Sullivan County, NY – Bloomingburg's Dissolution Voted Down After Judge Orders All Ballots Opened And Counted

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Sullivan County, NY – Over 11 weeks after an official vote was cast on the dissolution of a small Sullivan County village in an effort to prevent an influx of Chasidic Jews, the county board of elections has finally released the results of the highly contested election, ruling in favor of those who opposed dissolution.

"We opened the ballots at 11 Am this morning," Ann Prusuinski, a commissioner with the Sullivan County Board of Elections, told VIN News. "The final tally was 85 votes in favor of dissolution, 107 opposed. This is the vote that we are certifying."

Had the dissolution effort passed, Bloomingburg would have been absorbed into by the town of Mamakating, whose much stricter zoning regulations would have likely hampered further development efforts within the village.

As previously reported on VIN News, Bloomingburg has been the center of a heated controversy as developer Shalom Lamm continues construction of 396 homes in a village whose total population as of the 2010 census numbered just over 400 residents.

The results of the September 30th election had been challenged by locals who charged that many of the Chasidic voters were not eligible to vote in Bloomingburg.

Michael Fragin, who represents Bloomingburg's Jewish Community Council called the election results "a huge victory for the Jewish community."

"The court and the county have counted all the votes and it means that the people who came forward to say that Jewish votes should not be counted were overruled by the justice system," said Fragin. "We are very pleased with results and hopeful that the village can move forward."

Neither developer Shalom Lamm nor Mayor Frank Gerardi were available for comment, and Bloomingburg village attorney Steven Mogul said that the village never took any official position on the dissolution.

"This was brought by certain people in the electorate who did this in their own capacity," explained Mogul.

Mogul expressed his own concerns about today's outcome.

"My only reservation is that this count was done with a whole heck of a lot of challenged voters and I think it really remains to be seen whether or not those voters were really entitled to vote," said Mogul. "It would be a shame for dissolution to have been defeated if these people are found not eligible to vote."

Mogul noted that Judge Schick's decision on Wednesday to open the ballots, which had been sequestered since the election, favored those who were against the dissolution.

"Right now the gap between the two is 22 votes," said Mogul. "If 60 or 40 or even 23 votes that voted against dissolution turned out to be invalid, then the election would have to be overturned since there is no way to know whose votes are whose now that the they ahve all been opened."

Mogul said that while the village had no official position on the dissolution, he hoped that votes of actual residents would be upheld.

"If those individuals were not in fact residents and they were able to defeat this initiative by electors by less than proper means, then that would be sad."

While he declined to name any names, Mogul did suggest that getting Judge Schick to order the ballots opened was yet another move by those who opposed dissolution to achieve their goals.

" I believe that there were individuals who wanted to defeat the dissolution process regardless of whether the residents of Bloomingburg wanted it or not. If think it is unfair that those individuals will get what they want."

On Nov. 30, VIN News visited Bloomingburg and did interviews with Shalom Lamm and Mayor Frank Gerardi.

Watch below video:

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