

# SE Iowa Town To Discontinue

Tri States Public Radio | By [Jason Parrott](#)

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Alderwoman Tonya Putnam (L), Mayor Tom Allen, and Alderwoman DiAnna Allen participate in the final city council meeting in Mount Sterling.



Mount Sterling is located at the bottom of a hill along County Road W20 in southern Van Buren County. It's close enough to the Missouri border that when you look out from

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Mount Sterling is known for several things. When the town was founded more than 150-years ago, it became known as “Dogtown” because reports said more dogs lived there than people.

Mount Sterling then became a national sensation when former Mayor Jo Hamlett tossed around the idea of instituting a “No Lying” policy. The measure never caught on, but it was picked up by media outlets throughout the United States.

The tiny town of roughly 40 people is making news again. It has become the first community in Iowa since 2005 to discontinue.

## DISCONTINUE

Discontinuation means the city government is dissolved and the town becomes an unincorporated community where the county provides essential services. The discontinued town would remain on the map.

Mayor Tom Allen says the reason the city council started considering discontinuing itself is that residents chose not to run for city office or even vote in the city election last fall. He says he and the three women serving on the city council all decided to not seek re-election in the hopes that others would step up.

The lack of interest meant the current office-holders remained in power beyond January 1.

The official vote to discontinue came on April 11. The only Mount Sterling residents in the crowd were Mayor Tom Allen and Alderwomen DiAnna Allen (Tom’s wife) and Tonya Putnam.

The rest of the crowd included three reporters, two high school students, Supervisor Marvin Phillips, and RUSS Executive Director Bruce Hudson.

## TIMELINE

Residents now have 30 days to file a petition to reverse the decision. If nothing surfaces, the Iowa City Development Board will assume control of Mount Sterling's assets for future transfer to Van Buren County.

Van Buren County will provide services such as snow removal and road maintenance. The county could also assume responsibility for Mount Sterling's sanitary sewer system.

Allen says it is important for people to know that Mount Sterling will not dry up and blow away because of this. He says the community will still have a personality, heart, and a lot of livelihood, adding that it will still be there for a long time to come.

You can hear Public Radio's Jason Parrott's full report by clicking the audio link above.

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Jason Parrott is a former reporter at Tri States Public Radio.

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