Written by Carol Pomeday
Wednesday, 23 February 2011 18:35

Plagued by vandalism, man requests village to subsidize private fixture

A Village of Belgium resident — frustrated by increased vandalism since a streetlight was removed near his Spring Street home — offered a different solution to the debate on whether or not to replace some of the lights that were removed almost a year ago in a money-saving effort.

Randy DuFour, 422 Spring St., told the Village Board last week he would be willing to buy a street lamp and install it on his property if the village would pay at least a portion of the cost.

“I saw some nice ones for $300. Maybe the village could credit me $150,” DuFour said. “The homeowners would have to agree to pay the utility bills for the lights. A streetlight is two houses away, but we don’t get the effect from that light, but having
one at the end of the driveway would help.”

His mother Virginia said their mailbox has been vandalized and their house egged since the streetlight was removed.

“We had some problems before, but it’s gotten worse,” she said. “The only thing I enjoyed in winter was watching the snow fall near the streetlights.”

DuFour proposed the private street lamps while trustees were debating the merits of spending $11,000 to have We Energies install new poles and lamps where old ones were removed at no cost.

“To pay $11,000 to put back these lights is an insane amount of money to get a little more light for a few people,” Trustee Vickie Boehnlein said.

“We have to try to think outside the box without spending $11,000.”

Trustee Jeff Ritter said he considers the utility’s charges a scam and prefers putting up decorative poles and lights owned by the village rather than rent the utility’s equipment. He also liked DuFour’s suggestion to offset the cost of private street lamps.

“It’s one of these things that we have to look into more and not rush into,” Ritter said.

The subdivision in the village already has only private street lamps. Decorative street lamps at each driveway that were installed when the homes were built in the Ardennes subdivision.

The village’s Public Safety Committee had recommended that streetlights be reinstalled near the homes of people who submitted a petition to have them returned.

Decorative streetlights like those used on east Park Street are owned by the village and cost less than the utility’s lights. However, there will be a charge to hookup the lights, Public Works Director Dan Birenbaum said.

Even though it may look odd for a while, Neil Anderson, wastewater plant supervisor, suggested the village start now to convert all streetlights to decorative ones, doing a set number each year.

Village President Kevin Kowalkowski recommended the issue be referred back to the Public Safety Committee.

“The committee should do the leg work to find out the cost of village-owned decorate lighting vs. individual lights,” he said.