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W. Seneca lacks details of downsizing vote

By Mary B. Pasciak
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

One thing is certain: West Seneca voters will decide June 3 whether they want to downsize their Town Board.

What has yet to be determined, though, is where they will cast ballots and during what hours.

Rather than ironing all that out during its regular meeting Monday, the board voted to hold a special meeting next week on details of the referendum.

Depending on whom you ask, the delay is a prudent move or an underhanded ploy to keep people from voting.

Kevin Gaughan, the Buffalo resident who is urging all local town and village boards to downsize, questioned the board's motives.

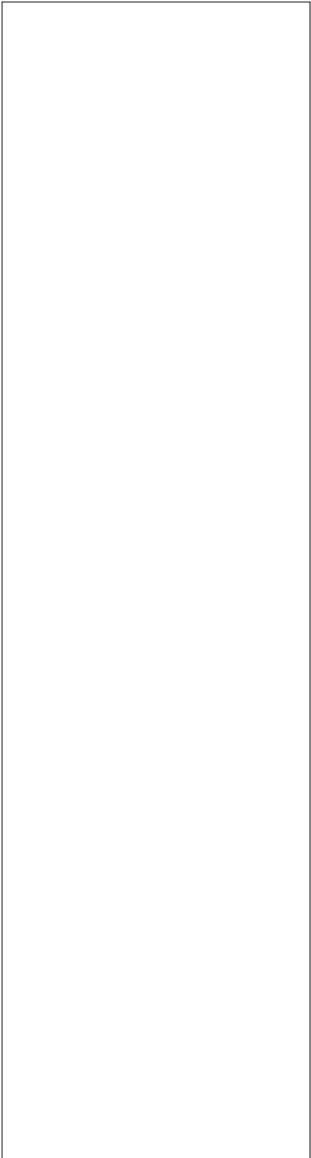
"Their decision is another in a long list of efforts by politicians to deny citizens sufficient notice of their historic opportunity to downsize government and save taxes," he said.

Councilman Vincent J. Graber Jr. said he proposed delaying the decisions on hours and polling places to allow Town Attorney Gregory J. Perla and Deputy Town Attorney Shawn P. Martin, who were appointed Monday, to prepare adequately.

"We just hired two new attorneys," Graber said. "They need to be provided time to get up to speed on the issue."

If voters approve reducing the Town Board to three from five members, no election would be held in November to fill the seats now held by Graber and Christina Wleklinski Bove. West Seneca would become the largest town in the state to be governed by a board of three.

Supervisor Wallace C. Piotrowski, a proponent of the downsizing, proposed holding the vote from 8 a. m. to 8 p.



m. June 3 at five polling places. The Erie County Board of Elections estimated that setup would cost \$6,710, he said.

He objected to the delay in setting the time and locations for the vote.

“The board has known since last year that this downsizing vote would be coming up. They had plenty of time to decide the time, the date, the location, the verbiage,” Piotrowski said. “Petitions were filed in March for this particular attempt by residents. They’ve known for at least two months this would be coming up.

“I think they’re just dragging it out and trying to keep it under wraps — the less the public knows, the better.”

Graber vehemently denies any political motivation.

“We’re trying to suppress the vote? I happen to think the lower the voter turnout, the more it hurts us,” he said. “I’m in favor of trying to get as many people out to vote as possible.”

Graber said he would like five polling places — one in each quadrant of town plus the fifth in a central location — open from 11 a. m. to 7 p. m. That, he said, would allow all residents to vote, regardless of what shift they work, but would not cost as much as keeping polls open 12 hours.

State law requires the polling places for a special election to be open at least six but no more than 12 hours. During a regular election, the town has 13 polling places.

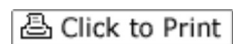
The public may attend the special Town Board meeting at 7 p. m. Wednesday in Town Hall, 1250 Union Road, but it will not include a public comment period, officials said.

“It doesn’t matter what the public says. We will be establishing the criteria,” Graber said. “That’s our duty as public officials.”

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