

[In-depth reporting by Illinois Public Media News](#)

Listen to the latest Illinois Public Media Newscast:

Play now:

Homer Board Rejects Water Contract for Mine

Story date: Monday, February 11, 2013 from Illinois Public Media News

Homer Village Board members have rejected a contract to provide treated water and sewer services for the purpose of setting up a coal mine.

The 3-2 vote by trustees Monday night essentially ends talks between the village and Sunrise Coal.

The contract for treated water and sewer services needed four votes to pass. Trustee Mike Johnson voted 'no' after voting 'yes' in prior meetings.

Some of the roughly 60 people present cheered following the vote, including Traci Barkley with Prairie Rivers Network, who called the decision 'huge.'

"I think he (Johnson) listened to the people of Homer, and the rural community, and this is just huge to have him stand up for the community, the future, the ag economy that exists is strong as it is right now, and this might just be the end of Sunrise Coal in the community."

Large numbers of opponents have come to village board meetings out of concern for Homer's groundwater quality, air pollution, and the value of farmland.

"I think it was a collective effort," says Homer resident Susan Forsyth. "Between Stand Up to Coal, and my online petition, and the community's support, it really made this happen."

Johnson says he wasn't sure he supported the coal mine itself, but had thought about voting yes as a source of income for the village. But Johnson says the turning point for him was Sunrise's 'hidden' request regarding water amounts, noting the company originally requested 4,000 gallons of treated water a day.

"They told us at one time that was the maximum high side that they'd use, and all of a sudden it's 20,000," he said. "I had concerns with them changing something that drastic – what else are they hiding?"

Village Trustee Guy James was absent Monday night, but had voted against the contract in each prior meeting.

Mayor David Lucas, who voted for the water contract to break a 3-3 straw poll vote about a month ago, says Sunrise will be moving on. He says the village lost about \$40,000 annually for its water system.

"They're going to go somewhere else and they're going to get water, and they're going to build a coal mine, and Homer is going to lose," he said.

Trustees Roy Woodmansee and Kevin Knott also voted 'no' Monday, but had in the straw poll a few weeks

earlier. Trustees Ray Cunningham and Larry Mingee voted for the water contract.

Sunrise officials left the village building immediately after the vote, declining to comment.

Story links:

- [Homer Board to Consider Water Contract for Mine](#)
- [Homer Mine Talks Continue After Mayor Breaks Tie Vote](#)
- [Homer Board Looks at Water Requests; 60 Attend](#)
- [Homer Village Board to Consider Mining Company Contract](#)

Story categories:

[environment](#) • [water resources](#) • [government](#)



Be the first of your friends to like this.

[Permalink](#) • [Email this story to a](#)

[friend](#)

[Back to Illinois Public Media News home page](#)

Page 1 of 1 pages