

Lake Villa pursues lake water

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By DIANA KUYPER Special to The News-Sun

LAKE VILLA -- The Village Board has agreed to seek allocation of Lake Michigan water, expecting to appear before the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in February to justify the need for switching from well water to lakewater for its municipal water supply.

Lake Villa is one of eight villages and the county submitting applications for an allocation of Lake Michigan water to IDNR. Hearings are to begin in early 2010, said Mayor Frank Loffredo.

The board Wednesday approved a resolution to support establishing a joint action water agency. Members of the group have already paid more than \$300,000 to Applied Technologies to prepare a feasibility study, calculate water needs and submit paperwork to IDNR.

Loffredo, the village attorney and other village officials will have two days to make their case at a public hearing before IDNR officials.

The project would pump Lake Michigan water from a shoreline site in Zion through a 57-mile pipeline to serve Antioch, Fox Lake, Lake Villa, Lindenhurst, Wauconda, Long Grove, Lake Zurich, Volo and the Lake County Public Water District on behalf of Grandwood Park and the northwest region near Fox Lake.

If approved, the project, estimated to cost \$180 million, could be a reality within five years.

Each municipality and the county must receive an allocation before the project can progress, said Loffredo. Although everyone isn't completely sold on the idea because it is an expensive project, he believes it is the best answer for the future of Lake Villa.

Lake Villa's water system entirely depends on wells and water towers scattered throughout the village. If the village switches to Lake Michigan water, the wells will be shut down and the entire village will be served by lakewater.

This is still a work in progress, but receiving an allocation is the most crucial part of the project. "Applied Technologies has calculated our need and now we have to justify that need and present a solid rationale for receiving an allocation," said Loffredo. Meetings are set to discuss overall strategy for the pending hearings.

With other states as far away as Nevada seeking Lake Michigan water, he said the opportunity to receive an allocation is now. "Our window of opportunity to plan for the future is now. If we miss it, it won't come around again."

The joint action water agency will make a final decision on funding the project after the hearings.

"Doing all this preliminary groundwork might be perceived as putting the cart before the horse, but we need to get our allocation first and then decide if we want to pursue the project," the mayor said. "We do know, however, that for the long term wells as a municipal water supply is not the answer."