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Impact fees for Elwood?

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ELWOOD -- Manhattan Trustee James Doyle crossed village lines Wednesday night to attend an Elwood village board meeting.

Doyle, the former mayor of Manhattan, came to stress the importance of adding a library impact fee to the funds collected when permits are issued for new homes.

Elwood is part of the Manhattan Library District per a referendum. In 1995, Jackson Township Precincts 2 and 4 were annexed by referendum. The April 2001 elections brought the annexation by referendum of Jackson Townships 1 and 3, including the village of Elwood.

Some Elwood officials feel the referendum took away the village's right to ever get their own public library district. They feel the district takes their tax dollars without offering any services in the village other than a book drop.

Elwood officials have, in the past, requested the name of the library district be changed to include Elwood and that has not been done. Other suggestions included coming up with a name that does not specify a town, like the Fossil Ridge Library District, which covers, Braidwood, Braceville, Godley and more.

The Manhattan Public Library District encompasses the Manhattan, Manhattan Township, Elwood and Jackson Township. Elwood is the only municipality in the district that does not collect impact fees for the library.

"I realize there is a bone of contention here," Doyle said. "We could someday get a library here paid for by the impact fees."

At the very least, Doyle said, the land next to the village hall could be donated to the library district for a possible satellite facility.

Trustee Mary Matichak said the impact fees are only on new homes. She would like to see the fees from Elwood come back to Elwood.

Doyle said the funds go into one pot that is part of the library's general fund.

Currently, the Manhattan library operates out of an old bank building in downtown Manhattan. The building is 6,000 square feet. Library officials say they have been trying to find properties that are more centrally located to construct a new facility. They failed in an attempt to pass a referendum in April.

A similar request for impact fees failed in June of 2004.

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