

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD
PROJECT SUMMARY AND PRELIMINARY IMPACTS DETERMINATION
PUBLIC HEARING
TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025
VILLAGE HALL BOARD ROOM

PUBLIC HEARING: At 6:00 p.m., President Richard Hofeld opened a hearing on the lead service line replacement program project summary and preliminary impacts determination. Those present were Village President Richard Hofeld, Trustee Julie Willis, Trustee Vivian Harris-Jones, Trustee Phil Mason, and Trustee Lauren Roman. Trustee Jay Heiferman and Trustee Allisa Opyd were absent.

Village staff members present included Village Manager Napoleon Haney, Assistant Public Works Director Patrick DiDiana, Assistant Finance Director Lindsay Cabay, Assistant Village Manager Terence Acquah, and Public Works Director Joshua Burman.

President Hofeld invited Village Manager Napoleon Haney to make a presentation. Village Manager Haney provided an overview of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's (IEPA) Lead Line Replacement mandate, which was instituted in January 2020. He explained the Village's ongoing inventory process to identify properties with lead service lines and outlined the purpose of the public hearing—to fulfill the requirements for the Village's loan application for lead service line remediation through the IEPA and to offer residents an opportunity to ask questions about the Village's plan.

Manager Haney stated that the total estimated cost of the project is approximately \$70 million, and the Village has applied for a \$4 million revolving loan, with a portion of it eligible for forgiveness. The project is slated to begin in 2026, requiring the Village to reapply for funding annually. Priority will be given to older neighborhoods, disadvantaged areas, and locations with planned capital projects. Currently, the Village has 6,839 service lines, of which 3,763 have been identified as full or partial lead service lines, and 600 lines remain unknown. After his remarks, Manager Haney opened the floor for questions.

Paul Hurley of Burns and McDonnell introduced himself and provided background on his role in the project. He also shared an update on the IEPA loan application process, noting that municipalities typically receive responses regarding funding decisions in the month of July.

Director Burman detailed the Village's phased approach, stating that the first year would be focused on critical sites such as schools, daycare centers, and nursing homes. Following that, work will expand to disadvantaged areas, as defined by census tracts, which are based on median income levels and are not restricted to municipal boundaries.

Mayor Hofeld asked about the scope of service line replacement, specifically whether it would extend beyond the meter. Director Burman clarified that the Village would only replace lines from the main to the water meter.

Mayor Hofeld also inquired about lead solder in private plumbing. Director Burman reaffirmed that the Village is only responsible for service lines up to the meter, and private plumbing issues beyond that would fall under homeowners' responsibility.

Trustee Roman suggested working with plumbing companies to assist with replacements, but Director Burman noted that materials and contractors will be in high demand due to the statewide mandate.

Trustee Mason asked about resources to help residents identify their service line materials. Director Burman stated that Public Works staff is available to assist on-site. Trustee Mason also inquired about financial assistance programs for homeowners needing to replace service lines beyond the meter. Staff confirmed they would compile a list of available resources.

Mayor Hofeld asked about how other municipalities are handling lead line replacements. Paul Hurley explained that state law requires municipalities to replace service lines from the water main to the water meter, and owner permission is necessary for public-side replacements.

Trustee Roman sought clarification on whether the Village was applying for a loan or a grant. Manager Haney explained that since this project directly impacts water rates, any loan received would require repayment through the Water and Sewer Fund. Paul Hurley reiterated that a portion of the loan would be forgiven.

Trustee Roman also asked how applications are scored. Manager Haney stated that while the Village's application is strong, priority is given to disadvantaged communities. Trustee Mason questioned how prioritizing disadvantaged areas would impact the rest of the community, to which Haney responded that securing funding now is crucial, as future funds may be depleted.

A resident asked how much funding is available statewide and how many municipalities are applying. Hurley did not have exact figures, but Manager Haney noted that funding is not guaranteed, and the Village can only receive what the state allocates each year. The same resident inquired whether taxpayers would need to cover costs if the Water and Sewer Fund couldn't support the full expense. Manager Haney responded that the Board would need to decide on alternative funding sources, as the fund alone is insufficient to cover the entire project.

Another resident asked about the estimated cost per household for service line replacement. Director Burman and Manager Haney stated that costs would be distributed equitably across the community.

A resident wanted to confirm whether they had a lead service line. Manager Haney stated that the Village is proactively engaging residents and providing resources, including a Village app, informational videos, and an online spreadsheet listing service line materials.

Another resident asked about a potential cost-sharing program for homeowners choosing to replace lead lines independently. Director Burman estimated the cost per property to be between \$10,000 and \$15,000 and assured that the Village is actively seeking additional funding to assist with replacements.

A resident asked how they could determine if pipes inside their home contain lead. Director Burman gave a brief explanation of how to check but emphasized that this responsibility falls on homeowners. Trustee Roman reassured the resident that changing in-home fixtures is a personal choice and not required.

A resident inquired about the material of the water mains. Director Burman confirmed they are made of ductile iron and water-grade plastic. He also emphasized that minimal disruption to residents would be a priority during replacements.

Another resident asked if the Village would be conducting full replacements or leaving some lead pipes in the ground. Director Burman stated that each case will be evaluated individually, and while some partial replacements may occur, Manager Haney assured that exposure to lead in the ground is minimal and does not pose a significant health risk compared to lead consumption.

A resident asked where the Village sources its water. Director Burman explained that the Village purchases water from Chicago Heights, which receives it from Hammond, Indiana. The same resident inquired whether there is lead in the transmission lines, to which Director Burman confirmed that all transmission lines are new.

Another resident asked if water testing reports are publicly available. Director Burman directed them to the Village website, where reports and sampling data can be accessed. He also explained that water mains are replaced, as needed, during main breaks.

A resident expressed concerns about political uncertainties affecting funding. Manager Haney acknowledged that much of the funding comes from the federal government, and while there is always a risk of disruption, the Village is proactively securing funds as soon as possible.

Village Manager Haney closed the meeting by thanking residents for their participation and announcing that staff would remain available to answer additional questions.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Trustee Mason and seconded by Trustee Willis to adjourn the public hearing on the budget.

Roll Call: AYES --Trustees Willis, Harris-Jones, Mason, and Roman. NAYS –None. ABSTAIN –None. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Acquah
Assistant Village Manager