

Village Disincorporation in Onekama

Over the course of the past couple years the residents of Onekama have expressed an interest in exploring consolidation of the two governments – the township and the village. Because villages overlap township governments – village residents are parts of both the village and the township – eliminating a village serves the purpose of consolidation or reducing the amount of local government.

The process was initiated by circulating a citizen-initiated petition among village residents asking for the question of disincorporation to be placed on the ballot. When the petition was turned in to and certified by the township clerk to have sufficient signatures to warrant advancing the question on August 24, 2011, the process was handed off to the village.

Upon receipt of the petition, village officials can let the question go right to the ballot or they can create a commission to recommend an orderly course of action in the event that the ballot question is approved by the voters. Onekama village officials chose to create a disincorporation commission.

The disincorporation commission is comprised of equal representation – three members from the village (appointed by the village president) and three members from the township outside of the village (appointed by the township supervisor).

Although Onekama's disincorporation commission could have begun meeting immediately after members were named, the process was delayed to allow the Michigan Department of Treasury to process a grant request. The new Economic Vitality Incentive Program includes funding to help local governments pay the costs associated with collaboration and consolidation. On January 20, 2012, Onekama Township received notice that it been awarded a grant to help with the cost of the commission's work and with actions that could be needed to transition property and responsibilities to the township if the ballot question is approved by the voters. The grant to the township allows the cost of certain expenses incurred by either the village or township as part of the process to be reimbursed by the state.

The commission is charged only with recommending to the village and township boards a course of action to follow if the voters approve the question of disincorporation. The commission does not have the authority to determine actions, to appropriate funds, or to take other actions. The village and township boards – if they each approve the commission's recommendations that are submitted to them – must take the necessary actions to carry out disincorporation if the voters support the question. The report produced by the commission will also serve to give voters greater certainty of what actions the village and townships boards are expected to take and what local government will look like after the village is disincorporated.

The disincorporation commission is specifically directed to address a number of issues, including: Who becomes responsible for planning and zoning in the village? What will happen to the indebtedness that has been incurred by the village? What will happen to the village's real and personal property and assets? What will happen to the village's records? What will happen to the village's employees? Who, if anyone, will become responsible for the village roads? What happens to the village sewer system? How will the township's finances be affected by dissolution of the village? The commission may address other issues. Adoption of the final report requires approval by at least two of the three commission members representing the village, and at least two of the three members representing the township.

The disincorporation commission began meeting on January 10, 2012. It is holding weekly meetings on Mondays at 3 p.m. at the Farr Center. At least one evening meeting has been scheduled and others may be moved from the afternoon to the evening if needed. All meetings are open to the public. The names of commission members, meeting minutes, and other information can be found online at www.onekama.info and www.allianceforeconomicssuccess.com.

The question is scheduled to appear on the August 7 ballot when Onekama (and Michigan) residents will be voting in primary elections for state representatives (and county or other offices if needed). The question of approving disincorporation of the village must be approved by a majority of electors voting in the village, and by a majority of township electors outside the village voting on a separate (concurrent) question.

It can be expected that the township and village will hold public forums in the period leading up to the election to explain the question and answer voters concerns.



Citizens Research Council of Michigan

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Onekama Village Disincorporation Process

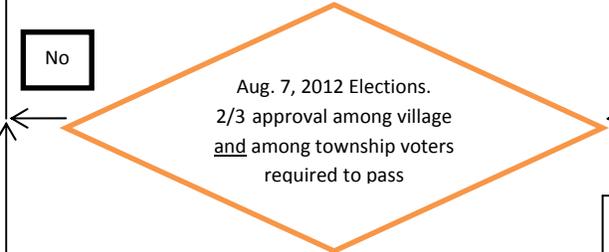
Onekama Master Plan Recommended Investigation into joint government for village and township

AES, CRC and Onekama Township and Village held informational meetings on joint government options in spring and summer of 2011



No action taken. Village and Township continues as is

Village and township decide if matter goes direct to citizens for voting or if joint commission formed to gather facts on disincorporation



Direct to vote

Joint disincorporation team formed with 3 commissioners appointed from both village and township. Report generated to address issues specified in section 74.23e of Michigan Law. Commission must approve report with 2/3 of village and 2/3 of township commissioners in agreement.

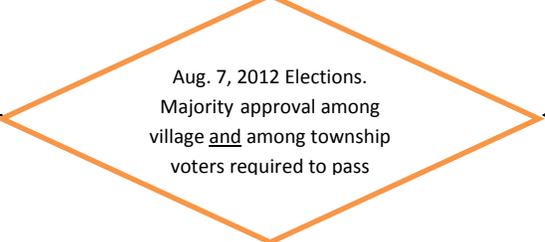
No approved report from commission

Village begins decommissioning process with township

No approval of report from village and/or township

Approved Commission Report goes to Village Board and Township Board

No



Village and Township approve commission report and approve election for village and township

