

Results of Ramapo referendums may take time to determine



Akiko Matsuda, amatsuda@lohud.com

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Tuesday's ward referendums in Ramapo may face logistics challenges



(Photo: TJN file photo)

RAMAPO – Town voters may have to wait until at least Wednesday to find out the outcome of [Tuesday's referendums \(/story/news/local/rockland/2014/08/21/ramapo-sets-ward-referendums-sept/14390385/\)](#) because the town clerk has to count all the absentee ballots before finalizing the results.

[Tuesday's special election \(/story/lohudrockland/2014/09/16/ramapo-ward-referendum-countdown-14-days/15725991/\)](#) has two propositions: One is to ask voters whether to [increase the number of Town Board members \(/story/politics-on-the-hudson/2014/09/22/talk-on-ward-referendums-get-heated-in-ramapo/16074415/\)](#) from four to six, and the other is whether to separate the town into geographical districts — or wards — to elect a Town Board member from each district. Currently, four Town Board members are elected

at large and don't represent specific areas of the town.

[Voters can cast their ballots \(/story/news/local/rockland/2014/09/30/ramapo-ward-system-vote-registered-voters-two-elected-officials/16474431/\)](#) at their general election polling sites from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday.

More : [Ramapo sets ward referendums for Sept. 30 \(/story/news/local/rockland/2014/08/21/ramapo-sets-ward-referendums-sept/14390385/\)](#)

Opponents of Supervisor Christopher St. Lawrence are backing the two referendums as opportunities to weaken the control of his all-Democratic administration. Others feel the measures would create a larger town government and cost taxpayers more money.

The proposed six-ward system has become a contentious issue in the community, but as the vote approached, how to administer the referendums has also become controversial.

Unlike most local elections, Tuesday's referendums are administered under New York State municipal law, which allows people to vote if they are at least 18 years of age and can prove residency, even though they are not registered voters, according to the Rockland County Board of Elections.

Today : [Ramapo referendums: confusion at the polls reported \(/story/news/local/rockland/2014/09/30/ramapo-ward-system-vote-registered-voters-two-elected-officials/16474431/\)](#)

Town Clerk Christian Sampson said Friday that state law requires absentee ballots to be counted at the polling sites after closing, and he was still figuring out the logistics. Sampson didn't return phone messages left at his office Monday.

The law also states that no absentee ballot can be counted unless it was received in the Town Clerk's Office no later than 5 p.m. on the day of election. This can be a source of confusion because in other elections, absentee ballots are counted if they are postmarked on or the day before the election day.

When Supervisor Christopher St. Lawrence announced that poll watchers would not be allowed, local activists challenged the decision in court.

[But a state Supreme Court judge sided with the town's argument \(/story/news/local/rockland/ramapo/2014/09/24/judge-ramapo-required-allow-poll-watchers/16167063/\)](#) based on state law that poll watchers are appointed for an election with candidates on the ballot, not an election on a proposition.

[On Monday, \(/story/news/local/rockland/ramapo/2014/08/08/ramapo-referendums-likely-held-two-months/13744227/\)](#) Town Board members Daniel Friedman and Yitzchok Ullman also voiced their opinions against the town's policy.

"Me and Councilman Friedman are demanding that there should be poll observers," Ullman said. "It's very undemocratic not to have poll watchers."

Friedman said the town could still allow poll watchers for a referendum if it so chooses.

"If they want to do it, they can do it right now," Friedman said. "If they don't want to do it, that's a position that they have to explain."

St. Lawrence and Town Attorney Michael Klein didn't return phone messages seeking comment on Monday, but Klein has said the town was simply following the law.

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