

# Reporter

## District 99 land facing possible condemnation

By Don Grigas and Kevin Stahr

Staff writers

The Woodridge Village Board was expected to consider, and possibly adopt, an ordinance May 19 to begin eminent domain proceedings to take control of a controversial 44-acre parcel owned by Community High School District 99.

The ordinance would open the door for village attorneys to file a lawsuit in DuPage County to condemn the property, which the village wants to preserve as open space. Results of the meeting were unavailable at press time.

District 99 officials are taking sealed bids for the property, which could be used as a housing development. The School Board has not yet declared the parcel adjacent to the Woodridge Village Hall as surplus property, which must happen before the land can be sold.

Woodridge Mayor William Murphy said his village has been forced to act because the School Board has not responded to Woodridge's requests to discuss a sale.

"We recently had the land appraised and asked them to at least sit down with us and hear our proposal -- but the two days we sought for meetings were turned down," Murphy said. "We've made an offer based on a good, fair market value."

Neither Murphy nor other Woodridge officials would comment on the offer or the appraisal figure, citing the possibility of future litigation.

By contrast, District 99 Superintendent David Eblen contended the district has reached out to Woodridge village officials to discuss a possible sale. Eblen said District 99 is awaiting its own appraisal and independent bidding information to be submitted by early June. He said school officials were surprised Woodridge has decided to consider condemnation.

"Once we have that info, we will be very happy to sit down and explore with the village of Woodridge," Eblen said. "It is unfortunate that they are moving forward with condemnation. We are moving as quickly as possible, but (appraisals and bids) don't happen overnight."

**Eblen said he would reserve comment on what District 99's course of action might be if Woodridge filed a condemnation suit.**

**The parcel in question has been the subject of controversy since last September with the District 99, Woodridge and the Woodridge Park District involved in the issue.**

**The Woodridge Park District "is 100 percent in full support of the action taken by the village," said Keith Frankland, director of parks and recreation.**

**The Park Board adopted a resolution of support -- including a provision the Park District agrees to support "further legal action to ensure the subject real estate is secured for park and public grounds" -- at its May 10 meeting.**

**Frankland said the Park District will share any legal costs with the village.**

**"The plan all along, based on the village's 1995 comprehensive plan and the Park District's open space plan, has been to either develop that site as a third high school, or preserve it as open space to benefit all the residents of this community," Frankland said. "It never was intended for residential development."**