

Development post reduced because of slowdown

Written by Mark Jaegar

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It may be seen as a “chicken or the egg” kind of issue, but the Village of Saukville’s development efforts have taken a hit from the stumbling economy.

Last week, the Village Board unanimously approved a recommendation by the Finance Committee to reduce the position of director of community development, currently held by Brian Biernat, to 30 hours per week.

The change went into effect this week and will continue into 2010. The reduction in hours will mean a cut in salary for Biernat from \$59,885 to \$44,912.

According to the amended compensation schedule, the job is still considered a management position. The reduction will not affect insurance or health benefits.

Village President Barb Dickmann said the move is a reflection of the economy rather than the job Biernat has been doing.

“When you look at the kind of budget we were facing, we knew we had to take a look at staffing,” Dickmann said.

“If the economy should turn around, we could always reconsider the status of the position, but for now it is considered a 30-hour-a-week position for 2010.”

One of Biernat’s primary responsibilities is to serve as the village’s lead contact person in matters coming before the Plan Commission and the Community Development Authority.

Businessman Gene Fransee, a longtime member of the CDA, said he worries the change will send the wrong message.

“I can understand why the village made the move to save money, but my fear is it is going to hurt the village,” Fransee said.

“We’ve worked so hard to create a positive image for the village, but I am afraid people in the business world are going to hear about this and ask, ‘What’s going on with the village?’”

Fransee had high praise for the job Biernat has done in attracting economic development to the village.

“He has done an excellent job. Brian is always available when anyone has questions,” he said.

Fransee took a hopeful cue from Dickmann’s comment about the timetable for the reduction.

“Let’s hope this is not a long-term situation. I have people approaching me all the time asking

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when things are going to start moving again. I do believe there is already an impetus out there," he said.

Former village trustee John Ross, also a longtime member of the CDA, said the job reduction reflects what is being experienced across the country.

"In times like these, it doesn't surprise me. I know a lot of people whose jobs were reduced or completely eliminated," Ross said.

"I was not part of the decision, but I presume it is not meant to be a reflection on the job Brian has done. Government has to look at all its options. It comes down to yet another example of having to get more done with less."

Although he wouldn't predict a quick remedy for the nation's financial malaise, Ross said an improved economy in Saukville seems inevitable.

"On the local level, there is only so much development that can occur in Grafton's I-43 corridor. Logically, Saukville is next in line, and we may be able to accommodate growth at less expense. It is going to happen sometime," he said.