

Westine Report

November 7, 2008

Quote: "We'll have a definite reduction in costs for government spending."

– Chris Denman
– Co-president
Village of Rochester

Now they've all become Village people *Just like that – no more Town of Rochester due to Nov. 4 vote*

By Patricia Bogumil
INTERIM EDITOR

The Town of Rochester hasn't disappeared but it has officially ceased to exist.

Following a referendum vote held Nov. 4, voters approved consolidating the township with the Village of Rochester and forming one Village of Rochester.

Unofficial voting results Tuesday night show Village residents approved the consolidation, 375-104. Town voters approved the change, 884-376.

The new, expanded Village of Rochester will formally come into being by week's end, after official certification of the Nov. 4 referendum vote tally is completed.

From now until next spring, both the current Town and Village boards will stay in place and continue to operate individually to ensure a smooth transition.

Town Chairman Gary Beck and Village President Chris Denman will serve as co-presidents of the new Village until the April 2009 election, when voters will select a new seven-member board.

"There's a lot of homework to be done between now and then and we need to get our feet on the floor first" before the new board takes office in April, said Beck.

The big advantage of consolidation for the Town of Rochester is "the fact that annexation from neighboring communities will cease," said Beck.

The Village of Rochester also sees consolidation as a way to gain better control and protection of its borders, said Denman.

In the eight years that consolidation has been in the works, Rochester officials gained a lot of insight into the future growth plans and needs of the City of Burlington and Village of Waterford with respect to Rochester, noted Beck.

Now, with consolidation, the new Village has gained the authority it needs to fight off unwanted annexation – an ability the township did not have under state law, said Denman.

The new Village will be able "to do a lot of things we could not do" before consolidation, Denman said.

For example, its increased size and efficiencies will help officials better plan for the Highway 36 corridor, including the future possibility of setting up a water district to attract development of a business district.

Also, former township areas of the new Village can be zoned locally rather than having to rely on county zoning, Denman noted.

Downsizing local government from a three-member Town board and seven-member Village board into one new seven-member board will bring cost efficiencies, said Denman.

"We'll have a definite reduction in costs for government spending," he said.