

## ISLAND PARK

# Village to settle housing lawsuit

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Island Park has reached a \$1.96 million tentative settlement with the federal government after a two-decade legal battle in which village officials were accused of violating fair-housing laws and diverting to their friends and family homes earmarked for minorities in the 1980s.

Village and federal officials signed a consent decree on Nov. 8 to settle the 1990 lawsuit brought against the village for allegedly illegally steering some of more than 40 federally subsidi-

dized homes away from minorities that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development program aimed to help.

The decree is awaiting the approval of U.S. District Judge I. Leo Glasser.

"The government and the village have engaged in complex negotiations in the past four years," said Paul Millus, the village's attorney. "This is an appropriate settlement that benefits the residents of the Village of Island Park."

U.S. Department of Justice spokesman Robert Nardoza declined to comment.

The village had initially

faced paying \$5.4 million in fines, after a federal judge ruled in 1995 that Island Park had violated the federal Fair Housing Act and False Claims Act and a federal magistrate judge set the judgment in 1997.

If the settlement deal is approved, the village would pay \$21,294.86 each month for 78 months starting on June 1, 2017. An additional \$300,000 would go toward appointing a fair housing administrator, whose goal would be to get at least 17 village homes over four years to be owned and occupied by African-American families.

About 83 percent of 4,655 vil-

lage residents are white, 26 percent are Hispanic and less than 2 percent are African-American, according to census data.

"If the village was forced to pay \$5.4 million, the tax burden of the village would have been enormous and it would have prevented the village from moving forward with its recovery from Hurricane Sandy," said Millus.

About \$1.06 million would be financed through tax increases that would start in 2017. The remaining \$900,000 would be paid through the village's insurance company, Millus said.