

Series of public arts projects to give residents a chance to display their talents throughout the village in 2011

Decorated rain barrels, new plaza banners and sidewalk poetry will join the list of public arts ventures in Grafton in 2011.

The projects are being fine-tuned by the Public Arts Board, a seven-member village committee formed last year to promote the community's civic, cultural and historical traditions.

On Monday, the board continued to review plans for Rain Barrels on Parade, which will be launched as its first official project.

Modeled after a similar program in Elgin, Ill., the project will give artists a chance to design and decorate eco-friendly barrels that can be used to catch rainwater for use in lawns and gardens.

The barrels, which would be sponsored by businesses and organizations, will be displayed throughout the downtown before being auctioned, Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said.

Details for designing and displaying the barrels are being worked out, Hofland said. However, applications from local students, adults and groups are expected to be accepted until late March, with the barrels displayed from early June through late July before being auctioned.

The public will be invited to vote for their favorite barrels. Information about the barrels and artists will be placed with each entry.

"Members of the Public Arts Board identified the rain-barrels project as having a strong public arts component as well as an educational element," Hofland said.

The project was also inspired by the success of last summer's "Art Bark: Dogs on Parade," in which fiberglass sculptures of Labrador retrievers were painted, displayed in downtown Grafton and sold as a fund-raiser for the Ozaukee Humane Society.

A contest is being planned to create eight new banners for the Paramount Plaza. The board will accept proposals from artists for four different designs that will be mounted on plaza light posts.

Plans call for the designs to reflect Grafton's musical and cultural legacies as well as the village's swirling-wave branding icon. Hofland said a \$500 prize will be awarded to the top artist, whose work will be fabricated for use.

The new banners will replace the current plaza versions donated four years ago by Joe Krupski, former owner of the Paramount Restaurant.

"They're becoming weathered, and the replacements will provide a new look and opportunity for

Rain barrels, banners and sidewalk poems

Written by Steve Ostermann
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public art,” Hofland said.

The village allocated \$3,000 from the downtown tax incremental financing district to purchase replacement banners.

The poetry program will give residents a chance to have their work preserved in concrete as part of the village’s annual sidewalk replacement work.

Designed after a St. Paul, Minn., public art project called “Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk,” Grafton’s version will be open only to village residents, the board decided Monday.

Hofland said poems selected by the board would be stamped into new public sidewalk sections installed in the northwest part of the village next year.

Poems will be limited to 10 lines and 250 characters, including spaces. Each poem must be an original work in English but can be on any topic.

Poems used in the St. Paul project cover subjects such as sports, weather, animals, music, childhood and broken relationships.

The entry fee will be \$5 for adults and \$1 for students.

Selected poets will be eligible to receive a gift certificate. Their names will be credited on the village Web site but not on the sidewalk.

Property owners scheduled to have sidewalks replaced in front of their residences will be asked if they want a poem included, Hofland said. If they don’t, one will not be installed.

Hofland recommended to the board that about 10 poems be selected each year for stamping in sidewalk replacement areas. Some poem stamps may be used more than once, he said.

The cost of the sidewalk poetry program is estimated at \$3,000. Donations or a grant will be needed to cover the expense, Hofland said.

Details of the three public arts projects are expected to be finalized at the board’s January meeting. Additional projects will be announced next year.

Angelica Chalmers is the chairman of the Public Arts Board. Other members are Village President Jim Brunnquell, Erica McCone, Gloria Rosenberg, Robert Wagner, Erin Blum and Paula Christensen.