

Water contract with county comes up for discussion

BY MARIAN MCMAHON
Gazette Newspapers

MADISON VILLAGE

— Second reading was held on an ordinance approving a contract with the Lake County Board of Commissioners on behalf of the Lake County Department of Utilities to have the Village supplied with potable drinking water and for cooperative infrastructure improvements, at the Aug. 3 council meeting.

Administrator Dwayne Bailey said he was recommending Council adopt the ordinance. He believes it is better than the current contract, which is ending, because it would ensure the Village would receive water from the county when needed and at a reasonable rate.

Councilmember John Hamercheck did have various questions and concerns about the contract and initiated discussion. One concern was the county tap-in fees required with the Village's switch to retail customer from surplus customer. He thought the Village might need to hike its tap-in rate to cover the \$800 capacity fee due the Lake County Department of Utilities for each "new" customer.

"As a surplus customer,

we're buying gallon for gallon, unit for unit water from Lake County. As a retail customer, we'll still be buying unit water but, we get the benefit of getting a discount for high volume usage," Bailey later explained.

He said the Village had been working for 10 years on trying to change its customer status, but the \$800 fee required by the LCDU from each "new" customer had made it economically unfeasible in the past.

"I don't believe, at this time, this agreement would cause us to increase our tap-in fees," Bailey said.

The Village tap-in fee is \$2,000, all of which had been going to the capital account, to pay for the operation of the Village's water system operations and maintenance. However, the county fee of \$800 would come from the Village fee and not be an additional charge to the customers.

The total capacity charge for all village customers, would be \$850,000. However, the Village would be allowed to pay that over 25 years at \$42,500 a year.

The contract would include an additional pumping station cost of 49 cents.

Bailey explained the additional charge of 49 cents

for higher pressure was to cover the county's costs of pumping the water from the Bacon Road station.

However, the water received from the south offsets water which would otherwise have to be pumped up, at additional cost, from the Hubbard Road station by the Village, so there is a savings.

With the new contract, the Village will pay \$3.10 per 748 gallons. The residents pay \$5.69, with the additional funds going to cover Village water operations (salaries), electricity for the pumps, maintenance and repairs and debt service.

Bailey summarized, although the Village will pay less for water, but the customers won't, the Village will cover the county's capacity charge and plans to absorb the price increases from the county, which had previously been passed on to customers.

He said, if the Village tried to make arrangements with another provider for water, it would cost millions of dollars.

Hamercheck had other questions and concerns which he presented and said could be answered at the upcoming Council of the Whole (COW) meeting.

In other business:

• Council suspended readings and passed an ordinance amending Ordinance No. 26-2013 to increase the compensation for the position of school resource officer to \$16.50 per hour.

The Madison School District is to refund up to \$21,000 per year under the new contract.

The position is part-time, has no benefits and the offer declined health coverage.

• First reading was held on an ordinance authorizing the administrator to advertise for bids for the improvement to the village water utility via State Route 528 Interconnection Project.

• Council suspended readings and passed a resolution authorizing the mayor to execute an agreement with the Madison Local School District to furnish a school resource officer to the South Elementary School and declaring an emergency.

• Council suspended readings and passed a resolution confirming the appointment of Ralf W. Caswell as school resource officer and declaring an emergency.

• Council approved a purchase order request for \$4,388 to Santee Security for

a new CCTV camera/recording system at the Madison Senior Center.

The purchase was in the budget for this year.

• Council approved a general request not to exceed \$25,000 to complete the installation of the pumps and motors at the North Booster Station to be funded with the current open Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) Loan.

• A resident asked about the lawsuit by councilmembers John Hamercheck and Ken Cahill to prohibit the Village from paying the Madison Joint Fire District \$189,000 for improvements and an addition built at the former Madison Fire Station 1.

He was advised the suit was still pending.

The resident asked how much the legal fees were so far and was told about \$7,000. He said the lawyers would be the only winners and they should get it settled.

• Cahill attended a special meeting of the Madison Fire Board to put, he believed, a 4.5-mill levy on ballot.

He asked Councilmember

Ken Takacs when the Fire Board was aware of "financial distress" which required a special meeting.

Takacs refused to answer that or any other question, stating Cahill should attend Fire Board meetings and ask questions then.

Cahill said the Fire Board did not open up the special meeting for questions from the public.

Hamercheck asked what the guidelines were for asking Fire Board members questions.

"Time was when we would have Fire Board updates, discussions at the council point, there was a free flow of information," Hamercheck said. "I realize that it's become a little contentious as of late, but what are those specific instructions? Can we see the rules and guidelines so we know what we're up against and how we do things?"

He was told again to attend Fire Board meetings because council meetings were not the forum for those questions.

• The next regular council meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 17. It will be preceded by a committee of the whole meeting at 6:30 p.m.