

NEWS

Woerner: Explore village electric service

By ERIC MARTIN
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Village President Michael Woerner proposed Tuesday that Hinsdale officials explore the creation of a village electrical utility, a move he tied to mounting dissatisfaction with power company ComEd.

"Clearly the Hinsdale residents and I have had enough of this shabby treatment," he said during his report to the Village Board.

Woerner said voters must approve three separate referendums before the village can form an electrical utility, and he set a timetable that could put the questions on the April ballot.

He referred to outages that beset Hinsdale during a storm early last month, and he said he received several calls and e-mails about additional outages late last week.

Statistics from ComEd show that last year,

Hinsdale's outages were more than three times the Chicago area average. Last month, company officials said efforts to improve service had cut the number of outages in half.

A company spokesman could not be reached for comment Tuesday night.

Woerner said 42 Illinois municipalities, ranging in size from Peru to Springfield, have their own electricity service. He said the village would not have to generate its own electricity, but rather could buy it on the market.

"It is possible for a village to operate its own electric utility, just as we operate our own water system and utility," he said. "Can Hinsdale leave Commonwealth Edison and form our own municipal electrical department? Yes we can."

In an address in which he announced shifts in Village Board responsibilities, Woerner said Trustee Cindy Williams will spearhead exploration of the proposal. To do so, she has agreed to give her up her role as

Environment and Public Services Committee chairman, a post Trustee Vic Orlor will take over.

From that seat, Williams has told ComEd representatives that the company's service in Hinsdale is unacceptable.

For Woerner's proposal, one of the ballot questions would be on bonds to fund building a system or purchasing equipment from ComEd.

If the decision is to purchase, and Hinsdale officials cannot come to an agreement with ComEd, the village can begin condemnation proceedings and ask a court to set a price, Woerner said.

"The important point is that we would not be in the electric business to make a profit, but to cover our cost," he said.

Williams, who thanked Woerner for the appointment, has until January to answer questions raised by the proposal, so that the Village Board can vote in February to put the measures on the ballot.