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VILLAGE OF HERMON TO DISSOLVE

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Election Inspectors Connie Whiteford, left, and Sheri Smith help village of Hermon voters with their ballots during a vote for dissolution of the village of Hermon on Tuesday at the Hermon Municipal building.

JASON HUNTER n WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES

HERMON — The village of Hermon will cease to exist at the end of 2016.

Village residents voted 95-15 Tuesday in favor of a proposition to dissolve their village into the larger town, effective at midnight Dec. 31, 2016, according to results provided by Village Mayor Cathy L. Race.

“To have the vote this overwhelming in favor makes me feel like we did the right thing,” Mrs. Race said. “I thought it would be closer, but I think that was last-minute jitters.”

Roughly half the village’s 215 registered voters cast their ballot during nine hours of voting at the municipal building.

Frank B. Aldous, 108 Germain St., said he didn’t think twice about voting to dissolve the village he’s called home for most of his life.



“I think it’s a no-brainer,” the 79-year-old said after casting his paper ballot. “We won’t have village taxes anymore.”

The outcome reduces the number of villages in St. Lawrence County from 12 to 11.

The result in Hermon may also prompt other municipalities to consider dissolution as a way to cut costs and bring in state incentive funds. In exchange for approving dissolution, the state is supposed to provide the town of Hermon with \$100,000 a year indefinitely. The town has about 1,100 residents which includes about 422 who live in the village. Only village residents were allowed to vote.

Nancy H. Bardeschewski, another voter, said she was initially upset about the idea of dissolving the village, but became convinced it’s the right step.

“You don’t want to lose your sense of identity, but we won’t,” Mrs. Bardeschewski said. “I realized we’d still have the same sense of community. We just won’t have a village. It’s been a struggle to keep the village going and financially, this will certainly help.”

Her husband, Richard Bardeschewski, is a village trustee who also voted for dissolution. He said a declining tax base and rising expenses have made it increasingly difficult to maintain a separate village government.

“We get along well with the town. We’ve been sharing services for quite a few years now. We help each other out,” Mr. Bardeschewski said. “Obviously, the state is encouraging consolidation. That’s why we have this pool of money.”

The dissolution process will take place over the next year. It will involve transferring the village’s property and fund balance to the town. Instead of contracting with both the town and village, the Hermon Volunteer Fire Department will have a single contract with the town.

Any unused village-owned property is supposed to be sold. Special districts will be created in the town for residents who now receive water, sewer and street lighting so that only these residents pay for those services.

Ms. Race said Jane M. Doiron, the village’s clerk/treasurer, plans to retire next year after the village dissolves. The other two part-time village employees will have the option of working for the town. Those include Dan Forbes, sewer plant operator and Christopher Stransky, water treatment plant operator. Mr. Stransky also handles some street and sidewalk maintenance such as patching potholes and some mowing. The town already handles snow plowing on village streets.

Village residents would see a projected property tax decrease of 52 percent while town residents would see a 1 percent hike, according to the dissolution study. Dissolution does not impact school and county taxes.

According to the study, a home assessed at \$50,000 would see a \$416 decrease a year in property taxes for village property owners. Town taxpayers outside the existing village would pay \$3 more on the same house.

This marks the second time a village in St. Lawrence County has voted to dissolve. In 2013 the village of Edwards dissolved into the town. Similar measures were voted down in Richville in 1996 and in Potsdam in 2011. The towns of Clifton and Fine are in the process of studying the feasibility

of combining their towns.

The Hermon vote came after a yearlong dissolution study that concluded with a 108-page report.

“It makes me feel good we worked on something and it paid off,” Mrs. Race said.