



## Glencoe residents want water plant talks made public

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The village's private discussions about the future of its 85-year-old water plant have frustrated some residents who want to be kept in the loop on the project at public meetings. (Karen Ann Cullotta, Chicago Tribune)

Some Glencoe residents say they are frustrated at what they perceive as being left out while Glencoe officials debate the future of the village's 85-year-old water plant behind closed doors.

"I understand and respect the need for some of these negotiations to be private, but rather than rumors, why not have a meeting about something that's really a village issue," said resident Laurie Morse, one of several residents at last week's village board meeting to question why a public discussion about the water plant did not appear on the official agenda.

Earlier this month, Village President Lawrence Levin confirmed that officials are exploring the possibility of forging a partnership that would allow Glencoe to provide water to the Northwest Water Commission, with the agency potentially helping the village foot the estimated \$35 million to build a new water plant.

Northwest Water Commission Executive Director John DuRocher said earlier this month that officials were in, "very, very preliminary" discussions with Glencoe, and confirmed the group was looking for additional sources of Lake Michigan water.

At present, the commission provides water to Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Palatine and Wheeling, DuRocher said.

Officials in Glencoe said they also are talking with the Glencoe Park District about the prospect of a partnership with the commission and the possibility of relocating the water plant north of its present site.

Levin said placing the water plant issue on the agenda would have been premature because officials need more time to determine and specify all the possible options before opening them up for public discussion.

"It's important to put this in perspective and understand why it's not on the agenda this evening," said Levin, who assured residents that officials have not made any decisions other than concluding it would be neither practical nor cost effective to renovate the aging, albeit charming, circa 1920s-era, Spanish revival-style water plant building sprawled along a lakeside bluff, overlooking the beach.

"The question is, how can we for the next 85 years maintain that level of water quality and good service, and we need to look at all the alternatives," Levin said, referring to the village's drinking water that in recent years, was voted the best-tasting water in the state of Illinois and the second best in the nation.

"What we want to do is make sure the village water is safe and the top water in the country, which is what we've had," said Levin. "We need to look at this again when all the facts have been gone over in depth."

Still, some residents asked officials to bring local residents into the water plant discussions sooner rather than later.

"Please make this process transparent," said resident Eileen Sirkin, who said she first learned about the water plant discussions from a Nov. 11 story published in the Chicago Tribune.

"It is very upsetting when all the information I'm hearing is negative, and I'm seeing posters up in the village saying 'Save Our Beach,'" Sirkin said, adding: "The village needs to start communicating with open meetings, which will calm the waters."

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