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Board of Elections invalidates Gaughan initiative

By Barbara O'Brien - News Staff Reporter

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The Erie County Board of Elections has invalidated the petitions collected by Kevin Gaughan and his supporters to downsize the West Seneca Town Board.

The board ruled Wednesday night on the challenge by Daniel Warren of West Seneca, who argued that the petition was misleading.

Gaughan and his supporters collected 4,327 signatures, more than five times the number required, to put a measure on the ballot to reduce the number of councilmen from four to two.

The petition states that the reduction of the Town Board would begin Jan. 1, 2012. That's a problem under the law, according to Democratic Elections Commissioner Dennis E. Ward.

"The statute itself lays out the specific procedures on how it should be done," he said. "It would take effect immediately."

That means if the initiative passed this year, there would be no council members elected next year during the November election, he said.

The terms of Vincent J. Graber Jr. and Christina Wleklinski Bove are up at the end of next year, and if the referendum to downsize did not pass, an election would be held next year to fill their seats.

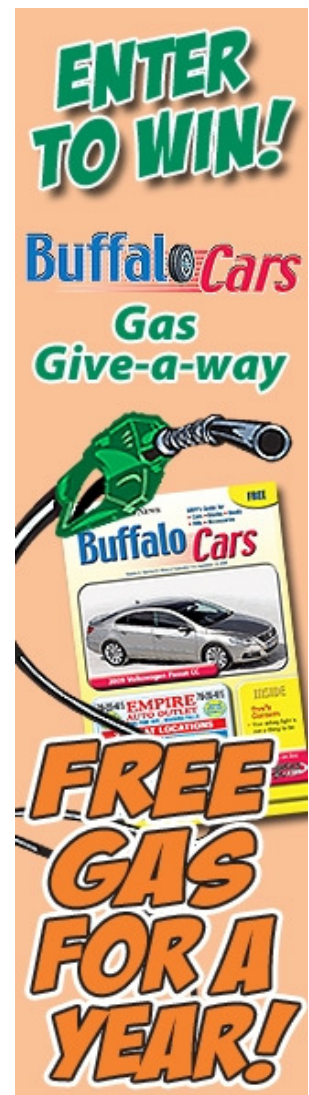
"Of course we expected this. I'm just terribly disappointed," Gaughan said.

He said he would challenge the decision in court.

"Our local economy is dying, the national economy is collapsing on top of us, New York State is broke," he said. "The politician's answer is 'Oh, no, citizens can't downsize government to save taxes.'"

Gaughan said he agrees with Ward that the implementation of the downsizing would start next year, when the town would not elect two council members.

Then in 2011, the town would elect a supervisor for four years, one councilman for four years and one councilman for two years. The newly-downsized board would take office in 2012, which is referenced in the petitions, he said.



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