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Glencoe water plant delayed by multiple players

By Daniel I. Dorfman For Sun-Times Media | @dandorfman

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of Glencoe's water situation is being delayed amid a mass chess game with a collection of low-profile government entities.

Over the last few months, the village conducted preliminary conversations with the Northwest Water Commission (NWC) about possibly forming a relationship. Those conversations took place against the backdrop of Glencoe's 86-year-old water plant, which may not be operational all that much longer.

At one point Village President Larry Levin talked about having a better understanding by spring of where the NWC stood on the issue, but that apparently will not be the case. That's due to another rather obscure agency, the Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency (NSMJAWA), which indicated it may want to create a formal intergovernmental relationship with the NWC, putting Glencoe's situation in flux.

The NSMJAWA supplies water to Elk Grove Village, Rolling Meadows, Mt. Prospect, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, Streamwood and Hanover Park. It purchases about 11 billion gallons of water per year from the City of Chicago under a contract that runs until 2023. However, the NSMJAWA is fearful of escalating costs and has reached out to the NWC, which supplies water to Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Palatine and Wheeling.

"We have several relationships open to us and we want to see what is best for our residents," noted Kevin Lockhart, the NSMJAWA Deputy Director.

As those two agencies talk, it leaves Glencoe in a wait-and-see mode.

"Probably given the new developments, I would say it would be mid summer or fall of 2015 before we have gotten through everything," Levin acknowledged.

All parties agree it is very murky situation.

"There are a lot of moving parts," conceded NWC Executive Director John Durocher. "Glencoe, NSMJAWA, and the Northwest Water Commission are analyzing all of these moving parts and trying to make the best decision possible."

Levin maintains a relationship with the NWC could potentially save the village millions of dollars by supplying raw water. Meanwhile, a relationship would be advantageous for NWC, which is interested in creating a redundant water supply line in case of an emergency. The NWC now buys water from Evanston, and takes it through a 60-inch pipe to a Des Plaines facility where the water is then distributed to its member communities.

Both Glencoe and the NWC have ruled out constructing a plant that could generate 100 million gallons of water per day, which is far more than Glencoe needs. However, the idea of creating a moderate size pumping station remains on the table.

As the process slowly unfolds, Levin is not feeling pressured to make a decision anytime soon.

“There is no pressure in terms of setting a date to finish the discussion,” he said. “We want to work them as a partner.”

In the meantime, the village continues to wait for a report from an engineering firm it retained to suggest the best options for its water future.

The possibility remains that the village may act on its own to build a new plant, and one idea floated was a land swap with the Glencoe Park District. Levin said he has not approached Park District President Bob Kimble on that issued in several months.