

EXCELSIOR REFERENDUM EXPLANATION

The Town of Excelsior Board of Supervisors is asking the residents to approve a referendum to approve an ordinance passed by the Excelsior Town Board that would make the offices of Town Clerk and Town Treasurer, or the combined office of Town Clerk/Treasurer appointed positions. Wisconsin state statutes require the voters approve this ordinance change via a referendum question.

1. What will appear on the April 7, 2020, ballot?

The formal ordinance passed unanimously by the Excelsior Town Board asks voters to approve making the offices of Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, or Town Clerk/Treasurer appointed positions. The question will appear as follows on the April 7, 2020, ballot.

“Shall the persons holding the offices of town clerk and town treasurer or the combined office of town clerk and town treasurer in the Town of Excelsior be appointed by the Town Board?”

2. Why is the change being proposed? The responsibilities and duties of Town Clerks and Town Treasurers are significant. Over time, the function of local government has become more complex with new regulations and requirements. It takes several years for Clerks and Treasurers to become fully trained in the positions. The term of elected Clerks and Treasurers are only two years. As such, a change in the position due to an election can be very disruptive to the effective operate of Town government.

Many towns have a difficult time finding town residents to run for the elected Clerk and Treasurer positions. Appointed Clerks and Treasurers do not have to be town residents, giving the Town access to a larger candidate pool. Transitioning to appointed positions will provide the Town flexibility to find qualified individuals that will provide quality services to residents.

3. What will it mean if a majority of the voters vote “yes” and the referendum is approved?

If the referendum passes, the ordinance will go into effect when the incumbent Clerk and Treasurer terms expire in April 2021. The Town Board will set the qualifications, job description and benefits. Residents of the Town as well as non-residents will be able to apply for the positions.

4. What will it mean if a majority of the voters vote “no” and the referendum fails?

If the referendum is rejected, the ordinance will not go into effect and the Town residents will continue to elect the Clerk and Treasurer. Potential candidates for the positions will be limited to Town residents only. If no qualified Town residents seek the elected positions, the quality of services provided by the Town will likely be impacted.

5. Will property taxes increase if the Town Board has the authority to appoint the Clerk and Treasurer?

No. Property taxes will NOT increase as a result of making the Clerk and Treasurer appointed positions. The change from an elected to an appointed position does not involve any planned change in salary or benefits.

6. Do other Towns in Wisconsin have appointed Clerk and Treasurer or Clerk/Treasurer positions?

Out of the 1,249 towns in Wisconsin, approximately 30% have converted from elected Clerks, Treasurers, and Clerk/Treasurers to appointed positions.

7. What are the differences between an elected Clerk, Treasurer or Clerk/Treasurer and an appointed clerk, treasurer, or clerk/treasurer?

Appointed Positions:

- Are not required to be town residents
- Are essentially town employees hired by the Town Board. The position qualifications, job descriptions, and wage/benefit package are determined by the Town Board
- Cannot be removed by the Town Board during their term of office unless there is "cause" for removal (misconduct or neglect of duties). The Town Board can decide not to re-appoint an official at the end of his or her term without establishing cause.
- Can be appointed for a term not to exceed three (3) years (Wis. Statute § 60.30(1e)(c)), but the Town Board can set a shorter term.

Elected Positions:

- MUST be town residents
- Are answerable to the electorate and cannot be required by the Town Board to hold specific qualifications or obtain training (unless required by state law – such as election training for clerks)
- Can be recalled from office like other elected officials, but cannot be removed from office by the Town Board
- Are elected for two-year terms during the spring election of odd-numbered years.

8. Can a Town switch back to having an elected Clerk, Treasurer, or Clerk/Treasurer vs an appointed position?

Yes. No sooner than two years after an ordinance is approved by a referendum or no sooner than two years after a person is appointed to office, whichever applies, the Town Board can return to a system of electing the Clerk, Treasurer, or Clerk Treasurer. Voter approval is not required to switch back.

9. When and where do I vote?

Election Day is Tuesday, April 7, 2020. All elections in the Town of Excelsior are held at the Excelsior Town Hall, 100 E Broadway Street, Rock Springs. Polls are open from 7am to 8pm. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID in order to vote. Additional voting information can be found on the Town's website.

