

News

Village of Corinth residents to vote on dissolution

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By PAUL POST

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CORINTH — Residents will have a chance to dissolve the village in balloting scheduled for Jan. 17.

Earlier this year, a committee charged with studying the issue voted 11-1 against dissolution.

However, more than 10 percent of residents signed a petition in favor of the move, meaning the village is required by law to hold a vote.

"I think it's very, very risky," Mayor Brad Winslow said of dissolving the village government.

One of the main concerns is a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreement between Curtis-Palmer Hydro and the village, town and school district. Curtis-Palmer pays more than half the village tax and it's uncertain if such revenue would continue if the village dissolves, he said.

The dissolution study, conducted with help from the Center for Government Research, was funded by a state grant. As an incentive for dissolving, the state would give Corinth about \$400,000 per year for an indefinite period of time.

However, given the state's troubled fiscal condition, committee members questioned whether the state would live up to this promise.

"They (state officials) said there would be more efficiency if you eliminated a level of government," committee Chairman Tim Murphy said. "But our data found there would only be a small savings. The figures were very small, not enough to justify it."

Also, dissolving a village would probably involve considerable legal expense, which could outweigh potential savings. "It just didn't seem to be to our advantage," Murphy said.

In addition, current village debt — about \$6 million — would not be absorbed by the town, but would still have to be paid by current village residents alone, Winslow said.

The village no longer has a police department, but contracts with the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office, which has a substation in town hall.

If the village dissolves, the town could contract with the sheriff's office, but patrols would be town-wide, no longer focused in the village, Winslow said.

Other village services are garbage pickup, leaf pickup and snow plowing.

"We already share graders and bulldozers with the town," Winslow said. "We already pool things together. Perhaps we can do more shared services."

The village owns Corinth Fire Department. If the village dissolves, a new townwide fire district would have to be created with its own board of officers and budget. Winslow said the village clerk's office currently handles fire department financial matters.

A new fire district might be more expensive, the mayor said.

Winslow said other expenses would rise if the village dissolves. With more town employees, health insurance rates might go up. Also, village employees are generally paid less than town employees, so their salaries would likely increase.

The same number of people would still be needed to provide services such as water and sewer, he said.

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