Written by MARK JAEGER
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Board president says lawmakers lending voice to cost-sharing proposal

Village of Fredonia officials have been disheartened by We Energies' refusal to charge the community anything but full cost to bury electrical lines in conjunction with the pending reconstruction of Fredonia Avenue.

When utility officials told village leaders last year it could cost as much as $1 million to bury the power lines along the community's major east-west thoroughfare, a referendum was held on the question.

Voters soundly rejected spending that much money on what is essentially a beautification project.

However, Village President Chuck Lapicola told the Village Board last week that momentum may be shifting.

"I have been in contact with State Rep. Duey Stroebel and Sen. Glenn Grothman, and they seem to be willing to work on our behalf," Lapicola said.

He said the lawmakers have presented the village's case to the Public Service Commission.

"At least it seems they are getting somewhere with the PSC. They seem interested in our suggestion of at least sharing the expenses instead of the village footing the entire bill," Lapicola said.

The village's greatest objection to We Energies' insistence that it pay the full cost to bury the power lines is the utility's failure to acknowledge the existing equipment has depreciated significanly since its installation.

"I have been told there are transformers and other equipment out there that are 50 years old and need to be replaced. They are expecting us to replace them as if they were new. That's simply not fair," Lapicola said.

He said the utility is also asking the village to pay the cost of upgrading power lines instead of simply paying the cost of burying lines.