

Streetlight plan would charge residents half the cost

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WOODRIDGE, IL -

Woodridge's plan to install street lights along some of the older, darker residential streets — a plan that would require residents to share in the cost — is being called unfair by a resident of the Winston Hills subdivision.

During a Village Board workshop Oct. 11 to review the issue, April Clark of the 6500 block of MacArthur Drive told trustees and staff she thought the plan was unfair and should be reworked.

"Our street is one of four in the Winston Hills neighborhood that is almost a half-mile long, yet we have only one street light on it halfway into the street," she said. "We need more lights because the road is hilly, and we have a lot of kids on this street. And it is unsafe when it is dark.

"But for the village to ask residents to pay for half of the overall cost without knowing how many residents will participate is unfair," Clark said.

Clark said she submitted a petition to the village signed by residents of her area last year regarding the issue.

"The majority of my neighbors want more lights, but we don't like the way the plan is structured," she said.

The proposed plan, which could be voted on as early as Nov. 1, would authorize ComEd to install lighting in areas determined by resident requests, with the village sharing half the overall cost, according to Chris Bethel, director of public works.

The village would pay for the improvements upfront and work out payment plans with participating residents.

If a homeowner were to renege on the agreement, the village could place a lien on the home and could deny the property owner a real estate transfer tax stamp at the time of sale.

"In reality, it is a much better value for residents because the village will be maintaining the lights," Bethel said.

Resident cost would be based on how many residents in a block agree to participate — one of the plan's flaws, according to Clark.

"So if five residents on my block out of about 60 agree to participate and the other 55 — knowing those five will absorb all of the cost — then choose not to participate, they will still gain the benefit of the lights without paying for them," Clark said after the meeting.

"The village has seen ... that lighting is a high priority to residents, so why can't the village simply pay for lights with funds from its budget? This is a basic service that should be paid for through our property taxes," she said.

Bethel said the board discussed several options in a workshop last year and selected the current option as "the most effective method available."

"We looked at the village installing lights in all the areas throughout town that are currently not up to code,

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The streetlight program will be the topic of a discussion for residents in the Goodrich School neighborhood at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25, in Seven Bridges Club House, 1 Mulligan Drive.

and the cost would be about \$2 million," said Bethel. "That was too much to take on."

The village does have a policy of installing street lights at village cost when it is deemed necessary after village review, Bethel said.

According to Bethel, the estimated cost for a single light to be installed would be about \$7,500. The plan would require residents who participate in the program to pay 20 percent of the cost prior to the village contracting the work, with the remaining 80 percent spread over up to four years.

In 1978, the village adopted its current standards requiring a street light every 200 feet on residential streets. Several subdivisions, including Winston Hills, were built prior to that date.