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Willow St. Residents OK Land Transfer

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Gazette Reporter

ALBANY — Willow Street property owners approved the transfer of their land from the city to the Town of Guilderland by a 19-1 vote yesterday.

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The annexation will transfer about 23 acres of land along the east side of Willow Street to the town. The Guilderland Town Board, which has already approved the annexation, is expected to formally accept the land from the city this month.

The 19-1 vote was logged at the polling place in the Teresian House, according to the Albany County Board of Elections. Thirty-five persons were eligible to vote in the special referendum, a board spokesman said.

A majority of the persons voting was needed pass the annexation.

Willow Street straddles the city's western border with the town. The new border will put 17 residences on the eastern side of the street in the town.

The parents of about 20 Willow Street children began the annexation drive nearly a year ago — after they learned the Albany School District no longer intended to pay their children's tuition at Guilderland schools.

The city district had been paying some \$24,000 annually in tuition to Guilderland under a long-standing arrangement allowing Willow Street students to attend the closer town schools. The district had been unable to

efficiently transport the students to Albany schools, with Willow Street, a dead-end, accessible only via Western Avenue in Guilderland.

In May, however, Albany school officials decided to find a way to transport the students and announced the tuition agreement would be ended in an effort to cut a spiraling budget. The federal government reimburses school districts for most of the cost of transporting students.

The parents — angered by the decision — said they did not want their children's education at Guilderland interrupted. Since Guilderland already provides many of the residents with services such as sewers and water, the town, city and persons affected agreed annexation was the best solution.

The annexation resolution notes that the town is better situated geographically to provide the residents with services, including police and fire protection.

The Willow Street residents have been paying Albany school tax and property taxes, with the city reimbursing the town for services provided.

The only property owner in the area to voice opposition to the land transfer, Charles Bednarczyk, was allowed to stay in the city. The original proposal to move the boundary was re-drawn, leaving Bednarczyk's house at the end of Willow Street in Albany. Bednarczyk no longer has any children in school.