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FEATURED

## Wilson village dissolution vote fails

By Kaley Lynch [kaley.lynch@lockportjournal.com](mailto:kaley.lynch@lockportjournal.com)

Aug 27, 2014

A resident walks in to Wilson Town Hall.



WILSON — The Village of Wilson survived Tuesday by 13 votes.

The majority of voters chose to pass on dissolving the municipality by a margin of 222 to 209.

Just slightly more than half of the village's 842 registered voters as of March 2014 turned up to cast their ballots, a total of 434.

Now, under state law, neither a group of residents nor the village board can now seek dissolution for four years.

"I think it went the way the community wanted it to go," Mayor Bernie Leiker said after the conclusion of Tuesday's vote. "I told the community that I would support whatever happens, because it's the democratic process."

Had the vote been in favor of dissolution, the village board, as well as representatives from the Wilson Town Board and residents of both municipalities would have had to work to put together a plan to follow through with dissolution. A professional study done by a third-party company also would have had to be completed to show dissolution's impact on the village's assets, taxes, and personnel.

The village would have been eligible for \$50,000 in New York state grant money to cover the study.

"In some ways I'm a little disappointed because I would really have liked to see the study and see what was available to the whole community in terms of savings," Leiker said.

The dissolution vote was brought about by a group of residents concerned about the village's 2014-15 budget raising taxes from \$7.72 to \$8.11 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Arthur Lawson, one of the 180 residents who initiated the petition, said he was disappointed with the results of the vote but determined to remain involved with the village government.

"I'm going to do my best to be a skeptical citizen and make sure to pay attention to what's going on," Lawson said.

Under New York state law, because the dissolution vote was generated by residents, a referendum had to be held before a study could be conducted to show the potential impact of dissolution. If the study showed negative impacts, residents would have been free to make another petition and if 25 percent of signatures were collected, a second vote would be held.

"Having the study to show the impacts of dissolution is a good thing, but the process of getting it done after the vote goes through as state law dictates is kind of backwards," village trustee Gary Darnell said.

Darnell said that the board will be looking to move toward some consolidation of services to save taxpayer dollars in the future.

"It's obvious that change has to happen," Darnell said. "We'll move forward as much as we can to consolidate some services and if we can work more with the town and other areas."

The village is not getting the state funding it used to and the cost of employee benefits has gone up the past few years, village trustee Jerry Kadryna pointed out.

"The people of Wilson have spoken and they want their village," Kadryna said. "We'll work hard to keep it going."

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