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BLASDELL

Public to vote on study of dissolving village

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In a calculated move to head off local regionalism advocate Kevin Gaughan, the Blasdell Village Board approved a public referendum to authorize a study to obtain “an unbiased determination of whether it would or would not be advantageous to dissolve the Village of Blasdell at a cost not to exceed \$200,000.”

Gaughan announced last month that he has collected enough signatures to initiate downsizing votes in Evans and West Seneca and planned to move forward with a signature campaign in Blasdell, where he said he hoped residents would back a referendum to abolish the village government.

“We’re going to beat him to the punch,” Village Administrator Janet Plarr said. “People don’t realize that you don’t just get rid of a village. You have to have a study first and studies don’t come cheap.”

In addition, the June 10 ballot will include two other crucial referendums dealing with the village’s local officials. One calls for a two-term or eight-year limit for the mayor and four village trustee positions starting with those elected on March 18.

The other initiates a 10 percent pay cut for board members and the mayor. Trustee David Adrian said the board used an analysis created by a group called “Better Blasdell” to come up with the 10 percent figure. The analysis compared similar-sized municipalities and salaries to those in Blasdell where the mayor earns \$9,500 annually and trustees earn \$4,875.

Also, in a 3-2 vote, the board voted to dissolve the annual Fourth of July event known as Freedom Fest due to its costs and liability. Adrian said the \$16,000 fireworks bill and \$5,000 additional insurance fees were only part of the reason. He cited the danger of having 20,000 to 30,000 people — few of whom were actually village residents — so close to working railroad tracks as a danger the village could no longer afford to ignore.

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Trustee Bob Warner and Mayor Ernest Jewett voted against the motion.

At the reorganizational meeting, held prior to the regular meeting, the board instituted a new process that requires all department heads to report directly to a specific trustee or the mayor as designated by the board. Previously, the mayor was the sole contact person for departments such as Police, Fire, Recreation and Public Works.

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