



On the Agenda

LOCAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ACT

For many months now, the Village of Bartlett has been meeting with area legislators and other state leaders to discuss the benefits of smaller school districts and the legislative efforts that would help achieve school district disconnection. The Village's informational campaign is now complete, and with the help of area representatives, Bartlett is ready to introduce legislation to Illinois lawmakers this spring that can hasten the formation of a new school district.

Bartlett's most recent educational campaign began in the summer of 2005, when residents were invited to attend a series of workshops to discuss the benefits of smaller school districts and the potential for academic improvement. The information gleaned from these workshops was included in the message brought to legislators. Several of the Village's elected officials and parents visited Springfield and met with members of the state legislature. These meetings continued throughout the year to keep the decision makers up to date on the necessary legislation and other issues surrounding disconnection.

Last year the Illinois General Assembly amended structural procedures to allow citizens to consolidate their schools. The legislation being proposed on behalf of the southeast quadrant of U46 is nearly the same. With the consent of voters, it simply amends the process for deconsolidation.

Under Illinois law, school districts have the right to disconnect. This legislation will clarify the Illinois School Code and allow the residents of U46 to have a referendum on deconsolidation of the district.

The huge population growth in U46 during the last 10 years has made the district obsolete. It is time to break it up, start over and improve the quality of education for all of the district's children.

PUBLIC SMOKING BAN

The Village of Bartlett has a choice to make. Take no action and allow Cook County's Clean Indoor Air Ordinance, which bans smoking in public places, to go into effect on March 15, 2007, or draft an alternate ordinance that is either more or less restrictive and applies across all three counties in the Village.

The Cook County ordinance prohibits smoking in all public places and places of employment in order to reduce the public health risks from exposure to secondhand smoke. However, most of the public discussion regarding this and similar bans across the country has focused on restaurants and bars becoming smoke-free and the impact this has on their business. Bartlett has more than 30 restaurants and bars in Cook and DuPage counties.

In their decision-making process, Village Trustees have been looking closely at all sides of the issue. The Village's Economic Development Commission sought public input, reviewed information from various sources and discussed the pros and cons of a comprehensive smoke-free policy at three consecutive meetings last fall. At its November 13 meeting, the EDC recommended that the Village Board adopt a Village-wide ban on smoking in public places and places of employment with certain exemptions. Possible exemptions could include hotels, motels, private clubs and retail tobacco stores. A Village smoking ban may also provide for fines and penalties that are different from the Cook County ordinance.

Village trustees continued discussion on the smoking ban at the Village Board's January 16 committee of the whole meeting and are expected to vote on this issue prior to March 15.