

Town of Danby, New York

Town Highway Superintendent Referendum Information

On Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 the residents of the Town of Danby will be asked to vote on how the Town of Danby's Highway Superintendent is selected: by election or by appointment. This information sheet has been put together to answer questions you may have about the referendum.

(Remember to check the back of the ballot to vote on the referendum.)

The proposed law is available for viewing at Town Hall and can be found on the Town Board's website:

TownofDanbyNY.org → Boards and Committees → Town Board → Links.

Commonly Asked Questions

Why consider a change when things have been working so well?

An appointed Highway Superintendent position would ensure continued partnership with other members of Town leadership, and best management practices are employed for taxpayers. We have been fortunate to have solid highway leadership for a number of years; the appointment process would allow us to continue this high level of service.

The job of Highway Superintendent is becoming more complex. Advances in technology, inter-municipal cooperation, grant and funding programs, bidding processes, state and federal laws, safety, regulations, severe weather events and invasive species all require specialized skills to keep our roads in the best shape and at the lowest cost possible. An appointed position would allow us to set the qualifications for this important job.

What is the process to change to an appointed position?

A mandatory referendum is needed to abolish an elective office. What is a referendum? – a vote by the general electorate on a political question that is submitted to them for final approval.

On November 6th, a referendum question will be on the ballot in Danby asking you to approve or reject the way the Town's Highway Superintendent is selected.

A YES vote would change the process from the current elective process to one where the Town Board appoints the superintendent.

A NO vote would leave the procedure, as it is, an elective process.

What would the change (from elected to appointed) mean for the Town?

Appointing a Highway Superintendent would allow the Town Board to ensure that the position was filled with the most competent person possible. It would also ensure that there was a cooperative working relationship between the Highway Superintendent and the Town.

What would the change (from elected to appointed) mean for residents?

Residents would no longer vote to choose a Highway Superintendent every two years. Residents would notice very little difference except maybe improved service and lower taxes.

How much would the change cost the Town? What impact would it have on the Town budget?

The Town will set the salary and benefit package. It is expected that there will be no change in the cost of hiring a Highway Superintendent vs. an elected one.

What are the job qualifications?

The Tompkins County Personnel Department would work with the Town and State to determine the most appropriate type of appointment (renewable term appointment or competitive civil service with protections.) The Town could require the Highway Superintendent be a resident or waive residency. A sample draft copy of the Highway Superintendent Job Description is available for viewing at Town Hall and can be found on the Town Board's website: TownofDanbyNY.org → Boards and Committees → Town Board → Links.

What would the hiring process be?

A Highway Superintendent vacancy notice would be advertised in local newspapers, sent to highway departments within county and in contiguous counties and to the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways.

The Town Board would appoint an interviewing committee that may include: Town Board members, Town Supervisor, the outgoing Highway Superintendent or a neighboring Highway Superintendent, the West Danby Water District Head Commissioner and member of the Danby Fire District Board of Commissioners. The interviewing committee would make recommendation(s) to the Town Board for the appointment. The Highway Superintendent would be renewed every two years, with annual performance reviews.

If approved this change would go into effect on January 1, 2020.

What other options were considered?

A number of competing options were considered: changing residency requirements or election procedures. The process of appointing a Highway Superintendent addresses more of the concerns with the current process than others.