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Village of Altmar to be abolished in June 2013

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By **Debra J. Groom / The Post-Standard**

Altmar, NY -- Come June 2013, Altmar will be no more.

The village of Altmar, which was incorporated in February 1876 and was once called Sand Bank, will be abolished as of June 1, 2013. Residents Tuesday voted 54 to 50 to accept the dissolution study done for the village earlier this year.

"I'm happy," said resident Bryan Myers, who started the dissolution process when he petitioned the village board in July 2010 to conduct a vote on abolishing the village.

That vote was held in November 2010 and residents voted 80 to 74 to dissolve the village. But then a resident submitted a petition calling for a vote on the dissolution plan. So residents had to vote to accept or deny the dissolution plan for the process to move forward.

Altmar is one of three villages in Central New York to vote on dissolution since the state made it easier for villages to dissolve and consolidate with neighboring towns. Camillus residents rejected the issue Nov. 8 and residents of Whitesboro, in Oneida County, opposed dissolution in a Jan. 4 vote.

Altmar Mayor Corey Holcomb said "no comment" when asked his views on Tuesday's vote.

Myers and others who wanted the village dissolved say they receive few services for the hundreds they pay in taxes. Those who want to maintain the village say there are many services provided and the village would not be as livable without a village government.

The dissolution plan done by a consulting firm in Rochester and a local committee showed that people living in the village would pay less taxes if the village dissolved.

The plan says village residents with houses assessed at \$50,000 would see town/village taxes go from \$486 a year to \$304 a year. If the town of Albion receives state money for municipalities that consolidate, Altmar residents would see yearly town taxes of \$269 on a \$50,000 home.

Taxpayers in the town of Albion outside the village wouldn't see much change in taxes. The plan says town residents with a house assessed at \$50,000 would see taxes go from \$250 a year to \$261 without state consolidation aid, but from \$250 to \$226 with the state money.

And the village's largest asset, the fire department, will be independent and owned by the town of Albion once the village is abolished.

Resident Debbie Smith said "the (village) board and fire department started this" move toward dissolution by its actions in the village. Myers said he was surprised more people didn't vote, but Smith said "some were scared to show up."

"We're the first village to dissolve under the new law," Myers said. "I'm glad this is over. You don't know how hard this has been on me."

It was dead quiet while Frances Ellis and Nancy Spearance counted the paper ballots. One counted the yeses and one counted the nos and then they switched to be sure the count was right.

Village Clerk Margaret Bailey announced the results. Myers and Smith rejoiced.

The village of about 350 residents is well-known for salmon, trout and steelhead fishing along the Salmon River. The Salmon River Fish Hatchery supplies fish for more than 100 public waters including Lake Ontario and attracts up to 500,000 visitors annually.

Village historian Florence Gardner said the village, once called Sand Bank, was incorporated in February 1876. The area's first settler was Peter Henderson, who came in the winter of 1812-13.

"It used to be quite an industrial area, " Gardner said. "First it was a logging area and then there were quite a few tanneries."

Fishing and farming also were big in the area. She said a large fire Oct. 13, 1885, burned everything except two churches and the village "really didn't come back to life after that."

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