

District set to hire YMCA for day care

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Board reviews plan that calls for morning, afternoon service at elementary schools

Responding to family requests, the Grafton School District will begin offering before and after-school child care this fall.

The School Board last week reviewed plans that call for the Feith Family YMCA to provide the service at each of the three elementary schools.

Supt. Mel Lightner recommended hiring the YMCA, which has agreed to run programs at Kennedy, Woodview and Grafton Elementary Schools from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 to 6 p.m. on school days.

Lightner said the day care is needed to help the district implement changes to the start and end times at the schools.

The new times — 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. — were approved in January in response to reconfigured bus routes that are expected to save the district \$150,000 annually.

The service will give families more flexibility in transporting children to and from school, Lightner noted.

“Many districts partner with child-care providers to meet the needs of parents,” he said. “This is something we need to do.”

In March, Lightner told the board he interviewed local child-care providers and received quotes from three of them before selecting the Feith Family YMCA. However, board members said they wanted more information before approving a contract.

YMCA representative Jennifer Clearwater told the board that the YMCA currently provides day care for more than 1,300 children at more than 40 schools in the metro-Milwaukee area and welcomes the chance to serve Grafton.

YMCA officials said monthly rates for families have been calculated based on whether children are enrolled in morning or afternoon programs and how many days they participate.

Morning-only care would be \$73 per month for one or two days, \$102 for three days and \$139 for four or five days.

Afternoon-only care would be \$94 per month for one or two days, \$139 for three days and \$179 for four or five days.

Other rates are available for children with late-start and early release times and for an all-day program at the Feith Family YMCA in Saukville on days when there is no school in Grafton.

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Families with multiple children in the program are eligible for discounts.

During a presentation to the board, YMCA officials said daily child care includes at least 30 minutes of physical activity; help with homework; teaching life skills such as patience, sportsmanship, teamwork and problem solving; and healthy snacks in afternoon sessions.

Several board members said they didn't have any problem with the child-care activities but questioned how the district would handle potential problems with YMCA staff members.

"The YMCA staff are not district employees. What option does the Grafton School District have to remove staff?" board member Mike Holloway asked.

YMCA representatives said school contracts typically give districts input in evaluating staff performance. "You have the right to remove staff because we are in your buildings," a YMCA official said.

Holloway said that provision be included in a proposed two-year contract, a suggestion Lightner supported.

Board Treasurer Paul Lorge asked to have the contract reviewed by legal counsel before any action is taken. Lightner said he will have the proposed agreement reviewed again before bringing it back to the board for approval.