

# City meetings on TV could cost taxpayers \$131,000+ in first year

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The city of Park Ridge will have to budget over \$130,000 next year if aldermen choose to broadcast meetings of the City Council and other city boards to residents via the Internet and cable TV.

Bob Kaderabek, purchasing agent for the city, said the total start-up costs to broadcast over the air and Internet could come to just over \$131,000 for the first year. That total includes approximately \$32,000 in personnel costs, \$46,700 to purchase recording equipment, approximately \$20,000 to host streaming and archived video on a web site, about \$2,000 to set up the city's web site to link to the hosting site, about \$19,000 for Comcast equipment to air the programs on

cable, and a 10 percent contingency.

The annual cost to the city in subsequent years has not yet been determined, Kaderabek said this week, but will be less than the start-up costs, with labor and maintenance making up the bulk of the expense.

"It would be a small piece of what it costs to set it up," he said.

Maintaining the web site that will host the video of the meetings will cost about \$12,000 annually, Kaderabek added.

The proposal to fund the televising of city meetings will be brought to the City Council as a new program during a workshop to discuss the 2008-09 budget on March 8, said 2nd Ward Alderman Rich DiPietro, chairperson of the City Council's Finance and Budget Committee.

DiPietro said the proposal

currently on the table is to broadcast meetings of the City Council, the council's standing committees (Public Safety, Public Works, Finance and Budget, and Procedures and Regulations), the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. This would require camera equipment to be installed in at least three rooms at City Hall and one at the Public Works facility, DiPietro said. At least one part-time employee would be hired, and the city hopes to use student volunteers in the production as well.

What is envisioned is a reactivation of the city's cable access channel which would run live meetings and re-broadcasts. Also, residents would be able to watch live streaming video of the meetings online, or access any portion of an already recorded meeting, also online.

"We have a feeling most people would view it that way," DiPietro said of the online option.

City computers, however, are currently not equipped with media players, so they would need to be updated in order to staff to have access to the meeting footage.

First Ward Alderman David Schmidt, who has urged the city to televise its meetings, said he remains supportive of it.

"I think it would be money well spent," Schmidt said. "When you look at the size of the city's budget, \$100,000 is a paltry amount and the return on that investment is a well-informed public."

Some area communities that televise municipal meetings include Des Plaines, Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights, Glenview and Morton Grove.