

Village looking for some helping hands

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Lapicola suspects community has a wealth of volunteers who would be willing to assist municipal workers

Fredonia Village President Chuck Lapicola thinks the burdens of village workers might be eased by simply appealing to the good nature of local residents.

Lapicola told the Village Board last week he would like to look into using volunteers to help public works employees by taking on simple tasks.

“I know there are a lot of older guys out there who just love mowing grass. Maybe that is something we can get them to do to help us out, and provide them with a stipend like a meal and the cost of the gas,” he said.

Running simple errands might be another way to use volunteers, Lapicola said.

He said he saw the volunteer concept put to good use when he worked for the U.S. Forestry Service in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

“It was highly successful there and I think it could be a good plus here,” Lapicola said.

“I think having some of our older residents helping our village crew would be great for camaraderie. There are people out there with a lot of great expertise, who might be willing to share that with the village. I am not thinking about having them do heavy work.”

Lapicola said the idea came to him when he saw a village employee working in a manhole, with another worker above, directing a light where it was needed.

“That second worker was probably costing us \$20 an hour,” he said.

Before a volunteer program is put into place, officials agreed they need to look into the legal ramifications.

“We would have to make sure that if something were to happen and damage is done to someone else’s property, the volunteers would be covered by the village’s liability insurance,” Lapicola said.

He said the concept could dovetail well with the program offered by the Northern Ozaukee School District, which matches students with local senior citizens who need help with snow shoveling and yard work.

Trustees suggested contacting the League of Wisconsin Municipalities to see if other communities have started such help programs, and if so what protections were put into place first.

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“I think it is a good idea, and it is likely other communities have also looked into it,” said Trustee Don Dohrwardt.

The proposal was referred to the village Public Works Committee.