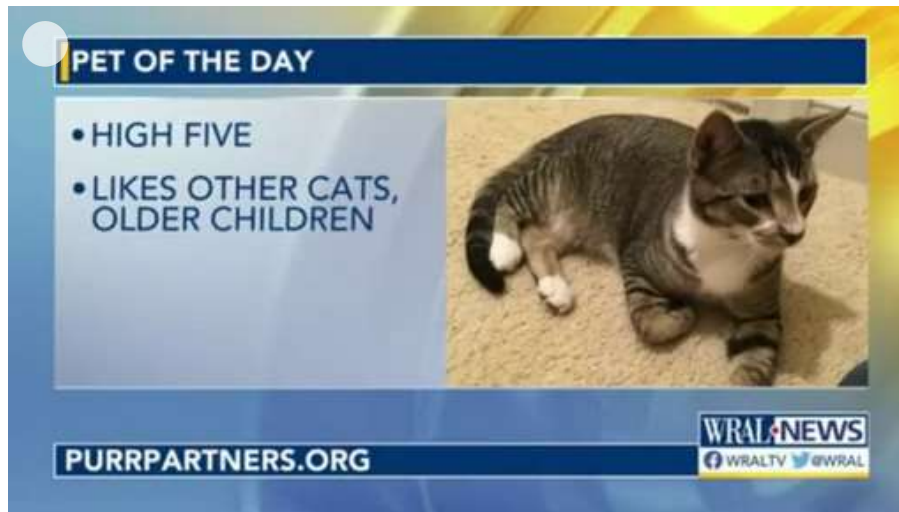
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Nelms said Centerville provides only street lights to its 89 residents. It has no police force, and the local fire department isn't funded by the town.

"We don't have the money to continue as a town," she said.

In addition to the \$200 monthly bill for the lights, the town pays \$1,500 a year for a required annual audit, \$300 a year for bonding insurance and \$1,080 every other year for local elections.

"We had 12 people (total) to vote in the last two elections. Four of them was us," Nelms said of herself and her husband, Henry Nelms, who also is one of the three Town Council members.

The Town Council presented the option of imposing a property tax to residents last fall, and the overwhelming majority said they did not want the tax, since it would not lead to additional services being provided for residents, and would rather repeal the charter and become unincorporated.

"Why you wantin' to be a town?" Henry Nelms said people asked.

Clay Arnold, who owns Arnold's Convenient Mart, said he'll be sorry when the streetlights go dark.

"The streetlights are nice. If it's not incorporated, I understand they'd do away with them," Arnold said.

Barefoot's bill is expected to pay off its bills and liquidate department.



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Margaret Nelms said Centerville will remain in spirit, even if the town no longer exists under state law.

"It will not go away. We're going to be Centerville – the same people," she said.



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CREDITS

Reporter

Bryan Mims

Photographer

Richard Adkins

Web Editor

Matthew Burns

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