

Ogle officials may appeal ComEd ruling

■ **Nuclear plant:** At issue is more than \$44 million in tax funds.

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**

The Register Star

BYRON — The dispute over how much Commonwealth Edison's nuclear power plant is worth for tax purposes appears headed to court.

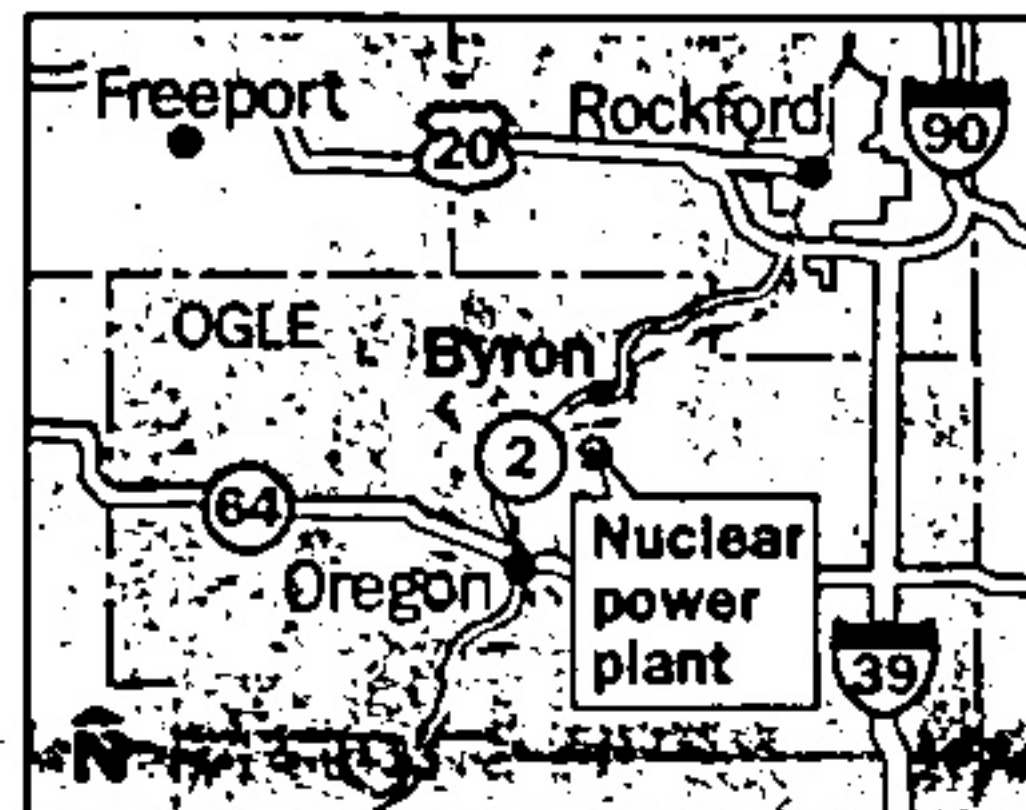
An alliance of Ogle County government leaders Wednesday said they believe the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board's 60 percent cut in the plant's taxable value "can be successfully challenged."

The Byron School District and other local government agencies must decide within a month whether to appeal the ruling in state appellate court.

At stake, according to a preliminary analysis by the Rockford Register Star, is more than \$44 million in tax revenue that ComEd paid local government between 1989 and 1992 — and now might be able to recoup.

Byron schools face the largest potential payback of more than \$23 million.

Local officials were scrambling Wednesday to gauge the ruling's full impact. Most agreed the loss of ComEd tax revenue would mean dramatic cuts in local government service or equally dramatic tax increases



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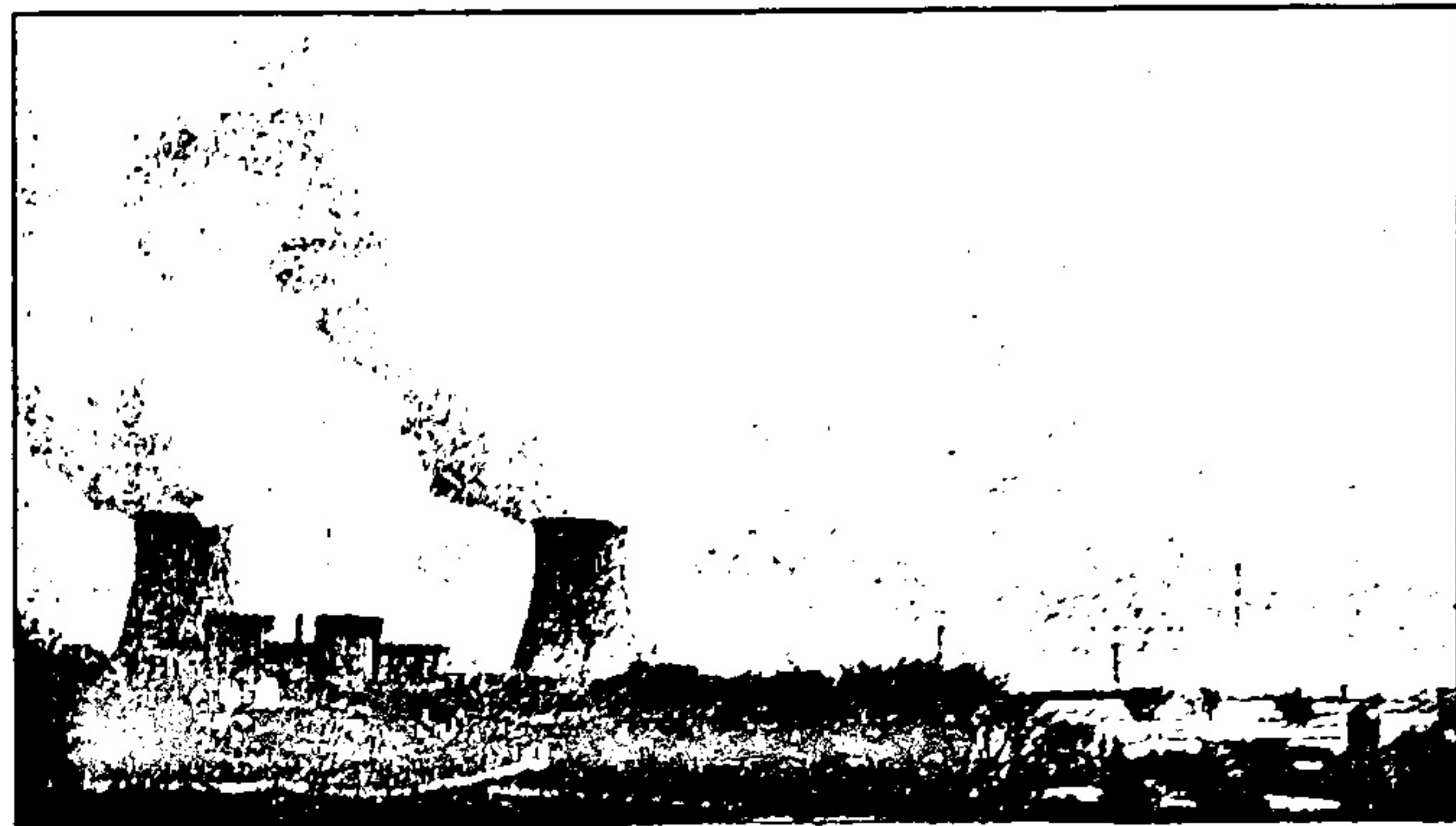
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for Ogle County residents to make up the difference.

"We've kicked around every scenario that you could imagine," Byron School Board President David Engelbrecht said.

The dilemma stirred strong emotions among Ogle County residents. While they have gotten used to living with a nuclear power plant since the facility opened in 1985, they also have grown dependent on its property



Photos by KEN LOVE/The Register Star

The Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board gave ComEd a cut of almost 60 percent in the tax value of its Byron nuclear power plant.

What it means

Here are some possible ramifications of ComEd's successful tax protest, if the state ruling is not overturned on appeal:

■ Byron schools, Oregon parks and other affected government agencies could be ordered to refund part of an estimated \$104 million in taxes paid by ComEd from 1989 to 1992.

■ Those agencies could cut local services to offset the loss of revenue from ComEd's reassessed power plant.

■ Those agencies could raise their tax rates to replace the lost revenue and maintain local services.

■ ComEd could agree to negotiate an out-of-court settlement that would lessen the effects of the reassessment on local government.

■ The dispute could remain tied up in court with no clear or immediate resolution.



Students eat lunch in Byron Middle School cafeteria Wednesday. The school would be among those affected by the ruling giving ComEd a cut in the tax value of its Byron nuclear power plant.

taxes.

ComEd last year accounted for about \$40 million of the \$72 million in property taxes paid throughout the county.

Nancy Jaquet, 57, who owns a house south of Byron, said her property tax bill is \$1,600 a year.

She shuddered at how much it will increase if homeowners must compensate for ComEd's reassessment.

"It'll be a real shakeup for

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