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Buffalo Grove works to slow foreclosures

By Steve Zalusky

Buffalo Grove is lending its qualified support to a regional effort to address the growing problem of home foreclosures in the suburbs.

The proposal calls for a housing coordinator to serve communities participating in the Northwest Suburban Housing Collaborative. Those communities would include Buffalo Grove, Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, Rolling Meadows and Palatine, among others.

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The collaborative is a project of the Metropolitan Planning Council, a Chicago-based nonprofit agency that works to promote sound, sustainable and equitable growth across the region. Formed in 1934, it works closely with groups like the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Buffalo Grove trustees agreed this week to send a letter supporting the effort to the Chicago Community Trust, which would provide grant funding for the coordinator position.

Although willing to lend that level of support, several village board members said they will remain wary until they get more details on the program.

"I believe the goals are still somewhat nebulous," Trustee Jeffrey Braiman said. "I'm not really sure what this organization is actually going to do."

Trustee Jeffrey Berman said he'll offer moral support to the program, but that's all for now.

"I will not sit up here and vote to expend taxpayer funds on this endeavor, at least not in its current form, not without something that has a more tangible objective," he said.

Robin Snyderman, a project manager for the agency, said the housing coordinator would develop a strategic plan for dealing with foreclosures in the Northwest suburbs. Working across municipal borders, she said, would promote more efficiencies in reaching solutions.

The program, Snyderman said, is similar to two others being conducted in West suburban and South Suburban Cook County.

Those efforts have garnered more than $14 million in funding for housing and community development efforts, with an additional $10 million in the pipeline.

When asked how much village staff time this would involve, Village Manager Dane Bragg said Village Planner Robert Pfeil would participate in the effort and that it may involve less

than one or two hours a week.

Snyderman said there is a growing need for regional housing solutions in the Northwest Suburbs.

Data provided in October showed a 49.7 percent increase in foreclosure filings in Northwest Cook County over the first nine months of 2010 compared to 2009, with that increase largely attributable to multifamily housing. In the first half of 2010, there were 149 foreclosure filings in Buffalo Grove, more than two-fifths from multifamily properties.