

## NEWS

# Voters give Strausstown, Upper Tulpehocken Township merger the green light

By **ANTHONY OROZCO** |

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When Dennis Wilson walked into his Strausstown polling station Tuesday night, he was leaning toward voting against the borough and Upper Tulpehocken Township merging.

“I don’t like seeing anyone out of a job,” said the 62-year-old, alluding to the fact that under a merger, Strausstown Borough Council members and the mayor’s positions go away.

But then Wilson talked with George Brown Jr., borough council president and a merger committee member.

Brown told Wilson that he and many other borough officials supported the merger.

After their discussion, Wilson became one of the overwhelming majority of voters in the borough and township who cast ballots for the merger, which is effective July 1.

Voters from both municipalities appeared to be persuaded to vote for the merger when presented with the results of the merger committee’s research, officials said.

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The merger committee comprises council members, township supervisors and



When the 23-square-mile township absorbs the less-than-1-square-mile borough, Strausstown's government will dissolve.

Upper Tulpehocken supervisors and boards will then serve as the government for the 1,940 residents of the combined municipalities.

Strausstown also will no longer be a legal entity. Instead, it will be the Village of Strausstown.

Brown said the committee will advise the township supervisors for the next year to help make the transition seamless.

The biggest appeal of a merger for borough resident Charlie Knight, 29, was a significantly lower tax rate.

Strausstown's taxes will fall from 3 mills to 1.8 mills, or from a \$300 annual bill to a \$180 annual bill for a property assessed at \$100,000.

The millage rate is the combination of a 0.8-mill real estate tax matching the township's rate and a 1-mill streetlight tax for residents who benefit from streetlights, most of which are in the borough.

"I just moved here with my wife and just bought our first house," Knight said after speaking with Brown. "Lowered taxes sound good to us."

Township resident Joyce Zajac supported the merger, citing cost-savings.

"I just went with logic," said Zajac, 68.

The revenue from borough residents will bring in about \$20,000, or the equivalent of a 1-mill tax increase in the township, according Russell Yerger of Upper Tulpehocken, a merger committee co-chairman.

Yerger was thrilled to see the merger pass decisively.

"It is a great day for the township and the borough," said Yerger, who was answering merger questions at a township polling place.

"It is the right thing to do and I'm glad we got information out to all the voters," he said.

Contact Anthony Orozco: 610-371-5015 or [aorozco@readingeagle.com](mailto:aorozco@readingeagle.com).





**Anthony  
Orozco**

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