

MOKENA VILLAGE BOARD

Officials look to complete EAB program by end of 2016

Contract approved
for reforestation

DANNY CIAMPRONE, Editor

After nearly four years of aggressively treating public/parkway trees for the emerald ash borer, the Village of Mokena is now eyeing the finish line this year and looking ahead to further its forestry management and diversification efforts.

During the regularly scheduled meeting on Feb. 8, the Mokena Village Board of Trustees unanimously approved an agreement with Graf Tree Care Inc. of St. Charles in an amount not to exceed \$26,110 to continue management of the EAB program in 2016.

Trustees John Mazzorana and Joseph Siwinski were absent from the meeting.

The board first initiated the EAB abatement program in 2013, which includes the treatment or removal and replacement of approximately 3,700 public/parkway ash trees, said Assistant Village Administrator Kirk Zoellner.

Zoellner said the Village is now looking to “substantially” finish the program by the end of 2016. Approximately 2,700 EAB-infested public/parkway ash trees have been removed and 2,550 trees have been replaced across the community since the EAB program began, according to board documents.

One of the biggest components of the EAB-program is the diversification of approximately 40 different species of trees planted in parkways.

“That is very crucial in this program in terms of diversifying our tree population,” Zoellner said. “It’s a little like a stock portfolio;

Board approves lease agreement with Verizon Wireless

DANNY CIAMPRONE, Editor

Verizon customers in the Hickory Creek commuter parking lot are set to see an increase in wireless quality, as the Mokena Village Board of Trustees unanimously approved a lease agreement with the wireless company Feb. 8 during its regular meeting.

The agreement allows Verizon to place antenna panels on a Village light pole in the parking lot in exchange for various financial considerations.

Assistant Village Administrator Kirk Zoellner said wireless communications require a network of antenna grids that vary in size according to customer use and other variables. Currently, the Village has agreements with other wireless providers, including AT&T, T-Mobile and Sprint.

These companies have antennas located on water towers and a monopole located between the Village’s Ken Heim Maintenance Facility and the Village’s wastewater treatment

plant, according to board documents.

But Zoellner said there is a need for additional bandwidth in the immediate vicinity of areas where mobile data usage is concentrated, which are referred to as “small cell” sites as opposed to “large cell” sites.

“The small cell site allows a lot more data to be utilized and carried in this concentrated area around the Metra station,” Zoellner said. “There’s a lot more bandwidth needed, and a lot of commuters coming and going and using their smartphones, and needing to access data.”

Zoellner said the Village was approached last year by a representative from Verizon seeking to place cellular antenna panels on the pole. These types of lease agreements with wireless providers have been common since the Village’s original ordinance addressing cellular antennas was approved by the board in 1998, Zoellner said.

Zoellner also said that

the equipment requirements for a small cell site are “substantially” lower in comparison to large cell sites. The apparatus consists of three panel antennas fixed slightly below the light pole’s luminaire, along with a small equipment cube located at the base of the pole, according to board documents.

Zoellner said the revenue stream associated with the lease is \$250 per month, or \$3,000 per year. In total, this will generate more than \$336,000 annually in nontax revenues from a total of 10 separate leases with six different wireless communication providers throughout the community.

According to board documents, the initial term of the lease is 10 years, and the lease allows the tenant to extend the lease for four additional, five-year terms. Therefore, the total length of the lease could be 30 years, and each renewal would include the same terms, including the 3 percent annual increase in rent.

you want a little bit of everything in there so if one [tree] gets attacked by something it doesn’t affect the others.”

Zoellner said the program is “right on schedule,” and the agreement with Graf includes the reforestation planning for a spring planting of approximately 435 trees, and a reforestation planning for a fall planting of roughly 249 trees.

The agreement also includes reevaluation by Graf in September/October of all of Mokena’s public/parkway ash trees that have not

been removed and replaced, as well as an update of Mokena’s EAB management plan. Graf also is set to audit and analyze the vigor of all new parkway trees planted since the EAB-program was implemented in 2013, and preparing a strategic guide to Mokena’s urban forestry management and diversification efforts beyond 2016, according to board documents.

Zoellner said the EAB program is currently projected to come in at roughly \$138,000 less than its

\$1.7 million budget upon completion.

“Our removals — we’ve done very well with those and have in house labor to keep our cost down on those — and also the reforestation program has been successful because the board had the wisdom to look ahead on this and start reforesting right after the trees were removed as opposed to waiting,” he said. “Now, the tree prices are much more expensive than when we first started.

“I think this has been a very successful program.”