Written by Steve Ostermann
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Village set to table project after hearing residents question plan to use Mole Creek Park

Grafton's first community garden will probably have to wait until next year to start growing.

Although the village was poised to open the garden in Mole Creek Park on Cedar Creek Road this spring, the project has been put on hold due to concerns with potential vandalism, officials said.

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said the Parks and Recreation Board is expected to table the project pending further review, including a search for an alternate site. The board was scheduled to discuss options at its 6 p.m. meeting Wednesday, May 18.

"It's anticipated that the decision will delay the project until 2012," Hofland said.

Mole Creek Park, a 20-acre venue on the village's north side, was recommended as a garden location by the Parks and Recreation Board in January. Members cited the park's high visibility from public streets, a limited number of nearby houses and low intensity of park use as positives.

The Village Board endorsed the decision in February. Since then, the village has received 12 inquiries from residents interested in leasing garden plots, Hofland said.

However, at a Parks and Recreation Board meeting last month, several residents voiced concern about vandalism in the park area and asked officials to consider another site. The Village Board subsequently directed the Parks and Recreation Board to revisit its recommendation.

"Vandalism is the primary issue that was identified," Hofland said.

The village's community garden has been modeled after similar projects in other municipalities. The program would give residents a chance to rent plots and plant, raise and harvest produce in a shared site.

Grafton's project calls for plots ranging in size from 400 square feet to 1,800 square feet. Plots would be leased for seasonal fees of $50 to $100. Only village residents would be eligible, and gardeners ages 55 and older would receive priority in plot assignments.

Plans call for the village to use fee revenue to plow and prepare the garden for planting, stake and identify each plot by number, provide holding tanks with water, create walking paths and mail plot numbers and a garden map to participants.

Gardeners would be required to maintain their plots, supply their own seed, fertilizer and equipment, water crops using buckets, cultivate or use mulch to control weeds and remove garden refuse and stakes in the fall.

Other parks considered as potential garden sites by the Parks and Recreation Board include Blackhawk Valley, Cheyenne, Shady Hollow and Wildwood. Open space next to Village Hall has also been proposed.