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Glen Ellyn, IL -

Glen Ellyn leaders are considering redrawing the village's loitering laws, which officials said would reflect up-to-date court rulings.

The changes would throw out the old section of the Village Code dealing with vagrancy, replacing it instead with one addressing "disruptive public conduct."

Among the most noticeable differences: People would be prohibited from occupying a public bench for more than two hours at a time.

The Glen Ellyn Village Board reviewed the proposed ordinances at a workshop meeting earlier this week. Members appear poised to approve the changes Monday, Aug. 25, despite two trustees' lingering concerns.

Village law defines vagrants as those begging, loitering or "abroad at unusual hours." Any vagrant who does not disperse on police order is guilty of a violation, according to the code.

The new ordinance still addresses loitering and begging to the same end, though with updated language. And it specifically deals with the village's public benches, saying that people cannot occupy one for 120 consecutive minutes without at least a 15-minute break.

Glen Ellyn Police Chief Phil Norton was quick to say that the laws would not mark a drastic change in police enforcement; they would not be out "chalking the pant leg" of people on benches the same way police keep tabs on cars in time-limited parking spots, he said.

But Norton likened the spirit of the law to parking enforcement: It is meant to keep a steady flow of foot traffic.

Village officials starting re-examining the laws in light of complaints about loitering in the downtown. Village attorney Stewart Diamond rewrote the ordinance to be consistent with case law, Norton said.

"It provides the Glen Ellyn police officers with a tool to address issues that have been brought to us by residents of the community," he said.

Some of the complaints, heard in casual conversation and seen in newspaper letters to the editor, have

targeted those staying at overnight shelters for homeless people run by DuPage Public Action to Deliver Shelter.

But Norton said that the law was not meant to single out a portion of the population.

“Let me be very clear: Whether someone is rich or poor, homeless or not, well dressed or not, this will be applied evenly across all stations,” he said to the trustees this week.

Still, Trustee Mary Jane Chapman was not fully convinced. If enforcement is driven by complaints, those complaints would likely be made unequally across the population, she said.

She also said she was worried that the laws would be too vague and required too much police discretion, a charge echoed by Trustee Peter Norton.

“It’s too vague, and it tries to cover too much ground,” he said after this week’s meeting.