

[Back to regular view](#) • [Print this page](#)

Time to power up, village trustees decide

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/hinsdale/news/247271,hi-electricity-020807-s1.article>)

February 8, 2007

By Mark Lawton | STAFF WRITER

In a unanimous decision, village trustees chose to ask voters whether Hinsdale should form its own electrical utility rather than continuing to rely on ComEd. The question will take the form of a referendum on the April 17 ballot.

At issue is the number of power outages residents have experienced. According to 2005 statistics, the average ComEd customer in Hinsdale experienced 4.56 outages per year. The average among ComEd's 3 million customers is 1.2 outages per year.

Fidel Marquez, vice president for operations in ComEd's Chicago office, said at Tuesday's Village Board meeting that the average number of outages in Hinsdale had shrunk to 3.3 per household by the end of 2006.

Trustees, however, did not appear to be impressed.

ComEd needs to put more money into infrastructure, Trustee Vic Orlor said.

"We hear a giant sucking sound of revenue coming out of Hinsdale," Orlor said. "We're simply not getting a fair share of investment back into the community."

The village has an 18-point plan it would like ComEd to follow. Although the two have agreed on some points, Trustee Cindy Williams said, there are four major points to go. The remaining points are putting lines underground, making a new larger transmission line and substation, maintaining a recent tree-trimming schedule and creating some kind of guarantee that ComEd will meet increased reliability target.

Marquez said ComEd is committed to improving reliability to Hinsdale residents, although he added that would "take some time."

Likewise, if residents approve the referendum, it is the start of a process that will take a minimum of three years, village manager David Cook said.

The next step would be for the village to enter negotiations with ComEd to buy its infrastructure in the village. The village does have the power to initiate eminent domain proceedings, although Cook considers that a last resort.

Then a second referendum would be required to gain approval to issue bonds to pay for infrastructure and the formation of a utility. The cost would include \$15 million to build a new substation and \$25 million to bury lines underground. The total savings to village residents, however, would be in the range of \$50 million to \$80 million over 25 years, according to a consultant from Latham and Associates.

Village trustees plan to continue to work with ComEd to improve service, regardless of how the vote turns out.

"We do not consider this to be a battle against ComEd," said Williams, the board's point person on the proposal. "We consider this a cooperative process."

Village President Michael Woerner also kept the door open to discussions with ComEd.

"I've not had a burning desire to have a utility," Woerner said before the proposal went to vote. "I just want better service."

© Copyright 2007 Sun-Times News Group | [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)