

Utility line referendum gets buried

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Village voters unwilling to pay \$1 million price to install underground service

Village of Fredonia voters said an overwhelming “no” Tuesday to footing a \$1 million bill to bury utility lines along the Fredonia Avenue corridor.

Village officials wanted input on the option as they mulled reconstruction of the community’s major east-west thoroughfare.

The input came through loud and clear in Tuesday’s referendum vote, which failed by a margin of greater than two to one, 352 to 155.

Although village officials have contended that placing electric lines and other utility cables underground would beautify Fredonia Avenue, they couldn’t get past the cost projected by the utility companies.

We Energies estimated the cost of burying its power lines would be about \$1 million. In addition, Time Warner Cable said it would cost \$219,000 to bury its lines and AT&T said it could cost another \$500,000 to place telephone lines underground.

Village President Chuck Lapicola said he was not surprised by the resounding outcome of the referendum.

“I didn’t really think it had a chance of passing,” Lapicola said.

“But that doesn’t mean we have to give up on the idea. I think we can approach We Energies with an alternative that works for everyone, such as moving the power lines from the Fredonia Avenue road right-of-way to back of the lots lining the road.”

He said he would also like to see the electric company remove the high-tension lines, which do not provide service to the community, from the heart of the village

Lapicola said those changes could be made when the utility goes through the normal process of upgrading its service lines.

“That approach would save the village a lot of money,” he said.

Tuesday’s election also brought a new trustee to the Village Board and created the first husband-and-wife team to serve as trustees.

Don Dohrwardt, 62, 313 S. Milwaukee St., who has served on the board for the past 10 years, was re-elected to another term with 256 votes. His wife Lisa, 51, earned her first term with 256 votes.

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Incumbent Jill Bertram, 55, 608 Fredonia Ave., was the top vote-getter with 354 votes.

Former village president Joe Short, 55, 230 Clover La., who also served seven years as a village trustee, failed in his bid to return to the board. He received 244 votes.