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## Village of Keeseville dissolves at midnight

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Keeseville Village Mayor Dale Holderman looks over boxes containing municipal records to be delivered to the towns of Chesterfield and AuSable on Wednesday. Keeseville dissolves at midnight, leaving its properties and functions to the towns of Chesterfield and AuSable.

STAFF PHOTO/LOHR McKINSTRY



**KEESEVILLE** — When the clock strikes midnight tonight, the Village of Keeseville winks out of existence.

The dissolution of the 202-year-old municipality was ordered by voters in a referendum in January 2014.

Its 1,815 or so residents will now receive services from the towns of Chesterfield in Essex County and AuSable in Clinton County.

### **DEBT PAID OFF**

Keeseville Mayor Dale Holderman said the village debt is paid off, with \$84,000 remaining in village coffers.

“The sewer (system) is out of debt, as is water. That was our goal at the beginning, and we did it.”

The village treasury will be split between the two towns, the mayor said.

“We didn’t auction any equipment or trucks,” Holderman said. “They all will be turned over to the towns.”

A new Village Department of Public Works truck arrived on the last day and will be transferred to AuSable, Holderman said, but used by both towns as needed.

“The employees and the village trustees worked really hard so no problems went to the towns,” the mayor said.

Historic documents such as photographs and maps were given to the Anderson Falls Heritage Museum in Keeseville, he said.

### **'LOST LOCAL GOVERNMENT'**

Holderman, who is in his third year as mayor of the 1.2-square-mile village, said he feels residents have lost the local government closest to the people.

“But it’s democracy, and the people have decided,” he said.

Standing in the meeting room at the Village Hall — which was filled halfway to the ceiling with containers of paper records —Holderman said the Village Department of Public Works was loading trucks all day and delivering boxes to the towns.

“AuSable will get our bank account,” he said, “and any bills that come in, AuSable will pay them. But we’re giving them enough (funds) to work with.”

### **'SMOOTH TRANSITION'**

Holderman said everyone had been working long hours on the changeover.

“We’ve done a lot to get it arranged so it’s a smooth transition,” he said. “The staff will probably be here until 11 p.m. getting it done.”

Village Clerk Lynn Hathaway had been there until 10:30 p.m. the night before and expected to keeping working into late New Year’s Eve.

She said she's happy with the way the process went.

“It was a huge task to disassemble a village,” she said. “We worked well with the towns. Everything went smoothly.

“We worked hard to finish every little detail,” she continued. “As you get closer to getting it done, the work gets overwhelming.”

Hathaway has been village clerk for 12 years.

“It’s been so rewarding,” she said. “I loved my position. I will sadly miss it.”

### **CINDERELLA DEADLINE**

No matter what, Hathaway said, her duties end at midnight, so she has to stop working by then.

“I may sleep late on New Year’s Day.”

Of the seven remaining village employees, six found employment with the two towns. Hathaway said she didn't apply for anything yet and wants to take some time off.

"I'm totally exhausted. I haven't decided if I want to look for a new position or go to retirement."

## **DIVIDING PROPERTIES**

AuSable Town Supervisor Sandra Senecal and Chesterfield Town Supervisor Gerald Morrow both said Wednesday that they've spent time preparing for the transition, and although they expect issues will arise, they will handle them.

Senecal said AuSable will take the Village Hall and transform it into the Town Courthouse. State Police already have a substation in one side of the building, and that will remain, she said.

She said AuSable is storing the records received from the village for now and will seek a records management grant from the state in 2015 to catalog and digitize them.

"There are going to be issues, but we've plowed roads and maintained streets for years," Senecal said. "I don't say there will be issues as much as additional tasks. We all agree we need to take care of the people."

She said in addition to the Village Hall, AuSable gets the Village Public Works garage and the Keeseville Civic Center, as well as the village wastewater treatment plant.

Chesterfield takes over the village water filtration plant.

"I have folder of things we inherited from the village," Morrow said. "We're working through it."

## **'ALWAYS KEESEVILLE'**

At Arnold's Grocery, owner George "Speedy" Arnold III said he got his first five jobs in Keeseville.

And though his village would dissolve at midnight, he was philosophical about it.

"There will be one less tax bill for village residents," he noted. "That's how I look at it. Each town has to absorb us, but this will always be Keeseville."

His store is on the AuSable side of the village, he said, and AuSable leaders have always done a good job of watching over spending.

“In my business, I say, ‘If you don’t have the money, don’t do it.’ The towns should function the same way.”

Keeseville will still be a community, Arnold said, just not a municipality.

“Through thick and thin, we’ve been here. I don’t see that changing.”

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