


[Listen Live >](#)
[Support This Station](#)

[WNIJ - WNIU](#)
[Dinner and the RSO](#)

[Freeport & Sterling Repeaters](#)
[Freeport and Sterling Repeaters At](#)
[Reduced Power](#)

[Politics](#)
[Watch Illinois Republican Primary](#)
[Candidates Debate](#)

Local

6:41 AM WED JANUARY 22, 2014

Drawing The Line On Providing Local Services

By [MIKE MOEN \(@PEOPLE/MIKE-MOEN\)](#)

Privatizing government services is a recurring topic in an era of tight budgets. From lottery systems to garbage pick-up, agencies have explored ways to save money. In some cases, turning over ownership of roadways has been discussed. That debate is happening in a northern Illinois community.


http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/n/wnij/files/201305/road_sign.jpg
[Enlarge image](#)
http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/n/wnij/files/201305/road_sign.jpg

Credit WNIJ

[Listen](#)

4:37

Morning Edition version by Mike Moen

The Chicago suburb of Long Grove is a village of more than eight-thousand people. Incorporated in 1956, this Lake County community is known for its affluent neighborhoods and annual festivals celebrating foods like chocolate and strawberries.

It also has a history of running a minimal government. Village president Angie Underwood says that philosophy is echoed through its tax base.

“We do not have a local property tax, so our sources of income in Long Grove are very limited,” Underwood said.

That’s especially been the case in recent years, as revenue from building permits dwindled and commercial development never materialized. Underwood says they are now dealing with a nearly one-million dollar funding gap for roads.

Finding a solution

One way to reduce that gap is to transfer the responsibility of road maintenance to residents. A while back, Underwood says, the village saw the writing on the wall and declared that any new roads built should be private. Over the course of time, as the community added more residents and infrastructure, there was a gradual shift in the percentage of ownership.

“So we have a situation now where 70-percent of our residents live on private roads, and 30-percent of our residents live on public roads,” Underwood said.

With the exception of main thoroughfares, the village wants the remaining 30-percent of people living on public roads to financially support the maintenance of those roads. Underwood says that would come through what they are calling special service areas.

"The residents that live in that special service area would be responsible for the financial upkeep of those roads, but they would remain public. The village would still own those roads, but the funding to maintain them would be private," Underwood said.

Underwood says they are now trying to work out agreements with various subdivisions where extra charges would be added a homeowner's tax bill. Residents also have the option of creating new HOA's to take ownership of the road in question. That second option would require a super-majority approval from village trustees. Underwood says they plan to take that vote as the process unfolds. There is a November deadline to get all of this done.

Despite their privatization efforts, Long Grove will still try to get a property-tax referendum passed this spring. That would go only toward maintaining busy streets the village still wants to own. Officials decided to go with a scaled-back tax proposal, after residents complained about paying for roads in other neighborhoods, when they're already subsidizing their own streets.

Dangerous precedent?

Kurt Thurmaier is a public administration professor at Northern Illinois University. He calls what's happening in Long Grove a slippery slope. Whether its splitting up how residents fund infrastructure, or voters not willing to support a community-wide tax for a particular service, Thurmaier says it points to what he believes is a growing distaste for funding basic community needs.

"The question is: Are people willing to contribute as they were in the past, something from their pocket to the common good? And increasingly, people are saying no," Thurmaier said.

Thurmaier says local governments can avoid these scenarios by building a more reliable tax base. He says that should include a property tax, as unpopular as it may seem.

Darryl Lindberg is the mayor of Loves Park. He also serves as president of the Illinois Municipal League. Lindberg says while Illinois law allows local governments to vacate responsibility of certain roads, he cautions against it.

"They're fine when they're new. But when it comes to resurface or doing other maintenance, it's such an expense that their homeowners association didn't really anticipate. And that's when they usually come to us and ask us 'can you take our roads?'" Lindberg said.

Lindberg's city also doesn't have a local property tax. But he says they've been aggressive in identifying other ways to pay for road maintenance. He says it's a service residents should expect from their local government. But he understands that smaller communities, like Long Grove, have their hands tied -- especially when revenues are hard to come by.

As for setting precedents, Long Grove President Underwood doesn't view this as a move against community-minded thinking. She says her village is a unique situation where it is already used to having residents be responsible for a key part of infrastructure.

"From the get-go, the village was founded on the idea that people would be self-sufficient," Underwood said.

Whether or not residents still agree with that sentiment will be borne out in negotiations.

Meanwhile, Underwood notes that it's miraculous they have gone this far without a property tax. She says if residents truly feel that local government should be the one in control of roads, than they need to embrace such a tax so it can still carry out that service, even if it's on a limited basis.



This copy is for personal, non-commercial use. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution you can: 1) Use the "Reprint" button found on the top and bottom of every article, 2) Visit reprints.theygsgroup.com/dailyherald.asp for samples and additional information or 3) **Order a reprint of this article now.**

Article updated: 1/17/2014 10:47 AM

Fox Lake voters to decide in March whether to raise taxes to fix roads

By Lee Filas

Fox Lake voters will decide in the March 18 primary election whether to raise taxes to improve local roads.

The village board agreed Nov. 12 to put a referendum on the ballot that asks voters whether the village should borrow \$6 million in bonds to repair 23 miles of roads.

The village would add \$2 million from the general operating fund for a total road repair project worth \$8 million, Mayor Donny Schmit said.

If the referendum is approved, the owner of a \$150,000 home would see their property tax bills increase about \$86 annually for 15 years, officials said. A Q&A about the referendum can be found at foxlake.org.

"At my very first meeting as mayor, I was presented with two petitions from homeowners asking me to fix roads," Schmit said. "I'm constantly getting calls from people asking for their road to be repaired. They say the roads are bringing down the value of their houses and causing damages to their cars."

After approving a water rate increase late last year, Schmit said, officials decided to give residents the choice of whether to raise taxes for road repairs.

"If people vote against the referendum, we will do our \$2 million in repairs and keep trying to fix them as we go," he said. "But, if they approve the referendum, it will take two years for all the roadwork to be completed."

The project would focus on roads rated to be the worst, he said.

"Currently, the village is responsible for maintenance on 55 miles of roadways," Schmit said. "With that amount, we should be repairing about 4 miles of roads every year. But, we have only been repairing about 1 mile a year because of money."

Schmit said the village contacted its representatives at the township, county, state and federal level in search of funding to help repair roads and was told nothing was available.

"So, we are bringing it to the voters to decide," he said.

Other referendum questions on the March 18 ballot in Lake County are:

• Libertyville voters will be asked whether the village should be allowed to borrow up to \$11.5 million, to be repaid with property taxes. The money would be used to convert the former Libertyville High School, known as the

Brainerd building, into a community center. If approved and the bonds are issued, the owner of a home valued at \$300,000 would pay an estimated \$141.98 more in property taxes each year.

¶ Voters will decide if Round Lake Area Unit District 116 should borrow \$29 million for a high school expansion and a variety of building improvements. If voters approve, school officials said, current debt would be restructured and extended and taxes would not increase.

¶ The village of Long Grove will ask voters whether they want to authorize a new property tax for repair and replacement of certain roads. As presented, the new tax would not last more than 10 tax levy years. The proposed tax rate would amount to less than 1 percent of a property tax bill, village officials say. The owner of a home valued at \$750,000 would pay an extra \$166.

Copyright © 2014 Paddock Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.



www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/ct-long-grove-roads-update-met-20131213,0,561161.story

chicagotribune.com

Long Grove's plan to privatize roads moves forward

By [Duaa Eldeib](#), Chicago Tribune reporter

December 13, 2013

Opponents of a plan to privatize nearly half the village roads in Long Grove appear to have lost after the proposal was affirmed not once but twice. advertisement

Village trustees who had voted against the ordinance when it initially passed by a narrow margin in November tried again to defeat the measure this week. However, the final 3-3 vote was not enough to rescind it. The village president, who voted in favor of the ordinance last month, abstained.

Local officials who favor the privatization plan contend that the village cannot afford to maintain public roadways properly. After two years of study, officials concluded that converting many residential subdivision streets into private roads — thus shifting the responsibility and cost of upkeep and plowing to residents — was the only feasible option to ensure that the streets don't fall further into disrepair.

The issue has divided the leafy northwest suburb and its residents — seemingly even more than Long Grove's bid to impose its first-ever property tax to pay for maintaining the remaining roads. Local voters will be asked to approve the tax on the March primary ballot.

Many of the residents who lined up to speak out against the ordinance this week voiced concern about what they called a rushed fix and argued that the plan places an unfair burden on a fraction of the residents. In a forceful objection to the ordinance, Trustee Stan Borys said the decaying roads will only exacerbate the problem for many residents.

"It is disturbing that this action was taken without thoroughly assessing and communicating its impact, without mechanisms put in place ... to ensure an equitable distribution ... without exhausting every option in advance," he said.

About half the roads in the village are already private, and some residents said they did not want to subsidize roads on which they rarely, if ever, drive.

Residents who live on roads set to be privatized have two options: They can have the Village Board vacate the road, meaning responsibility for its upkeep would likely pass to the respective homeowners association, though some subdivisions don't have formal organizations in place. Or the village could establish a special service area, a type of targeted taxing district, to maintain and repair roads.

The deadline to implement either option is November 2014.

deldeib@tribune.com

Copyright © 2013 Chicago Tribune Company, LLC

Humana. **Questions about health insurance?**
 Get answers at a **free healthcare reform event** in your area. [Learn More](#)

À«

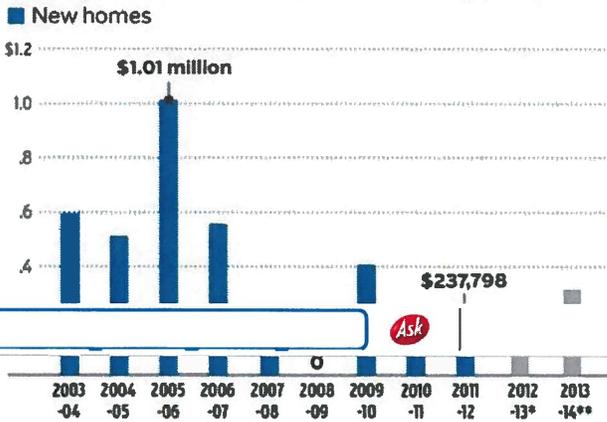
Long Grove, Illinois annual building permit fees and revenue

Long Grove's road problems

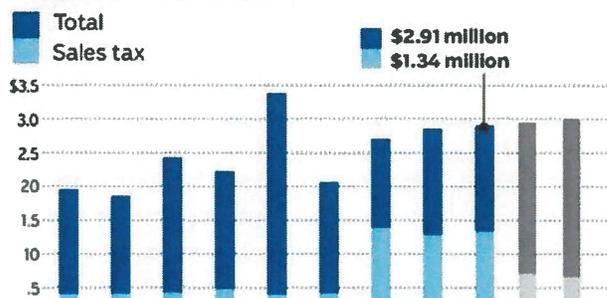
Although Long Grove is an affluent suburb, it can't afford to fix and maintain all of its roads. Citing an annual shortfall of more than \$1 million to keep up the roads, trustees approved a plan that could privatize nearly half of the village's public roads — transferring the costs to the residents. The village has no municipal property tax and is lacking fees from building permits after the housing market collapsed.



BUILDING PERMIT FEES Scale in millions by fiscal year



REVENUE Scale in millions



VIDEO

Running on Fumes in North Dakota
The New York Times Jan 14, 2014

The New York Times



Running on Fumes in North Dakota



Raw: Obama Discusses 2014



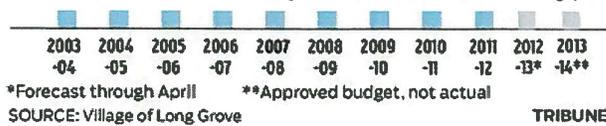
Bomb attack in Cairo before Egypt...



Cubs unveil new mascot

PHOTO GALLERIES





(Tribune, Tribune / January 13, 2014)

E-mail Twitter Facebook StumbleUpon

Share

TODAY'S FLYERS



Save on 2014 Pro Model Gloves (Sports Authority)



Resolve to Save Big (Target)



Free Target Gift Card! (Target)



15% OFF Loose Dumbbells, Weight Plates and Kettle Bells (Sports Authority)

The Tribune is using Facebook comments on stories. To post a comment, log into Facebook and then add your comment. To report spam or abuse, click the "X" in the upper right corner of the comment box. In certain circumstances, we will take down entire comment boards.

Our commenting guidelines can be found [here](#) ».



Add a comment...

Comment

Facebook social plugin

Volcano eruption in 2015 concept cars Indonesia



Mugs in the news



Scott Stantis cartoons

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTIONS



HOPE FOR RECOVERY Taking action once signs of teen addiction are confirmed

How to select a retirement community



PRIMETIME A special look at local lifestyles for those over 50



REAL ESTATE INSIDER 5 big insights on selling a home in 2014

CHICAGONOW



New Cubs mascot: Unbearably cute?



(http://adclick.g.doubleclick.net/aclk?sa=L&ai=BwPYXpp-wl

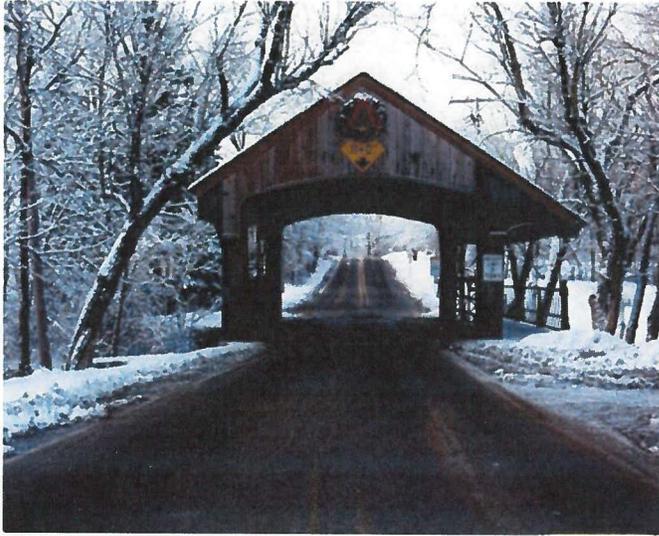
DG2DJ5p6I8KOsFYIBCWNhLWdvb2dsZblBGWJ1ZmZhbG9ncm92ZS5zdW50aW1lcy5jb23IAQLaAUJodHRwOi8vYnVmZmFsb2dyb3ZlLnN1bnRpbWVzLmNvbS9uZXdzL3RheGVzbGctQkdDLTA!
 DGyjbzasB2gUCCAGgBhTgBtvNqwE&num=0&sig=AOD64_25FP6bnvc1uXMhmlodVlrarPURGg&client=&adurl=http://oascentral.suntimes.com/RealMedia/ads/click_x.ad
 09262013/article/L30/2012719629/Top/STM/BrookfieldZoo.Pioneer.ROS.728x90.300x250.12.10-12.31.13/BrookfieldZoo.Pio.728x90.12.11.html/4d6b327a5a564b4b4d624541446b7059%3Fhtt
 BOGO.pdf)

December 16, 2013 1:35 p.m.

Like 26 Tweet 1 +1 0 Share 29

Property tax question looms in Long Grove

By: Ronnie Wachter | rwachter@pioneerlocal.com | @ronniewachter



Covered bridge at Christmas located in Long Grove

The reason Long Grove's iconic covered bridge may have to be torn down and rebuilt is one part of village officials' larger and pressing question regarding the need for a property tax levy.

At their fourth town hall meeting, set for 7 p.m. Oct. 8 at Woodlawn Middle School, village trustees will discuss putting a referendum on the spring 2014 ballot that seeks public approval of Long Grove's first property tax. The issue has loomed for years, but has recently resurfaced in light of a \$2 million annual gap that separates village hall from its infrastructure improvement goals.

"The village of Long Grove was founded on the concept of minimal government," Village President Angie Underwood said. "That worked for a long time, but it's not working now, and it's not getting any better."

This weekend, when thousands descend on Long Grove for its annual Apple Fest, some drivers will see some of the main roads and public parking lots in need of repairs.

Village manager David Lothspeich said Long Grove should be addressing 3.1 miles of street every year, but that it has not hit that pace since 2003. In 2012, Long Grove worked on about one mile, he said.

Underwood said there is no room left in the village's operating budget, and that point might be moot anyway. Long Grove's annual expenditures amount to \$2.8 million, which is still \$2 million short of officials' infrastructure funding targets.

Underwood and Lothspeich said the village could cut off everything else, focus solely on rebuilding roads, and still not have enough money with the current tax base to catch up.

Lothspeich offered Robert Parker Coffin Road's covered bridge over the Buffalo Creek as the microcosm.

Lothspeich said the federal government has deemed the bridge "deficient."

"It's not falling apart, but it does have some significant failures to it," he said.

The deficient label comes mainly from the fact that the bridge narrows the road to one lane, he said. To gain federal funding for its repair or replacement, Long Grove would have to widen it to two lanes. If the goal is to keep the single lane, Long Grove will have pay for its repairs alone.

The bridge is part of the village's marketing of the downtown area, which has welcomed new businesses this year.

"That's the most noticeable one, that people recognize and associate with Long Grove," Lothspeich said.

He noted that the Oakwood Road bridge will be replaced in 2014, with federal funds paying 80 percent of that bill.

Long Grove officials also reported signs of economic turnaround.

At the board's Sept. 10 meeting, trustees noted that increased revenue from building permits pumped an unexpected \$200,000 into the infrastructure budget, with \$50,000 earmarked for replacing road signs.

Underwood said trustees are eager to hear all taxpayers' opinions.

"This is critically important," she said. "Everyone needs to understand why this is being done."

[Read More News \(http://buffalogrove.suntimes.com/news/\)](http://buffalogrove.suntimes.com/news/)

 Post a new comment

[LOGIN](#)

[POST](#)

0 Comments

[RSS \(http://comments.us1.gigya.com/comments/rss/62237010/buffalogrove/taxes-to-BGC-09262013\)](http://comments.us1.gigya.com/comments/rss/62237010/buffalogrove/taxes-to-BGC-09262013) | [Subscribe](#)



ADVERTISEMENT

Latest News

Buffalo Grove Fire Department hosts holiday blood drive
(/news/commbrieft-BGC-12192013:article)

December 17, 2013 12:13 p.m.

Buffalo Grove women raise money for ovarian cancer-detecting dogs
(/news/ovarian-BGC-12192013:article)

December 17, 2013 12:35 p.m.

SPONSORED

What to expect from the Apple iPad Air 16GB Wi-Fi
(/directory/what_to_expect_from_the_apple_ipad_air_16gb_wifi-DIR-12062013:article)

December 13, 2013 9:25 a.m.

Local business supports Vernon Township food pantry, Adopt-a-Family program
(/news/commbriefs-BGC-12192013:article)

December 17, 2013 11:47 a.m.

Warm welcome: Lake County PADS gives shelter
(/news/htt_hpads-LCN-12162013:article)

December 17, 2013 12:31 p.m.

A birth-control Comeback: The IUD
(/news/a_birth_control_comeback_the_iud-LIB-12172013:article)

December 17, 2013 11:26 a.m.

Family of Lake County murder victim seeks monitoring law
(/news/family_of_lake_county_murder_victim_seeks_monitori-VER-12172013:article)

December 17, 2013 10:46 a.m.

SPONSORED

WEEKAWAY: Holiday shopping in downtown Valparaiso, Indiana
(/things-to-do/weekaway/wa_val_vcfe-NAP-12172013:article)

December 17, 2013 10:41 a.m.

Paul Sassone: In the old neighborhood, ghosts of Christmas past
(/people/voices/sassone-PPN-12192013:article)

December 17, 2013 10:02 a.m.

Chinese Exclusion Act repealed 70 years ago today
(/news/chinese_exclusion_act_repealed_70_years_ago-NIL-12172013:article)

December 17, 2013 11:48 a.m.



DG2DJ5p6I8KOsFYIBCWNhLWdvb2dsZbIBGWJ1ZmZhbG9ncm92ZS5zdW50aWlcy5jb23IAQLaAVBodHRwOi8vYnVmZmFsb2dyb3ZlLnN1bnRpbWVzLmNvbS9uZXdzL2dvdMvYm1lbnQvdGF4n30A&client=&adurl=http://oascentral.suntimes.com/RealMedia/ads/click_bx.ads/buffalogrove.suntimes.com/news/government/taxpreview-BGC-11122013/article/L30/2090262428/Top/STM/Bi us/Brookfield-Holiday-N

November 12, 2013 1:10 p.m.

Like 1 Tweet 3 +1 0 Share 4

Long Grove trustees to vote tonight on property tax proposal

By: Ronnie Wachter | rwachter@pioneerlocal.com | @ronniewachter

With a community meeting scheduled for tonight, a group of Long Grove residents is hoping to rally their neighbors against village hall's proposal to levy Long Grove's first property tax.

Long Grove United is a three-week-old collection of Long Grove homeowners who hope to stop the village board from placing a property tax referendum on a future ballot. Trustees are scheduled to vote during tonight's meeting, which could place a referendum on the April ballot.

Marcia Marshall, the group's founder, said their intent is to unite citizens by bringing those who would vote in a tax's favor into their fold.

"We believe that there are other ways for Long Grove to generate revenue," Marshall said. "We can be self-sustaining, all we'd have to do is tap into our most wonderful district, which is the historic downtown."

A property tax, if approved by the majority of voters, would pump new money into the village's road-repair budget. Long Grove is responsible for 31 miles of pavement, most of which has hardly been touched since the recession began roughly five years ago. Officials have said the current repair bill is around \$3.5 million, but growing annually.

Village administrators and trustees will speak at 7 p.m. tonight at Kildeer Countryside Elementary School, 3100 Old McHenry Road, during the latest town-hall meeting about their proposal. A vote is scheduled to follow.

"We've got a lot of public interest," Long Grove Village President Angie Underwood said. "I'm looking forward to having a lot of residents there. It could have a lot of effect on the future of the village."

Marshall said Long Grove United began in her living room after the most recent meeting on Oct. 22, when she invited several like-minded property owners over to discuss an organized response to the village's proposal.

No one is debating the validity of the situation, Marshall said, noting the majority of Long Grove's funding has always come through sales taxes and building permit fees. But a struggling downtown and little home construction have forced trustees to seek other funding sources.

She also noted that her group understands that some of Long Grove's newer residents moved in with the expectation that modern services and infrastructure would follow.

Marshall said Long Grove United simply believes in a method less taxing on homeowners.

"We have a sketchy plan," she said, but it focuses on revitalizing the downtown.

The first specific would be to turn the area into a "food-truck Mecca" every weekend to attract more people to the downtown's existing charms. Long Grove United's plan also would put off road repairs quite a ways into the future.

But Underwood responded that village officials are "trying not to just push it down the road one more year."

Can Long Grove United actually unite the village?

"That's a great question, and the answer is, 'Yes,'" Marshall said. "We can bring people into the village, and then fix it later, when we have the wherewithal to do it."

In addition to road demands, the village for years has discussed moving away from its well-water system by connecting to Lake Michigan, among other services enjoyed by surrounding communities.

"There are people who want a park district, there are people who want a full-time police force," she said. "We are not Chicago, we have a very different character, and that's what makes us unique and wonderful."

"We live in the fifth-largest taxing body in the country," she added. "I don't think anyone wants to damage the housing market further. You have to balance living in a community like this and public services."

Read More Government (<http://buffalogrove.suntimes.com/news/government/>)

Post a new comment

LOGIN



December 16, 2013 1:37 p.m.

Like 6 Tweet 2 g+1 0 Share 8

Long Grove hires architect to assess covered bridge

By: Ronnie Wachter | rwachter@pioneerlocal.com | @ronniewachter



Covered bridge at Christmas located in Long Grove

Long Grove Village Board members agreed Dec. 10 that the Robert Parker Coffin Road covered bridge needs help, quickly.

To that end, they hired Johnson Lasky Architects from Chicago to examine the 110-year-old structure's condition.

Trustee Charlie Wachs said the naked eye can see that its condition is not good.

"The limestone abutments are badly worn right now," he told the board. "But the iron truss is still in very good shape."

The bridge, of considerable significance to the village's marketing scheme, is only one lane and has a three-ton weight limit, the lowest the state allows. Whatever results the architects bring to the board will determine whether it can be rehabilitated, or if it must be replaced entirely.

"In the meantime, we're going to need to do some work to make it safe," Wachs said.

The board spent almost \$20,000 to hire Johnson Lasky, a sum small enough that it did not require competitive bidding.

Any work is likely years away. After the study is finished, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will need to approve any work done over the Buffalo Creek, which runs beneath.

Read More News (<http://lakezurich.suntimes.com/news/>)

Post a new comment

LOGIN

POST

0 Comments

RSS (<http://comments.US1.qqya.com/comments/rss/6223701/lakezurich/bridge-BGC-12192013>) | [Subscribe](#)

Related Articles

Long Grove homeowners oppose village tax for road repairs (http://buffalogrove.suntimes.com/news/long_grove_homeowners_oppose_village_tax_for_road_-BGC-10102013:article)