

Neighbors to begin talking shared costs

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Grafton, Cedarburg officials will meet Aug. 10 to chart course for exploring options

A search for cost-savings options through shared services will begin next week for Grafton and Cedarburg officials.

The newly formed Joint Initiative Executive Committee, a six-member group that includes representatives of the Grafton Village Board and Cedarburg Common Council, will meet for the first time at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 10, at the Grafton Village Hall.

The committee was formed following a June meeting in which village and city officials agreed to explore ways to pare municipal costs — including consolidating emergency dispatch, library and recreation services — in response to 2012 budget constraints.

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said the Aug. 10 meeting will be an organizational session “without any detailed discussion of items.” Instead, he said, members are expected to review the committee’s mission, select a chairman and identify the order of priority for four cost-savings options identified in a Joint 2012 Initiative Report.

Those options include:

Consolidating emergency dispatch operations of the village and city into one site at the Grafton Police Station, with a savings of \$80,000 for each municipality in reduced staff and technology costs.

Joint operations would initially be staffed by equal numbers of Grafton and Cedarburg telecommunicators. Each department would remain responsible for its own clerical staff needs.

Having the village contract with the city to manage the Grafton Park and Recreation Department, with a \$45,000 savings for each municipality.

Cedarburg’s Park, Recreation and Forestry Department would oversee village operations and be a staff resource for the Grafton Park and Recreation Board. The village would eliminate its position of park and recreation director.

The Grafton park system would eventually be managed by the village’s Public Works Department.

Operate the Grafton residential yard-waste site as a joint venture, with each municipality providing equal staffing and equipment.

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An annual user fee of \$40 per household is expected to cover the operating cost of \$75,000. Grafton would save \$15,000, which would be paid by Cedarburg to help defray the cost, but Cedarburg would not receive any savings in 2012.

Consolidate the Grafton and Cedarburg library boards for joint planning and operations.

No savings is expected for either municipality in 2012 with the change, but it could result in more cost-effective library operations, officials said.

Committee members, who were appointed by Village President Jim Brunnuell and Cedarburg Mayor Greg Myers, are Village Board members Jim Grant, David Liss and Susan Meinecke and Cedarburg Aldermen Ron Reimer, Robert Loomis and Paul Radtke.

In announcing the formation of the committee, Brunnuell said the proximity of the municipalities and a history of cooperative efforts in municipal services and civic activities made the effort a logical step.

"They're all good people who will represent their communities well," Brunnuell said at Monday's Village Board meeting. "I've got the utmost confidence in them."

The committee is expected to make recommendations to the Common Council and Village Board as part of each municipality's budget-approval process. In

Grafton's case, that would require recommendations by early September to be included in final budget deliberations in October, Hofland said.

The committee is tentatively scheduled to hold additional meetings Aug. 23 and 30, Hofland said.