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Voters to decide fate of 132-year-old village of Middleburgh

Voters today will decide the fate of the village of Middleburgh in a referendum on dissolution.

By Edward Munger Jr. | [February 18, 2013](#)



PHOTOGRAPHER: PATRICK DODSON

Main Street in Middleburgh on Monday, February 18, 2013.

Voters today will decide the fate of the village of Middleburgh in a referendum on dissolution.

The referendum, initiated in October with a petition submitted by former Mayor Gary Hayes, would eliminate the village. A majority of “yes” votes would mark the end of the tiny municipality incorporated 132 years ago.

Details on what dissolution would entail won’t be known until a study is performed after the vote, according to the state law that governs the process.

It’s likely the village would have to hire consultants to map out a plan stretching until 2021 to completely merge village services into the town.

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During a hearing in late January, an attorney from the New York State Conference of Mayors explained that village residents pay taxes both to the town and village, so their total tax liability would go down if the village is

would likely increase, as the town would have the increased expense of paying for things formerly done by the village.

Hayes, who gathered 140 signatures on a petition in the fall of 2011 to force the vote, said it's all about the money.

"It's an economic issue. We in the village have been subsidizing town taxes since we've been a village," he said Monday. "It's a double layer of taxation."

According to NYCOM, 46 New York villages have dissolved since 1921. Over the past two years, residents in 20 villages went to the polls to consider dissolution and granted approval in three of them — Altmar, Lyons and, most recently, Keeseville.

Hayes said he believes the low success rate in dissolutions is attributable to people holding onto a sense of heritage he contends village officials have been using to encourage a "no" vote.

"They've made it into an emotional issue," he said, likening residents' reactions to village dissolution to that of a local school district.

He said losing the village label won't affect residents in the town and village. "You're still going to have the same community. It's the people that make up the community. They're all neighbors," Hayes said.

Village business owner Patty Eddy-Beal said despite the loss of some operations because of Tropical Storm Irene flooding, she believes the village of Middleburgh can be a thriving entity.

"We don't want it to disappear," said Eddy-Beal, who operates The Conglomerate gift shop on Main Street. "There's still enough people who

not going to find in those other places.”

She said she’s concerned about the potential loss of grant funding the village receives by virtue of being a village.

Voting will take place at Middleburgh Town Hall, 143 Railroad Ave., from noon to 9 p.m. today.

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