

# Gurnee puts brakes on wind proposals

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Gurnee has become the most recent community to take pause on wind and solar power. The village board this week in a 5-0 vote decided to impose a nine-month moratorium on wind turbines, solar panels and other such devices.

Like other communities, the village anticipates an influx in requests to use wind turbines or solar energy devices, be it for commercial or individual use, and wants to make sure guidelines are in place to deal with issues such as size, noise and "shadow flicker."

No proposals have been submitted but there has been general interest from about five to seven sources, according to Tracy Velkover, the village's planning manager. "At this point we don't have any regulations in our zoning ordinance," she said. "People are getting pretty serious about wanting to put them up."

That is becoming evident across the county. Libertyville and Bannockburn are other communities that have recently enacted moratoriums, for example. Antioch, Old Mill Creek and Wadsworth are working with Lake County on an agreement regarding a concept for a commercial wind farm in unincorporated Newport Township.

Wind power to produce energy for the Waukegan's water plant on Lake Michigan also could become an option at some point, although that is just part of a much broader examination of energy efficiency.

The city has been awarded \$851,000 in federal stimulus funds through the federal Department of Energy for its water and sewer departments. The grant is "to evaluate the way we do things and come up with ways to do things more efficiently save money and reduce our carbon footprint," said Jeff Musinski, superintendent of the 1920s-era plant.

The city council this week awarded a contract not to exceed \$220,000 for an energy analysis at the plant. The remainder of the federal funds would be available for projects related to the study.

A wind turbine to generate alternate power for the plant is a possibility in the future, although it is a "smaller portion of everything being done," Musinski said. The city will evaluate the feasibility of a turbine at the lakefront, but the city council would have final say.

Waukegan and Gurnee are among about two dozen communities working with county planners as part of a wind energy task force. The idea is to craft a standard set of guidelines that can be modified for individual communities as needed.

Wind turbines are the initial focus but guidelines for solar devices also are expected to be addressed. "We're not by any stretch of the imagination anti-wind or solar," said Velkover, but "there are some potential external impacts."

A small wind turbine at Chipotle Mexican Grill on Gurnee Mills Boulevard East already is in operation. That request was processed as a variation to existing code, however, with its proximity to power lines part of the rationale for approval, she added.