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# Farnham, county's smallest village, faces same big questions on dissolution

By Barbara O'Brien

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**S**ize doesn't seem to matter when grappling with issues surrounding the possible dissolution of a village.

Residents of Farnham, Erie County's smallest village, have many of the same questions as those in Williamsville and Sloan, who voted against dissolving their villages: What will happen to the services the village provides that the town does not, and how much will it save?

"There really are a lot of unknowns," said Mayor Terry Caber. "People don't know what they are voting for and what the outcome might be."

Two groups, pro and con, met in the village's two churches Monday night to talk about the issue. The Farnham Citizens Committee, which opposes dissolution, met in the basement of St. Anthony Catholic Church, 417 Commercial St., while Citizens to Strengthen the Village of Farnham, the pro-dissolution committee, gathered in a meeting room at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 633 Church St.

One attracted 16 residents, the other had 13.

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Residents will get their chance to decide the issue a week from today. Voting on whether to dissolve will take place from noon to 9 p.m. next Tuesday in Village Hall, 526 Commercial St.

Michael Graci wants to save money on his taxes, and he thinks dissolving the government is the way to do it.

"We have no businesses here, no stores, no gas stations, no nothing. It's going to be the same," Graci said. "Other than losing the village government, I don't see we lose anything."

Caber believed that instead of saving taxes, dissolution would cause a shift of taxes from the village to the town.

Kevin Gaughan, the citizen activist who is championing village dissolution, answered questions from some skeptical residents at Holy Cross Church about what would happen to the fire department and ambulance service.

He said they would remain, although they would not be operated by village government.

"The reason for the fire hall to be here will not change," he said. "The reason is not because there's a government here, it's because of the density."

When pushed, he agreed that there are no guarantees.

Farnham, with its 311 residents, truly is a place where most residents are acquainted. That's what attracted Dolly Hoffnagle of South Buffalo three months ago.

"We wanted to move to the quiet of a small village," she said, adding that should the government dissolve, she's concerned village issues would not get the same attention from the Town of Brant.

Graci said he agrees with those who say there are a lot of unanswered questions. If residents vote to dissolve, the village would have to come up with a plan on how it would work. After the plan is presented, another referendum could be conducted if enough signatures are filed.

"Because there's no plan, there's a lot of uncertainty," Graci said.

He said it was too bad the two groups could not meet together Monday night, but the Farnham Citizens Committee did not want to hold a joint meeting.

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