

Park utility easement gets nod

By Amy Smith, Union staff writer | Posted: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 9:44 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors unanimously granted the City of Lake Mills Light and Water a permanent utility easement through Korth Park.

The utility easement will allow the utility company to replace existing overhead power lines with underground power lines, which are expected to provide more reliable electric service to the west side of Rock Lake.

The new construction will be by directional boring of conduit and will not require extensive access to the utility corridor. However, there will be minimal motor vehicle access through the Town of Lake Mills park during construction.

Existing overhead power lines and poles will be removed following completion of the project.

According to the approved resolution, the overhead power lines must be removed within 60 days of nonuse.

Lake Mills Light and Water currently has a utility easement through Korth Park, which is used to provide public utilities through the overhead power lines the power company intends to replace. Korth Park is a Jefferson County park overlooking Rock Lake in Lake Mills.

In addition, the board took action in regard to another county park — Dorothy Carnes County Park and the Rose Lake State Natural Area, located west of Fort Atkinson.

Supervisors unanimously approved a county conservation aids grant application intending to benefit numerous plant and animal species within the park. If awarded, funds would be used to cut and remove non-native woody vegetation and the hand-pulling and spraying of non-native herbaceous plants.

In other business, the board of supervisors ruled in favor of supporting state funding for county 911 services, including the designation of one public service answering point per county.

State funding was reduced for 911 in services in 2009. The result left counties completely reliant on property taxes to fund the services.

The approved resolution encourages the State of Wisconsin to fund the county and municipal aid program with the state general purposed revenue rather than the police and fire protection fee.

In 2003, the state established a fee on all wireless phones to fund grants to counties to pay for enhanced 911 services such as wireless call-locating software and equipment. The enhanced 911 grant program expired in 2009 and was replaced by a 75-cent monthly police-and-fire-protection fee for all devices capable of dialing 911 and directed the revenue from the fee to fund the county and municipal aid account to meet other state financial obligations.

The board moved Tuesday to support eliminating the police-and-fire-protection fee and restoring the funding for 911, which without replacing the lost revenue would result in about a \$50 million annual reduction in shared

revenue payments to municipalities and counties.

Support for the resolution stemmed from the knowledge that the 29-cent landline telephone fee Jefferson County imposes is declining as use of cellphones increases. The fee often is insufficient to cover the cost of the 911 services, requiring any difference to be paid by property taxes.

Additionally, the board voted in opposition of actions by Wisconsin state legislators that would significantly modify local control in matters related to the health, safety and well-being of county residents, as well as a proposed lapse in state funding to the circuit court system.

The 2013-14 state biennial budget requires the Wisconsin court system to return a total of \$11.8 million to the state general fund over the next two-year period, resulting in budget cuts affecting the Jefferson County circuit court system. If the resulting budget cuts are made, the Jefferson County courts no longer will receive state funding at its previous level, which would create an enormous financial challenge to the county, potentially resulting in an increased tax levy.

Also, Tuesday, the board:

- Awarded the sale of \$9,995,000 general obligation county building bonds, which are to be used to fund the construction of the new Highway Department facility and satellite shops.
- Approved a bid of \$44,000 from 911 Security of Milwaukee for the replacement of security cameras in the courthouse.

New cameras will replace cameras in the interior of the courthouse and courtrooms, as well as the addition of new cameras for exterior coverage of hallways within the courthouse. The 2014 budget designated \$48,000 in the Central Service budget for the security cameras.

- Approved a contract with Sikich LLP of Brookfield for 2014 auditing services at a cost of \$37,500. The county had previously contracted with CliftonLarsonAllen LLP of Milwaukee who came in with a bid of \$50,000.