

Panel calls for security measures

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Cameras in parks put on hold, but village officials see need for alarm systems in municipal buildings

The Village of Fredonia's Public Safety Committee has called for increased security at municipal buildings, sidestepping — at least temporarily — the heated issue of surveillance cameras in village parks.

The committee unanimously recommended the village look into installing alarm systems at Village Hall, the wastewater treatment plant, the water tower and the village marshal's office.

The Fredonia Government Center has smoke detectors, but no automatic alarm system.

The security upgrade recommendation included no cost estimates, but reflected a concern by officials that municipal facilities need to be better protected.

Village Marshal Mike Davel told the committee the village should look into installing alarm systems in village buildings before devoting a great deal of time on security cameras in village parks.

Davel noted that the old Village Hall, which has been converted into the marshal's office, sustained \$15,000 damage last year in a fire that started in the garage.

The blaze was not detected until a patron at a nearby bar noticed smoke.

"That damage could have been prevented with an alarm system," Davel said.

"It is hard to believe we don't have our own buildings connected to alarm systems," Trustee Lisa Dohrwardt said.

The topic of security cameras was also raised.

Davel was reluctant to give blanket support to the use of surveillance cameras, but said they could be beneficial if deployed in more remote areas, such as in Marie Kraus Park and the bike trail.

"Of course, the quality of the camera system is a huge consideration," he said.

Davel said security video can be a useful tool in law enforcement, but it is not the solution to the spree of vandalism that has plagued the village.

Repeated vandalism has been reported at Stoney Creek Park and a fire was intentionally set at the Oak Park baseball field.

"It is certainly regrettable that these things are going on, but such acts have become a fact of

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life in every community, not just Fredonia. The things kids do today are a lot more destructive than they used to be, not just soaping windows,” Davel said.

At the last Village Board meeting, Village President Chuck Lpicola said strategically placed security cameras could be useful in fighting crime, suggesting such a system might have provided evidence in a recent arson case which cause an estimated \$100,000 in damage.

“This is very serious when we have an apparent arsonist running around,” Lpicola said.

“I think cameras could be a valuable piece of the puzzle. They wouldn’t be a be-all-and-end-all, but they could help.”

The committee recommended a different tool — offering rewards for information that leads to arrests and convictions in specific crimes.

Panel members suggested a \$100 reward for information on the recent house fire on Wisconsin Street.

“A reward system can be preventative. High school kids will see there is always a risk someone will turn them in,” said Trustee Fritz Buchholtz, chairman of the committee.