

# Ogle officials may appeal ruling

▷ Continued from Page 1A

everybody," she said.

Supervisor of Assessments James Harrison said the tax base countywide would drop from more than \$1.5 billion to about \$924 million.

In addition to Byron schools, the ruling affects nine other government agencies throughout the county. Byron stands to lose the most, Harrison said, because the nuclear power plant helps fund so many local services there. He said tax rates in Byron are about half those in other parts of the county.

"If they lose that advantage," he said, "they're going to be like anybody else."

Government agencies in Byron depend on ComEd for 90 percent or more of their operating funds.

The Byron Library District, for example, gets about 90 percent of its \$200,000-a-year budget from ComEd taxes.

Librarian Penny O'Rourke said the library would have to raise taxes or cut back services. The library might not stay open as late or maintain as many resources for the public.

"It's just going to be very different," she said.

## Prepare for worst

Representatives of the affected agencies have formed the Ogle County Intergovernmental Agency Board to present an organized front against ComEd. Leaders of the group gathered Wednesday at their lawyers' offices in Aurora — some cutting short vacations and business trips — to review Tuesday's ruling. Some have tried to prepare for the worst.

Oregon Park District director Jim Grove said the park board increased taxes about \$600,000 last year and another \$300,000 this year specifically so funds would be available to repay ComEd if the company won its

tax appeal.

According to the Register Star's analysis, that still is less than half what the park district might have to refund.

"It's probably close to our projected worst-case scenario," Grove said.

Others might be less prepared.

Oregon School Board President Jeff Basler could not estimate the district's cash reserves, although he said the district is "not flush with cash." Oregon schools face a projected liability of \$1.3 million.

Basler said he was uneasy as well about the prospect of financing a court appeal.

"I'm always nervous when you have to pay expenses that you have don't get any educational benefit from," he said.

But, he added, "We're not going to go down the tubes."

*Staff writer Patty Scully contributed to this report.*