



## Port Henry dissolution falls short

By **LOHR MCKINSTRY**

Staff Writer

March 17, 2010 06:25 am

—  
PORT HENRY — Port Henry was saved from oblivion Tuesday with the rejection of a referendum to dissolve the village.

The 186-146 vote means the Village of Port Henry will remain as a municipality and the issue of dissolution cannot be brought back for another vote for two years.

Village Mayor Ernest Guerin said he was glad the issue had been put to rest.

"It's (a vote) something that needed to be done. It's revived interest in the village. People are proud of their village."

### BALLOT COUNT

A small crowd waited at the Port Henry Fire Station polls for ballots to be counted and the outcome to be announced.

It took an hour to count the 332 paper ballots cast by village residents, with Village Clerk Denise Daly reading off the final totals. One ballot was disqualified for improper marking.

The total included 28 absentee ballots.

### REPORT RESULTS

A report prepared by a joint village-town study committee predicted taxes would decrease 33 to 24 percent if the village dissolved, depending on whether the town received state dissolution aid of \$303,600 a year.

The plan would have created special taxing districts to replace village services, including a Port Henry Fire District and districts for trash and recyclables collection, sidewalk maintenance and snow removal, water and sewage.

The village clerk, two water and sewer employees and the five-person Village Department of Public Works would have transferred to town employment, but elected officers and the village-treasurer and codes-enforcement-officer jobs would have been eliminated.

Guerin said the study committee has them looking at new ways to share services and save money.

"We have a lot of ideas. We put a lot of time and effort into it. We all learned."

Moriah Town Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava said dissolution of Port Henry is an issue that's been around for decades.

"The people have spoken — the village will continue as a village."

He also praised the committee's work for pointing them toward ways to save money.

"It was a learning lesson on the number of things we can do together. In the end, we are all one community. Port Henry is part of the Town of Moriah."

#### PLACED ON BALLOT

The Village Board took the unusual step of placing dissolution on the ballot by its own vote, in the absence of a valid citizen petition for a dissolution referendum.

A petition filed in 2008 was ruled invalid due to lack of signatures of registered village voters, but the board decided to put the issue on the ballot to end the continuing controversy on dissolution, Guerin said.

The village received a \$50,000 State Department of State grant to study dissolution, hiring the Rochester-based Center for Governmental Research to help prepare the dissolution feasibility study and guide the village through the process.

Several well-attended public hearings were held to keep residents informed and answer questions.

#### STRONG TURNOUT

The referendum had an excellent turnout, Guerin said. Out of 651 registered village voters, 332, or 50 percent, cast ballots.

He said the next step will be to look at the village and town public campgrounds on Lake Champlain, which provide sources of revenue, and see where they can be upgraded.

Scozzafava said they'll issue requests for proposals to hire a consultant to look at the campgrounds.

The study process could bring a new era of cooperation between the two municipalities, Guerin said.

"Collectively, we can do a lot more for the town and village. We're can work together on a lot of things."

**E-mail Lohr McKinstry at: [lmckinstry@pressrepublican.com](mailto:lmckinstry@pressrepublican.com)**

Copyright © 1999-2010 cnhi, inc.