

Village to ask voters for 911 fee hike

Southtown Star By Sarah Zylstra Correspondent December 14, 2011

Olympia Fields wants to raise its monthly 911 landline phone surcharge from \$1.25 to \$6.95.

Such an increase requires voter approval, so the village board Tuesday unanimously decided to place the issue on the March ballot.

State law caps cell phone monthly 911 dispatch fees at \$1. SouthCom Dispatch, which fields 911 calls for Olympia Fields, Matteson, Richton Park and Chicago Heights, charges Olympia Fields about \$338,000 a year for its services, according to village administrator David Mekarski.

About \$88,000 is collected from the landline surcharge, Mekarski said. The remaining \$250,000 is collected through the property tax and comes out of the village's general fund, he said.

"For the price of two lattes a month, we can free up a quarter million dollars, which this local government could utilize for more judicious purposes for residential needs," Mekarski said.

Olympia Fields could use the money to offset the loss of sales tax revenue from the departure of Jewel-Osco or to catch up on its underfunded police pension fund, he said.

The referendum's success will come from educating residents, Trustee Willis Pennington said.

But that education might lead to more people trading their landlines for cell phones, Trustee Bob Waite said.

DOESN'T ADD UP

- The Village claims the referendum is needed to pay SouthCom Dispatch for 911 fees of \$338,000 annually.
- According to the Village, they collect \$88,000 annually from the present rate of \$1.25
- The new rate would be \$6.95
- That's 5.56 times greater than \$1.25 ($\$1.25 \times 5.56 = \6.95)
- \$88,000 times 5.56 equals \$489,280
- That leaves a \$151,280 surplus. ($\$489,280 - \$338,000 = \$151,280$)