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Arlington Hts. residents to vote on bidding for cheaper electricity
By Deborah Donovan Daily Herald
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Arlington Heights residents will vote by referendum March 20 on whether the village should seek competitive bids for electricity rates for residences and small businesses.

Assuming voters' approval, the village would join six other communities to seek the lowest possible rates, hoping to achieve considerable savings through economy of scale with a total of about 250,000 residents.

Residents would have the choice of staying with ComEd, signing an individual contract with a provider or joining the contract worked out by the consortium, said Scott Shirley, director of public works and the village's representative to a group led by Buffalo Grove.

"It would be a win/win for citizens because those who wish to do it can and those who do not want to do not have to," Village President Arlene Mulder said.

The contract would be for 10 or 11 months until June 2013, Shirley said. The Arlington Heights village board gave preliminary approval Monday night to holding the referendum and is expected to finalize its vote Nov. 21.

The municipalities hope to achieve a rate savings of almost 25 percent from the 7.8 cents per kilowatt charged by ComEd, according to a report from Shirley. That's what Grayslake, Oak Brook and Lincolnwood saved when they joined together. Residents signing contracts on their own are saving about 18 percent, Shirley said, but the market is very volatile.

The municipalities in the consortium circle Buffalo Grove, which has already approved putting the question on the March ballot. Long Grove and Palatine have also approved asking voters for permission to contract. Vernon Hills' board will vote tonight, Nov. 15; Arlington Heights and Wheeling will vote Nov. 21; and Lincolnshire's board will vote Nov. 28.

While the referendum will not cost the municipalities anything because it will be held with the primary election, the consortium might hire a consultant, which could cost each town up to \$10,000.

The working group has agreed residents will have the option of buying

some of their energy from green or renewable sources — 20 percent of the energy purchased.

The general belief is that people in this area care more about getting the lowest price possible, said Shirley.

Trustee Mike Sidor said many residents have contacted him asking for the option of a higher percentage of renewable energy. They point out that Oak Park recently signed a contract for 100 percent green energy with only a slightly higher cost than what the village could have achieved purchasing from traditional power sources.

ComEd would still deliver the electricity and bill people. Residents are expected to see no change except in price, said Shirley's report. The contract would be with a different electricity provider that would find the energy on the open market.

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