

Village of Homer Glen

**14240 W. 151st Street
Homer Glen, Illinois 60491**

January 14, 2026

**Board of Trustees
Committee of the Whole**

**Village Board Room
14240 W. 151st Street
Homer Glen, IL 60491**

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order on January 14, 2026, by Mayor Neitzke-Troiike at 5:30 p.m. in the Village Board Room, 14240 W. 151st Street, Homer Glen.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**C. ROLL CALL**

Present were Mayor Neitzke-Troiike, Trustees Curtis Mason, Rose Reynders, Mike Lepore, Robert Schaller, Nick Muller and Bart Holzhauser. Also present on behalf of the Village were Village Attorney Michael Pasquinelli, Village Manager Joe Baber, Planning and Zoning Director Chris Gruba, Economic Development Director Janie Patch, Public Works Director Brent Woods and Village Engineer Brett Westcott.

A quorum was established.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT – There was no public comment.**E. Discussion Regarding ComEd Substation Improvements – 13015 W. 143rd Street**

Lisa Aprati, ComEd representative addressed the Mayor and Board of Trustees to provide an informational update ahead of their formal public hearing before the Plan Commission. Lisa is from ComEd External Affairs. She outlined ComEd's ongoing mission to modernize the electric grid to improve reliability, resiliency, and infrastructure hardening, while continuing to invest in and support the communities they serve. She emphasized nearly a year of collaboration with the village administration on this project.

Scott Safe from ComEd's legal team then presented an overview of the proposed Goodings Grove Substation modernization project. He stated ComEd has maintained transmission and distribution infrastructure in the area for approximately 70 years, with two substations located on a 70-acre parcel: the Goodings Grove substation (facing Bell Road) and the Bell Road substation (facing 143rd Street). Both substations predate the Village itself.

The project focuses on upgrading and expanding a portion of the Goodings Grove substation, much of which contains equipment nearly 50 years old. The upgrade is intended to modernize aging infrastructure, improve system reliability, and strengthen grid resiliency for Homer Glen and surrounding communities. The project aligns with ComEd's state, federal, and regional obligations and was formally reviewed and approved through PJM's regional planning process in 2020, becoming part of PJM's Regional Transmission Expansion Plan.

The Goodings Grove substation handles ComEd's highest-voltage transmission (345 kV and 138 kV) and supports the Bell Road substation, which directly serves Homer Glen and is approximately 40 years old. Improving the Goodings Grove substation enhances the reliability of power delivered through the Bell Road substation.

Key components of the project include construction of a new primary enclosure along Bell Road to house modernized equipment out of sight, replacement and removal of obsolete equipment, and conversion from a linear breaker system to a modern networked breaker system. This change significantly reduces the risk of widespread outages—currently, a single breaker failure could take seven of fourteen 345-kV transmission lines offline.

The project replaces the existing linear breaker system at the substation with a modern, networked breaker system to improve reliability and reduce risk. Under the current configuration, a single breaker failure can cause seven of the fourteen 345-kilovolt transmission lines to go offline; this project eliminates that vulnerability.

The upgrades include construction of a main enclosure to provide weather protection and reduce the overall equipment footprint, installation of modern relay, protection, and control cabinets to allow for remote switching and enhanced safety, and removal of obsolete equipment, further reducing visual impact.

The proposed use is consistent with the village's comprehensive plan, which designates the site for utility use. The expansion is intentionally located along Bell Road, away from open space and nearby residential subdivisions. The plan aligns with the comprehensive plan's guidance to place development along primary roadways and leverages the site's strength as a distribution substation directly connected to an on-site transmission substation.

The project also preserves and enhances existing bike and pedestrian paths on the east and south sides of the property. Overall, the proposal advances multiple goals of the comprehensive plan.

The applicant team has worked with village staff for nearly a year to address concerns outlined in the staff report, including building height, parking, trees, and enclosure design. Representatives from ComEd, Burns & McDonnell, Christopher B. Burke Engineering, and Aldridge Electric are present to answer questions and discuss any aspect of the plan.

Overall, the project is intended to improve reliability (keeping power on), resiliency (faster restoration after outages), weather protection, and future electrical capacity while minimizing the need for additional substations or land use.

ComEd concluded by offering to answer questions from the Board and staff.

Mayor Neitzke-Troiike asked if there was a motion to suspend the rules to allow open dialogue. Trustee Mason motioned to suspend the rules to have open dialogue, second by Trustee Reynders.

Voice Vote:

Ayes: (6) Trustees Mason, Schaller, Muller, Lepore, Reynders, Holzhauser

Nays: (0)

Abstained: (0)

Absent: (0)

The motion carried.

Trustee Mason repeatedly asked whether studies have been conducted to ensure the facility will not emit hazardous materials or harmful electromagnetic fields (EMFs). Mr. Safe acknowledged familiarity with EMFs generally but could not confirm that any site-specific EMF or hazardous-material study has been conducted. He stated the facility will enclose existing electrical equipment, not introduce new transmission lines at this time.

The voltage levels discussed (roughly 42–45 kV locally, with regional transmission at 138 kV and 345 kV) are described as common and long-established in the region. Mr. Safe emphasized that, upon completion, the facility will support the same transmission assets that exist today, though additional transmission could occur in the future.

Ultimately, he did not directly answer whether formal studies ensuring no hazardous emissions have been done and deferred to their team.

Facility height and design is discussed.

- The building's official height is 58 feet, 9.25 inches, staying under the 60-foot zoning limit.
- Apparent height varies due to grade changes, creating a walkout basement on one side.
- The height is required for two main reasons:
 1. A vault/basement level is needed to accommodate underground transmission lines entering and exiting the facility.
 2. An internal crane system requires significant vertical clearance to lift, move, and replace large electrical equipment inside the building.
- Mr. Safe stated the facility cannot be built lower because deeper placement would:
 1. Increase heat around transmission lines
 2. Reduce performance and efficiency
- Engineers aimed to balance minimizing height while maintaining safe and functional transmission operations.

Mike Malloy, Project Manager from Burns & MacDonald answers questions regarding the building height and crane design.

- The facility includes a basement and a single main floor; there are no multiple above-ground floors.
- The main hall height is approximately 45–49 feet from the main floor to the underside of the ceiling.
- The overhead crane is positioned as low as possible and is dictated by equipment height, not excess space.
- Equipment is estimated to be around 20 feet tall, and the crane must clear stacked equipment to allow installation, movement, and maintenance.
- Additional space above the crane is reserved for utilities (electrical, fire protection, HVAC, conduit), not for occupiable floors.
- The facility cannot be sunk further into the ground due to transmission line constraints and operational requirements, including overheating concerns.

Crane clarification

- There was confusion about whether the crane was six stories high; this was corrected.
- The crane operates within the single tall main hall and does not span multiple floors.

- The design reflects standard industrial practice: minimum necessary lift height, not excess vertical clearance.

Trustee Mason has questions about equipment delivery and doors.

- The facility will include a dock door, sized based on modular equipment delivery.
- Equipment will arrive in sections on flatbed trucks, then be assembled inside.
- There is no need for an oversized “elephant door” because equipment is not delivered as one large unit.
- Adequate interior space is planned to allow assembly and disassembly while the building is fully equipped.

Trustee Mason asks Director Gruba and Village Engineer Westcott if they have seen final plans and documentation.

- Village Attorney Pasquinelli states that they have floor plans, but detailed architectural drawings have not yet been formally provided.
- More detailed drawings do exist and are held by Commonwealth Edison.
- The village is working through FOIA and legal considerations to determine whether and how those drawings can be released.
- Village Attorney Pasquinelli expects to review the issue and report back shortly.

Trustee Reynders raised concerns about the lack of interior design details for a proposed substation building, specifically questioning how many floors the building will contain and whether the board has been given sufficient information to make an informed decision. She expressed frustration with what they viewed as insufficient transparency, stating that without interior plans, the board cannot accurately determine permit fees or ensure the village is being fairly compensated.

Trustee Reynders also objected to the overall height and mass of the building, arguing that it does not fit the character of the surrounding area, which includes a strip mall on one side and residential neighborhoods on the other. Residents, according to her, are questioning why the building must be so large if it is only a single-story structure, and what direct benefit the project provides to Homer Glen.

In response, Mr. Safe disagreed with claims of a lack of transparency, stating that floor plans and elevations have been provided and that the applicant is willing to share updated interior architectural plans, but only through appropriate channels. He emphasized that there is nothing being hidden.

Trustee Reynders also raised questions about which communities the substation will serve. Mr. Safe explained that while the substation serves Homer Glen and other southwest suburban communities, they are unable to provide a detailed list or map due to confidentiality and security requirements. The Mayor acknowledged and appreciated the need for confidentiality for safety reasons but reiterated that residents want to understand whether the project primarily benefits Homer Glen or other communities.

The discussion then turned to the height of the building and the enclosed crane. While the Mayor reiterated opposition to the building’s height, she did acknowledge understanding that the height is intended to accommodate an interior crane used to install and remove equipment. Mayor Neitzke-Troiike asked what would happen if the crane were not enclosed.

Mr. Safe responded that without enclosing the crane, the project could not function as designed, as the crane would not be able to move equipment inside the building. The Mayor objected, stating that this information contradicted explanations given at a previous meeting, where they were told the crane could be placed outside and was enclosed primarily for weather protection. Mayor Neitzke-Troiike expressed

that laughing at the question was disrespectful, given the conflicting information previously provided, and requested clarification.

Mike Maysek, a manager at ComEd, clarified a prior misunderstanding regarding the crane at the substation. He explained that the critical requirement is that the electrical equipment—which performs the grid’s operational functions—must be enclosed, and that the crane must also be enclosed to support the movement, installation, and maintenance of that equipment. Earlier references may have caused confusion, as prior feedback suggested the crane could be outside, with enclosure needed only to protect equipment from the elements. He stated that enclosing both the electrical equipment and the crane allows ComEd to minimize the site footprint, avoiding the alternative of rebuilding a substation at roughly twice the size. The proposed approach is described as the least impactful option that still meets the requirements of PJM, the regional transmission operator.

Regarding building height, The Mayor raised the question about whether ComEd is seeking a variance to exceed zoning limits. Mr. Safe responded that the zoning code allows utility buildings to be erected up to 60 feet, subject to additional setbacks, and that this allowance is not limited only to areas otherwise entitled to 60-foot heights. While staff characterized this as discretionary, he stated that his reading of the code recognizes that certain uses—such as utility and school buildings—are explicitly permitted to reach that height with conditions. He noted that, regardless, ComEd has applied for approval through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) process. He stated that they need a special use for this site because the village has characterized utilities a special use.

Trustee Schaller asked clarifying questions regarding the proposed substation project, beginning with confirmation that all transmission lines serving the new building will originate from within the existing substation footprint. Mr. Safe confirmed that no new transmission lines will enter from the south or east and that all lines will be reconfigured underground within the existing site.

Trustee Schaller then raised concerns on behalf of residents to the south and east—particularly those in Martingale and Founders Circle—about potential noise impacts once the facility is fully built out, noting that many residents are elderly and sensitive to persistent sounds such as hums or mechanical noise. Mr. Safe responded that transmission equipment itself does not generate sound and that any audible noise would primarily be HVAC-related. Additionally, transformers that do emit sound are located further north, away from nearby residential areas. He emphasized that the new facility will replace aging equipment, some 30–40 years old, and is expected to reduce overall noise while improving safety and performance.

Trustee Schaller acknowledged the need to plan for future capacity but reiterated concerns about the building’s proximity to residential areas, noting that unlike comparable facilities near I-90 in Barrington and Hoffman Estates, the Homer Glen site is uniquely located within a residential context. He described the building as visually intrusive, despite understanding the structural requirements such as height and the internal crane system. In response, Mr. Safe stated that new design images had been shared with staff and highlighted that the Homer Glen project incorporates enhanced architectural design elements intended to reflect community character. An example from Hoffman Estates was shown, featuring precast concrete with rhythmic architectural detailing, as part of an effort to reduce visual impact and better integrate the structure into its surroundings.

Mr. Safe reviewed several existing substations to provide context for the proposed Homer Glen facility. Examples included facilities in Waukegan, Elk Grove Village, Itasca, Elmhurst, and Bedford Park, all of which primarily utilize precast concrete construction, often with limited glazing and some architectural rhythm.

- Waukegan: Precast concrete with minimal glazing; the building sits somewhat isolated.
- Elk Grove Village: Precast concrete with architectural rhythm; located adjacent to the tollway.

- Itasca: Rectangular precast concrete structure with limited visual detail; difficult to fully discern in the image shown.
- Elmhurst: Precast concrete structure visible from the east; residential homes are located directly west of the site.
- Bedford Park: Precast concrete construction.

Mr. Safe emphasized that the Homer Glen project represents a different approach, noting that the exterior design incorporates brick veneer to the greatest extent possible, which is a first for this type of suburban project. Considerable effort has been invested in this design, and the project architect was present to provide further detail. One of the key areas of feedback being sought from the Village concerns brick color options, including the use of various shades of red brick, though other alternatives are also under consideration.

Trustee Muller commented that, despite these efforts, the structure remains fundamentally a precast concrete building with brick accents. Mr. Safe acknowledged this characterization but stressed that brick is a dominant feature, particularly on the east, north, and south façades. The west façade includes more equipment and therefore contains less brick. He further noted that exterior detailing is being used intentionally to reduce visual impact and avoid creating an eyesore.

Trustee Muller raised a question regarding whether any of the referenced substations are in close proximity to residential areas. Mr. Safe responded affirmatively, citing Itasca and Elmhurst as examples. In Itasca, Prospect Avenue, a four-lane north-south roadway, runs directly adjacent to the substation. In Elmhurst, residential homes are located immediately west of the facility, and the image shown was taken from a street in front of those homes.

In response to concerns about noise, Mr. Malloy clarified that no new transformers are being added, and therefore there is no anticipated increase in ongoing operational sound.

Questions were raised regarding building height, particularly in comparison to the Homer Glen site along Bell Road, which is currently a two-lane roadway. The presenter explained that the perceived height from grade to the top of the parapet wall is approximately 47 feet, while the technical height measurement is approximately 51 feet. When measured consistently from grade, this height is comparable to the Itasca facility, which is located on a relatively level site.

Trustee Muller asked why the building was placed in its specific location on the site. The presenter explained that alternative locations to the north and west were evaluated but presented challenges due to:

- Existing north-south transmission lines
- Wetland and stormwater concerns in the northern and western portions of the site
- Increased proximity to existing residential subdivisions to the west

Mr. Safe stated based on these constraints, the selected location was determined to minimize impacts to nearby neighborhoods while accommodating electrical infrastructure and stormwater requirements.

Trustee Muller asked how far off Bell Road is this site plan set for. Mr. Safe stated in terms of distance from Bell Road, measured from the expanded right-of-way that accounts for the future widening from two lanes to four lanes, the main wall of the enclosure is approximately 176 feet off Bell Road. The front of the staircases, which are low-profile, are about 168 to 169 feet from the right-of-way. He added, additionally, there is a retaining wall located 12 feet from the property line due to the change in grade along Bell Road. That retaining wall begins at approximately six inches above grade and gradually increases to about seven and a half feet in height along the roadway.

As for the design, the rectangular building layout shown in the renderings is the concept they are proposing to move forward with. However, they are seeking feedback from the board on the exterior appearance, as they have provided four color and material options, and would appreciate direction on which option to advance.

Trustee Lepore's question focused on why the building design cannot go lower due to underground transmission lines and related construction concerns. He raised the question about whether temperature issues from underground transmission lines could be mitigated to allow a deeper basement. The response from Mr. Safe explained that the transmission lines have strict ampacity requirements (the amount of electrical current they must safely carry).

- The deeper the lines are buried, the worse heat dissipation becomes, which reduces their ampacity.
- If buried deeper than their current placement, the lines would no longer meet required electrical capacity standards.
- There is no practical insulation or workaround to counteract this issue.
- The lines are already installed as deep as technically feasible—approximately 12 feet below grade.

Trustee Holzhauser asked whether similar projects had experienced labor disputes. The project team stated they have not had picketing or labor disputes on comparable projects. Trustee Holzhauser asked the question about whether ComEd would sign a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) with Will and Grundy County building trades to prevent disputes. The team could not answer definitively at the meeting but acknowledged the concern and agreed to follow up.

Lastly, Trustee Holzhauser raised the concerns about the visibility and disruption of construction along Bell Road, including hauling, debris, street cleanliness, and the irony of tearing up a newly finished road. He emphasized the importance of managing construction impacts such as debris, hauling traffic, and street sweeping to avoid negative effects on the community.

Village Engineer Brett Westcott raised the question whether construction and phasing of the new facility (including connecting new components and cables) would cause power outages in the village. ComEd confirmed the answer is no—electrical service will be maintained throughout construction, with no planned or unplanned outages affecting the village. Power is maintained through the Bell Road substation.

Director Gruba raised concerns about the absence of a paved parking lot and compliance with ADA requirements. He had recommended approximately eight parking spaces, including one ADA-accessible space, based on the traffic impact study.

Mr. Safe explained that substations are intentionally designed without paved parking for safety and operational reasons:

- Substations use gravel surfaces due to an engineered grounding grid that safely dissipates electrical discharges; paving would interfere with this.
- Extensive underground electrical infrastructure makes paved areas problematic during fault repairs.
- ComEd has designated safe gravel parking areas along the east side of the site, sufficient to accommodate expected traffic (about eight vehicles per day, spread out).
- ComEd stated the surface will be dust-free and hard, but not paved.

He asserted that under the Illinois Accessibility Code, an accessible parking space is only required if parking is paved. They characterized the substation as a privately owned, typically unoccupied machinery

facility, which they believe does not require paved ADA parking. Mr. Safe respectfully disagreed with the zoning administrator's recommendation.

Trustee Holzhauser raised concerns regarding the need for staging space for trucks, cranes, and equipment.

Mayor Neitzke-Troiike raised concerns about the visual and community impact of the facility, describing it as a potential eyesore visible from major roads. She has concerns from nearby residents. The ongoing questions about landscaping, trees, bike path design and maintenance, and overall community benefit. The mayor stated that she appreciated some design elements (brick façade, landscaping efforts), but continued concern about aesthetics and long-term impacts are key here. She indicated this issue will require multiple, in-depth discussions and careful consideration. There is no desire to rush or be pressured by deadlines. Further dialogue will continue, including discussions limited by Open Meetings Act constraints. The meeting concluded due to a scheduled board meeting immediately following.

F. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Reynders motioned to adjourn, second by Trustee Mason.

Voice Vote:

Ayes: (6) Trustees Mason, Schaller, Muller, Lepore, Reynders, Holzhauser

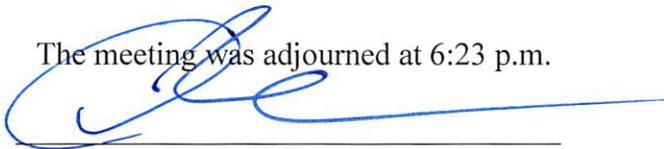
Nays: (0)

Abstained: (0)

Absent: (0)

The motion carried

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.



Candice Bielski, Village Clerk

Approved at the Board of Trustees Meeting dated January 28, 2026