

New businesses could get incentives

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Village's Finance and Personnel Committee endorses financial assistance to bring jobs to Belgium

Financial incentives offered by the Village of Belgium should be for only new businesses moving into new or existing structures, the Finance and Personnel Committee has recommended.

The incentive would provide forgivable loans of \$1,000 for every full-time job the business brings to the village up to \$25,000, the committee said.

The committee also recommended that no money be offered for part-time jobs, said Village President Richard Howells, chairman of the committee.

Last month, the Village Board endorsed the concept of offering incentives to lure businesses to the tax incremental district, but referred the issue to the Finance and Personnel Committee to work out details. The money would come from TIF funds.

The proposed plan would forgive \$2,000 per year for the first five years and the remainder of the loan at the end of the sixth year. If a business leaves the village before then, the loan is expected to be repaid.

However, the chances of recovering any money is slim, Village Atty. Gerald Antoine told the board.

The board is expected to act on the recommendation at its Monday, Feb. 13, meeting. Other financial issues expected to be discussed at the meeting include the following:

Allocating up to \$3,000 to purchase a used vehicle for use by employees when doing village business, as recommended by the Finance and Personnel Committee. The \$3,000 would be in addition to \$5,000 already in the public safety budget.

Trustee Jason Acevedo, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, hopes to have a vehicle purchase proposal for the board at the meeting. Acevedo will work with local businesses that sell used vehicles.

The village was advised to purchase a vehicle for employee use by its insurance carrier because then they would be fully covered by village insurance. If employees use their own vehicles, the employees' insurance would be the primary insurer and the village's insurance would be secondary, which could present a liability risk, the village was told.

The vehicle would be used by office and public works employees during the day and by the village marshal and deputy marshal, if one is hired, at night. An office was set up in Village Hall for the marshal and deputy marshal.

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Purchasing remote-read water meters at a cost of \$372,000 for 869 residences and 41 businesses. Trustee John Hise, chairman of the Public Utilities Committee, estimated the village will save more than \$480,000 over 20 years, the expected life of the meters, in labor and materials. Many of the current meters are 19 years old and scheduled to be replaced, Hise noted.

In addition, the new meters, which can be monitored in the public works office, will quickly show when excess water is being used, indicating a possible leak, Public Works Director Dan Birenbaum said. That will save the village and property owners money, he said.

After conferring with the village's financial adviser, the Public Utilities Committee will submit budgets for the water and sewer utilities to the Village Board.

Because the water utility lost money last year, the committee transferred \$58,000 from the water tower fund to the water fund to cover the shortage. The committee recommended the village consider seeking a higher increase than the 3% per year allowed by the state Public Service Commission.

The sewer utility had a \$36,000 surplus, which will be put into a contingency fund. The effort to stop stormwater inflow into the system is paying off, said Neil Anderson, wastewater superintendent. He suggested fixing old manholes on Spring Street by inserting liners into them.

n Deduct water meters will no longer be available for residents who want to reduce water bills when filling swimming pools, the Public Utilities Committee decided. Last year, two meters were provided to residents, who must hire a licensed plumber to install them, Birenbaum said.

One resident complained he didn't see much change in his water bill, which Birenbaum said he warned would happen. No action is required by the Village Board unless it decides to offer the meters again.