

St. Charles Countryside FPD to consider referendum questions

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ST. CHARLES—The St. Charles Countryside Fire Protection District expects to know by July whether it will place a referendum on the November ballot.

It has until August to formally decide.

Trustees on Tuesday talked mainly of placing an advisory referendum on the ballot.

They directed attorney Ken Shepro and the Citizen Advisory Committee to present possible questions for feedback at the June 29 meeting.

With a tax rate of 18 cents per \$100 of assessed value, the district is the cheapest in Northern Illinois, Treasurer Robert Handley said, noting West Chicago's and South Elgin's are closer to — if not above — 60 cents.

According to district documents, expenses are outpacing revenues for the first time. Revenues

increase by about 2 percent each year while expenses are growing by 13 percent.

Contracting fire and emergency medical services with the St. Charles Fire Department is the district's biggest expense, Handley said.

The district's contract with the city was set to expire April 30, but each party authorized a three-month extension as negotiations continue.

Handley said the district accounts for about 20 percent of the city's call volume, yet the district does not pay that amount of the budget.

"If we paid that, it wouldn't cover what we get in taxes," he said.

Voters have twice turned down the district's requests for more money. The latest of which happened last year, when the district asked for more in operating expenses and for funds for a new station.

This time, the district would

likely seek taxpayers' input about the future of the district, which dates to the 1940s, Handley said. For example, he said, voters may be asked whether they would want the trustees to dissolve the district. In that case, residents would be absorbed in neighboring districts.

"If we have to dissolve, they'll go from 18 cents to 60 cents or more," Handley said.

If voters want to keep the district, he said, it is likely the district would later seek a binding referendum to boost the tax rate.

"We can't do it any more [at 18 cents]," he said.

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The Kane County Board is expected next month to appoint a new trustee to the St. Charles Countryside Fire Protection District.

Former President Ed Malek's term expired April 30, and he did not seek reappointment due to new job responsibilities, Handley said.