



Winnetka/Northfield

## Northfield charges state senator \$926.55 for FOIA request

By [John P. Huston](#) Tribune reporter Friday at 4:46 p.m. 10-15-10

State Sen. Jeff Schoenberg is getting what he asked for, but possibly more than he bargained for, from the Village of Northfield.

In response to Schoenberg's recent Freedom of Information Act request, the village has provided him with a detailed response – a box of 6,277 pages weighing enough that Village Manager Stacy Sigman can't lift it.

"I can lift a 50-pound bag of dog food, but I can't lift that," Sigman said.

And the box of documents carries a hefty price tag as well. At 15 cents per page, that village is asking Schoenberg's office to pay a \$926.55 bill. (The village gave Schoenberg the first 50 pages for free.)

FOIA law allows public entities to charge up to 15 cents per page to cover the cost of reproduction.

Schoenberg is angry his request that the fee be waived was not granted.

"It's very unfortunate and totally outrageous that Northfield is using yet another delay tactic to block my ability to do my job as our area's state senator," Schoenberg said. "The request was clearly my request was clearly for official purposes."

He has appealed to Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office and expects a ruling by Oct. 25.

The Evanston Democrat originally submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to Northfield Sept. 8, alleging a "slush fund" of money used by the village to fight the expansion of Willow Road to four or five lanes.

Northfield denied the accusation, and on Sept. 20 it provided a three-page, 15-year financial breakdown saying it spent \$686,709 of its own money, plus \$762,394 which

was reimbursed by the Illinois Department of Transportation, since the issue first surfaced in 1995.

Northfield wants to keep Willow from expanding beyond three lanes, citing child safety concerns around adjacent schools and parks. Neighboring towns say the 1.2-mile stretch of two-lane Willow Road creates congestion and traffic accidents.

Schoenberg responded Sept. 29 by saying Northfield officials were deliberately failing to comply with FOIA, and pledged to appeal to the Illinois Attorney General's office. He also widened his original request to "all contracts, memoranda, communications, board minutes, invoices, billing records and other such relevant documents."