Written by Mark Jaeger
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Program director says locals already use services

Village of Fredonia officials have been asked to make a financial commitment to support the Port Washington Senior Center.

With no senior program of their own, a half dozen Fredonia residents are members of the Port center and even more are regular guests, according to center director Catherine Kiener.

The City of Port Washington budgeted $92,000 this year for the center.

“I realize in this economy, it is difficult for communities like Fredonia to consider starting their own senior program,” Kiener told the Village Board last week.

As an alternative, she suggested the village consider paying for the equivalent of 10 basic memberships. Nonresident memberships are $35 each.

With an aging population, Kiener said the need for senior programs is increasing throughout Ozaukee County.

In Fredonia, she said 8% of the village’s population is 65 years or older. In Port Washington, 25% of the city’s population is at least 55 — when individuals can become members of the center.

“We have found that one of the best ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle is to be active in programs like the senior center,” Kiener said.

The Port center has 491 members and offers more than 60 programs throughout the year.

Kiener said Port officials realize the current facility, which is housed in the city’s old firehouse, is cramped and efforts are under way to find a new location. A temporary relocation to a former-church-turned-office-building has already been approved, although a more long-term solution to the space crunch is being sought.

Village officials said the suggested support of the senior program was worth considering, but some obstacles need to be overcome.

“I see there being a transportation problem,” Trustee Chuck Lapicola said. “A lot of senior citizens don’t drive anymore and would have a difficult time getting from Fredonia to Port Washington.”

Kiener said such a transportation problem could be overcome by utilizing the county’s shared-ride taxi.

Village officials agreed to research the request further.

At last week's board meeting, trustees did approve renewing the agreement with the county to hold the local senior meal site program in the meeting room of the fire station.

The meal program meets Tuesdays at the fire station, 201 S. Milwaukee St.