

Stark County will cut back on polling places

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of the Journal Star

Posted Jan 9, 2019 at 8:48 PM

Updated Jan 10, 2019 at 9:54 AM

TOULON — Stark County will cut back on the number of polling places in a cost-savings move in expectation of a small voter turnout in the April 2 consolidated election.

New County Clerk Heather Hollis plans to consolidate the small county's nine precincts into three polling places located in Bradford, Wyoming, and just outside Toulon, she told the County Board Tuesday night.

"I estimate it will save about \$5,000," Hollis said.

Hollis said she based the decision partly on the 2015 election, which this spring's ballot will basically mirror in having no township, county, state, or federal offices at stake. Only 347 votes were cast in all of Stark County that year, representing well under 10 percent of about 4,000 registered voters, she said.

The April 2 election appears likely to see a similar turnout, Hollis indicated. There are no referenda on the ballot, and there will be no contested school board or municipal races with the possible exception of one LaFayette Village Board seat, she noted later in an interview.

"I just can't see paying 27 election judges (for three in each precinct)" as well as all the other associated costs of operating nine polling places in the mostly rural county of 288 square miles, Hollis said.

"The state election code says you can combine up to four precincts as long as they're (geographically) contiguous. We're going to do three," she explained.

Specifically, the precincts of Elmira, Osceola, and Penn will vote at the Bradford Fire Department; Essex, East Toulon, and Valley at the Wyoming Fire Department; and Goshen, West Jersey, and West Toulon at the Goshen Township building just west of Toulon.

“I’m going to put a big notice in the paper, and there will also be signs posted at all of the other precincts. So if anybody hasn’t heard about it before election day, they’ll know where they can go to vote,” Hollis pointed out.

Early feedback has generally been positive, with people approving of the county saving money, Hollis said. In addition, options like early voting at the courthouse or by mail have become increasingly popular anyway, she added.

“I don’t think I’m going to get much pushback,” Hollis said. “We’ll try it and see how it goes. This will be a good election to test it out.”

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