

Winston Hills woman calls for more streetlights

By Don Grigas

Staff writer

Woodridge resident April Clark said she has not given up on her goal of convincing Woodridge officials to add streetlights along four streets in Woodridge's Winston Hills subdivision south of 63rd Street Park.

Over the past few months Clark has written letters, spoken to municipal administrators and elected officials, and petitioned the village -- along with about 50 other neighbors -- asking the village to install additional streetlights along MacArthur, Winston, Maxwell and Taylor drives.

"We live in one of the older subdivisions, and we have just one streetlight for each street. One lonely little street light is not enough, particularly since these streets are about one-half mile long each," Clark said.

Village officials will discuss the issue Saturday, March 4, during the first of two budget workshops, to be conducted at Bobak's Signature Events of Seven Bridges, Public Works Director Philip Modaff said. According to Modaff, the village reviewed the issue at a 2004 goal setting session and made four suggestions at a March 2005 budget workshop, none of which appealed to Clark.

"The village spent considerable time looking at this issue in March 2005 and didn't feel it was a priority," Modaff said. "But we have a new trustee on the board since March 2005 (John Curran), and we will revisit the issue."

Originally Clark pushed for streetlights throughout the Winston Hills subdivision, but said she has amended her request for just a few streetlights along the four streets.

After reviewing the issue last year, the village mulled maintaining its policy with no changes to the village's streetlight inventory; creating a policy based on need determined by such criteria as traffic safety and crime concerns; initiating a \$2.1 million capital improvement program village-wide; or allowing residents to participate in cost-sharing to help fund streetlight installation.

The Village Board supported evaluating each request case by case. In a Feb. 9 memo from Modaff to Village Administrator John Perry and Director of Finance Deborah Freischlag, trustees said a review conducted of the area in question did not substantiate installing streetlights.

"A review of five years' worth of accident and crime data yielded no information which would point to the lack of streetlights as a contributing factor to actual problems in the neighborhood. In fact, there is little history of crime or traffic-related incidents at all," Modaff wrote.

Clark said the village should not ignore the request for more streetlights just because the neighborhood is crime and accident free.

"It's insane in a way, as if they were saying if there was more crime or traffic accidents along these streets then they might qualify for more lights," said Clark, who has lived at 6531 MacArthur Drive for 10 years. "Maybe we don't have \$600,000 homes, but we still need more lights."

Village code requires one streetlight every 200 feet, but Clark said the neighbors who support the request would be happy to have "three or four more placed along our half-mile long street."

"There are codes for reasons. There must be a good reason why the village has determined why there must be at least one light every 200 feet. But our street has one in the very middle, and that is it," Clark said.

The village responded to a petition of about 50 neighbors who requested more lighting in the subdivision with a letter that indicated voluntary participation in cost-sharing would cost homeowners about \$5,200 per home to install lights.

Clark said Village Trustee Robert Brandt recently told the homeowners the cost would be significantly less, closer to \$250 apiece.

"But there is still a feeling among many neighbors that we have paid taxes for 40 years, and safely lit streets should be something the village should pay for out of its taxes, and we shouldn't have to pay for it ourselves," Clark said.

In his memo, Modaff said the village has yet to hear from Clark or her neighbors "that they, or their neighbors, are willing to pay for streetlights."

Also, after Clark raised the issue at a Town Meeting to identify key safety issues, "the topic of streetlights was not raised at any of the other three public safety tables," Modaff said.

"I'll continue to push for more streetlights along those four streets," Clark said. "I just hope it doesn't come to a point where the village finally does react after someone gets hurt because of the lack of light there."