

Village aims for school collaboration

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Officials contend cooperating on things like facilities, equipment use could benefit all taxpayers

Village of Fredonia officials are hoping mutual interests will result in widespread cooperation with the Northern Ozaukee School District.

School Supt. Blake Peuse attended last week's Village Board meeting, and listened intently as Village President Chuck Lopicola detailed a series of initiatives he contends would benefit all local taxpayers.

"This is something I did a lot when I was with the U.S. Forest Service, developing agreements with taxing entities throughout Michigan's U.P.," Lopicola said.

He asked that an ad hoc committee including representatives of the village's Public Works Committee and the district's Buildings and Grounds Committee be formed to consider several joint efforts.

Highlighting that potential work plan would be the creation of youth baseball fields on land the district owns west of its joint campus.

"I think that would be an ideal site for a couple of ball fields," Lopicola said.

"We already own land given to us by the developer of the Village Green subdivision that may be too narrow for ball fields, but ideal for parking. There is also the possibility of buying four unplatted lots adjacent to Deer Meadow Lane that would be contiguous with the land the district currently owns, making a large parcel of public land. That would seem to make sense, if the price is right."

That notion is still in its infancy, and funding is up in the air, Lopicola said following the meeting.

The ad hoc committee would also be asked to look into services the village could provide the district, such as the use of heavy equipment.

The school district currently uses a private contractor for much of its grounds maintenance, and Lopicola said the village is not interested in taking on that work.

"We are not looking to bid on the district's maintenance contract or to get extra work for our guys," he said.

However, Lopicola said the district might benefit by having ready access to some of the village's heavier equipment, like a loader for snow removal.

"We will have (Village Engineer) Roger Strohm meet with the district to discuss what we have available. On the other hand, we simply could not share something like our big generator, which

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would be needed in the event the power goes out and we need to keep water flowing and the sewer lift stations working,” Lapicola said.

The ad hoc committee may also be asked to develop a memorandum of understanding the district and village could provide emergency shelter to area residents in the event of a major disaster, such as a tornado tearing through the community.

“The committee could determine what shared resources would be available if we have to enter into survival mode,” Lapicola said.

In a less ominous tone, Lapicola said Peuse willingly agreed to work with the village to set up a directory of local teens would be created to help the elderly and those with handicaps deal with yard work and snow shoveling.

“We probably get four or five calls a year at Village Hall from people who are no longer able to take care of their yard. It would be great if we could develop a list of names of young people who would be willing to help,” Lapicola said.

Peuse told village leaders money may even be available from the district’s community service account to pay students willing to take on those jobs.

Although the other concepts will be shared with the district’s Buildings and Grounds Committee, he was optimistic about the potential for working closer with the village.

“I think there are definitely win-win opportunities for us,” Peuse said following the village meeting.

“Our plan is to work on these items over the coming months and keep a healthy dialogue open about how we can work cooperatively.”