Public Services, Parks & Natural Resources Summary and Recommendation Sheet

Meeting Date: November 18, 2024

The Item: Discussion and Recommendation on Discontinuation of Adding Fluoride in Village Drinking Water

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Attachments:

Requested PSPNR Committee Focus: Offer a recommendation

Summary of Issue: The addition of fluoride to drinking water incurs both direct and indirect costs, including:

Chemical and Operational Costs: Purchasing and managing fluoride for municipal water systems requires significant, ongoing expenditure. Reducing these costs could free up resources for other essential services or infrastructure projects.

Maintenance and Safety: Handling fluoride involves extra safety protocols and regular equipment maintenance, adding to operational expenses. Eliminating fluoride would simplify water treatment processes and potentially lower the risk of worker exposure to hazardous chemicals.

Recent studies by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) and other health bodies have linked higher fluoride exposure to neurodevelopmental concerns in children, including lower IQ scores and potential impacts on thyroid health * **. Specifically:

No Safe Threshold Identified: Research indicates that even at levels as low as 0.7 mg/L (the standard fluoridation level in the U.S.), fluoride exposure may reduce IQ by 3-6 points among children. Given this lack of a defined "safe" exposure threshold, maintaining fluoride in water could pose unanticipated risks to young residents***.

Increased Vulnerability: Fluoride may interfere with thyroid hormones critical for brain development, making young children particularly susceptible. Given these potential risks, the precautionary principle suggests minimizing fluoride exposure when alternative sources are readily available.**

Today, nearly all households have access to fluoridated toothpaste, mouthwash, and dental treatments, which provide a more targeted and efficient way of applying fluoride directly to the teeth. Studies have shown that topical fluoride is highly effective in preventing tooth decay, while systemic exposure (i.e., from drinking water) is less impactful*. Encouraging residents to use these alternatives could provide dental health benefits without the broader risks associated with ingestion.

Adding fluoride to public water supplies effectively removes individual choice regarding fluoride consumption. Discontinuing fluoridation aligns with a respect for personal health autonomy, as residents can opt for fluoride supplements or fluoride-containing dental products based on personal preference and health considerations.

Discontinuing water fluoridation is a financially prudent and health-conscious decision that respects both individual choice and the latest scientific evidence. By redirecting resources away from fluoride procurement and maintenance, the Village can better support services that address other critical infrastructure needs, benefiting all DeForest residents.

Recommendation: The Public Services Committee should ask the Board to support ending the addition of fluoride to DeForest's drinking water. This approach aligns with current scientific findings, promotes public health, and demonstrates fiscal responsibility.

Anticipated Next Steps: Should the board support this measure, we'll stop adding fluoride to our drinking water in DeForest.

* https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/assessments/noncancer/completed/fluoride

** https://www.verywellhealth.com/fluoride-lower-iq-children-report-8708414

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