

[https://www.eastcentraliowanews.com/anamosa/news/center-junction-moves-ahead-with-disbanding/article\\_f9e80ca6-dce3-5ecb-944d-e3a6b8d327b5.html](https://www.eastcentraliowanews.com/anamosa/news/center-junction-moves-ahead-with-disbanding/article_f9e80ca6-dce3-5ecb-944d-e3a6b8d327b5.html)

## Center Junction moves ahead with disbanding

By Robert Crozier Staff Writer

Jun 4, 2015

### CENTER JUNCTION

The results of the May 26 election in Center Junction will allow the hamlet to continue with its plans to unincorporate, disband its city council and turn over the administration to the county.

The town voted overwhelmingly – 33 to 7 – to allow the town to get rid of its waterworks, which was the biggest hurdle preventing disbandment. Only a simple majority was required.

“That was the only thing that was holding us up,” Mayor Sandy Ricklefs said. “It kind of worried me, but the supporters came through.”



The waterworks will be turned over to a company that administrates rural water and sewer systems. It already owns the sewer.

The state’s City Development Board will review the plan to disband at a June 10 meeting. If that board approves the plan, the city council will disband immediately and the state will take possession of the town’s assets, pay off any remaining creditors and turn the remaining assets



over to the county. The county will then administer Center Junction as it does any other unincorporated area.

In preparation for the turnover, the town's financial and meeting records have already been sent to the county auditor's office, according to Ricklefs.

The town's leaders exploited a legal loophole to call the special election earlier than they otherwise could. Iowa law only allows special on certain days – the next one being Aug. 4 – but the council had already sold off its assets when it learned it had to hold the vote before it could give the water system away.

And the clock was ticking.

While city coffers had been bolstered enough to cover the town's remaining obligations by the asset sale, more bills were due to come in, and there wasn't enough money to last through August, Ricklefs said.

County Auditor Janine Sulzner devised the workaround. A city council member resigned, allowing the council to call a more immediate special election to replace her. And the water system referendum was tacked onto that.

Ricklefs said the town likely won't sink back into debt because of the workaround.

"Right now, we're going to be OK, I think," she said. "If we come out, it's probably going to be by the skin of our teeth."

If the town does disband with remaining debts, a special property tax levy will be assessed against its residents to cover the difference.

Plans to save the town's park, community building and fire station are coming together, Ricklefs said. The Center Junction Rural Fire Company will take over the fire department building, and Madison Township will take over the community building and park. A committee has already been formed to maintain the community building and park, she said.

Some of the remaining council members who had been appointed since the last city election also had to appear on the ballot.



Mayor Ricklefs and council members Jack Brickley and Bill Raymond will keep their seats. And Carol Barnes, who recently resigned from the council, will take over the seat Audrey Smith resigned from to trigger the election.

It won't matter very much, though, because there will only be one meeting before the town is disbanded, according to Ricklefs.

All of the winners won handily, and there were no opposing candidates. There were one or two write-ins, depending on the election.

Ricklefs said the turnout of 38 voters was the highest she had ever seen in the town, which has a population of about 100 people.

"I'd have made a bet that we'd have no more than 10 or 15," she said.

The election cost Center Junction \$2,200, according to Ricklefs.

"That was no help, but it was something we had no choice for," she said.

