

Big election requires bigger venue

Written by MARK JAEGER

Wednesday, 31 October 2012 17:01

Village to again hold presidential vote at YMCA

Village of Saukville voters will head to the Feith Family Ozaukee YMCA on Northwoods Road for the Tuesday, Nov. 6, presidential election.

The venue was first used by the village during the 2008 presidential vote. The switch was made because the larger facility can more easily handle the crowds than the American Legion hall, which is used for all other elections.

"The Y offered to partner with us for the last presidential election and it worked out well," Deputy Village Clerk Mary Kay Baumann said.

"We were expecting big crowds for that vote, but they never really came thanks to all the absentee ballots we handled."

Village officials noted that large turnouts for past presidential elections would sometimes mean people had to stand in line outside for extended periods of time.

Bottlenecks at the hall during the 2004 presidential election meant there were voters waiting in line until 10:30 p.m. to cast their ballots, even though polls close at 8 p.m.

Parking was at such a premium at the Legion Hall that there were times when voters had to park on the shoulder of Highway 33.

Use of the YMCA building eliminates those kinds of problems.

Baumann said the north parking lot will be reserved for voters on Tuesday. Public-works employees will post signs directing voters to the reserved parking area.

Voting booths will be set up in the gym.

The YMCA has cancelled Monday night activities so the polling booths can be erected. The gym will be closed to Y members on election day.

The YMCA is also providing volunteers to help voters unfamiliar with the building find the polling place.

Baumann, who has helped with village elections for a decade, said the YMCA had no problem accommodating the crowds during the last election.

As in 2008, Baumann said many village voters are choosing to avoid lines at the polls by casting absentee ballots.

She said she has been processing about 50 absentee votes a day, and expects the final tally by Friday's deadline will be close to the 660 that were cast during the last presidential election.

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Many voters are happy to get their ballots completed early, but Baumann noted that process is no magic cure for people who are fed up with how intrusive the elections have become.

“One man said, ‘Here’s my ballot. Can you now stop all of those phone calls from coming to my house?’ I told him I wish I could,” Baumann said.

She said most village residents are respectful of people’s electoral rights, even in a hotly contested election.

“For me, even though I may have my own opinion, I have to put those aside on election day. The election is not about politics, it is about the process ... making sure all of the laws are followed. And even though it is going to be a very long day, I make a point of always trying to stay positive.”

Another challenge the presidential election poses is the influx of unregistered voters. During the last presidential election, 300 voters registered at the polls.

“I wouldn’t say dread is the best word to describe how I feel about the election, but will I be sorry to see it over? No,” she said.

The YMCA is at 465 Northwoods Rd.

All voting in the Town of Saukville will be done at Town Hall, 3762 Lakeland Rd.

Both polling places will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.