



**BETTER NOT POUT,
YOU BETTER GO BUY**

Chic & cheap

Looking fabulous for less at next holiday get-together / **Voice, C1**

Change to believe in

Geneva grad's season lifted
Wheaton College football,
Sports, B1



TODAY'S WEATHER BY:

SAMANTHA PRUSAK
ST. RITA OF CASCIA
AURORA

HIGH 30, LOW 18



SNOW DEVELOPING



ANDREA REULAND OF ELBURN,
OUR VALUED SUBSCRIBER

The Kane County Beacon News

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2008

KC

NORTH AURORA • BATAVIA • GENEVA • ST. CHARLES • KANEVILLE • ELBURN • MAPLE PARK • VIRGIL

75 CENTS

Fire District needs tax hike to speed its response times

By Dave Gathman

DGATHMAN@SCN1.COM

ST. CHARLES—The 20,000 people who live in the St. Charles Countryside Fire Protection District will have a tax referendum on their ballot in April to pay for speeding up ambulance and firefighters' response time by building at least one more fire station.

The Fire District's board this month voted unanimously "to raise funds to reduce the time it takes for emergency crews to reach home, schools and businesses within the district."

The district covers 34 square miles of land around the city of St. Charles, outside the city limits. That includes parts of unincorporated St. Charles, Campton Hills, Elburn, Elgin, South Elgin, Bartlett and West Chicago.

Board President Ed Malek said the decision was spurred by a recent study of how long it takes emergency crews to respond and by a survey of 600 homeowners.

"The citizens spoke and we listened," said Malek. "Lives are at risk when emergency services cannot respond in less than 10 minutes, which is clearly more often the case for homeowners in the furthest boundaries of the district."

Malek said the exact amount of funds

the district will request will be determined in the next month or two. Board members specified that they want to reduce the emergency response time to 6.5 minutes for 75 percent of calls, as opposed to the current 2008 average of 9 minutes or longer for 53 percent of the time.

According to district estimates, four additional minutes must be added to the response time for an operator to answer a 911 call, sound a station alarm, and for the crew to mobilize and depart the station.

Officials state that half the district's 911 calls take 13 minutes or longer before medical or fire services are performed on site. The survey indicated that 82.7 percent of the fire district residents believed a response time between five to seven minutes, or total elapsed time of nine to 11 minutes, is acceptable.

For the 2008 year to date, 511 out of 953 calls took 11 minutes or more in their elapsed time. Board members noted that a flashover can happen in six to 10 minutes, turning a small fire into an uncontrollable blaze. A person in cardiac arrest will die or experience severe brain damage in less than six minutes.

To view the complete survey or get more information about the referendum, visit www.sccfpd.org.