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Amelia residents vote to dissolve village



By: WCPO staff

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AMELIA, Ohio — One woman's dedication and determination led to the Nov. 5 vote to dissolve the village of more than 5,000 residents, even though it's not the outcome she wanted.

Renee Gerber, a former council member, said she resigned in 2016 because she believed the mayor didn't have the village's best interest at heart. She started the Facebook page "[Wake Up Amelia](#)" last year to communicate with the village about what was going on.

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Gerber decided to run for mayor against Hart after she resigned from council. As the results came in Nov. 5, it became bittersweet for Gerber, who watched to see if her village would be dissolved and if she would be mayor. Her family and

dozens of supporters celebrated as they counted the vote outside the school building on election night and posted celebratory messages on the Facebook page.

"I'm going to go celebrate, and I think we all are going to go home and get warmed up," Gerber said at the end of a [video she posted](#). "I got 50 followers. You guys want to say anything?"

They erupted in a cheer.

Residents voted 843-479 to dissolve the village, according to Clermont County.

The people of Amelia also put Gerber in the mayor's seat to finish incumbent's Todd Hart's term until the village dissolves. Gerber defeated Hart 69% to 31% by an actual count of 856-379.

"I beat Todd by a landslide – by a landslide," Gerber said on the video. Two of her supporters, Don Gates and Timothy Rosser, were elected to the village council.

The first vote means Amelia's residents will be absorbed into Pierce and Batavia townships.

Gerber said she had hoped it wouldn't come to that, but many residents thought dissolving was the answer to what they say had been years of "cover-ups" from the current administration.

"Did a lot of records requests and found that money was being spent without anyone's knowledge," Gerber told WCPO last month. "Not letting council know, which is the reason why I resigned -- because hundreds of thousands of dollars were being spent and we weren't told."

"If they would just be up front and let people know, I think none of this would've happened, honestly," said Dani Speigel, a resident of Amelia for 27

years. Spiegel said the last straw came when council passed an emergency ordinance in 2018 to implement a one percent earnings tax without notifying residents.

"I think he's made too many people upset with this income tax and not being up front," she said, referring to Hart "People caught him in too many lies."

Hart, who had expressed hope Amelia would remain a village, said his administration had been actively communicating about its actions.

"Everything we do is a public meeting -- open to the public," he said. "Nothing's been done in secrecy. They're more than welcome to come. Rarely do they ever come, until we did that one percent."

Spiegel said broken trust is not easily repaired.

"It's sad that it has to come to this," she said.

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