

Seniors face fee hike to use center

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Village officials working on plan to increase yearly charge to help defray costs

Increased membership fees are on the horizon for area residents who join the Grafton Senior Center.

However, village officials are still unsure whether nonresidents should pay more than residents.

The Village Board last week tabled a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Board that calls for an annual membership fee of \$10 per individual and \$15 per couple for village residents and nonresidents alike.

After hearing protests from a number of local senior citizens, trustees agreed to delay taking action until the Parks and Recreation Board reconsiders the proposal. Some residents objected to the fee increase and said nonresidents should pay more than residents — a long-standing policy the village has used for swimming pool fees and other recreation programs.

The Parks and Recreation Board supported establishing the fee schedule after Parks and Recreation Director John Safstrom recommended an increase to help offset operating costs of the Grafton Multipurpose Senior Center.

Safstrom said the center, 1665 Seventh Ave., will cost more than \$83,000 to run this year, and the facility will generate only \$4,500 in revenue through membership fees.

Traditionally, the operating cost has also been offset by federal funding and rental fees charged to non-senior groups that use the center.

Safstrom recommended establishing a membership fee of \$25 per person, a change he said could provide an additional \$5,000 in revenue. He proposed allocating \$20 of each new membership for the center's operating costs and \$5 to the Senior Friendship Club, a group that helps oversee center activities.

Club members are currently asked to pay \$5 per year, but not all seniors comply, Safstrom said.

After a number of residents complained about the proposed \$25 fee being excessive, Parks and Recreation Board opted for rates of \$10 per person and \$15 per couple.

Most Village Board members said they agreed with the need for increased fees but said not having a separate rate based on residency would be inconsistent with the fee policy.

The Parks and Recreation Board is expected to reconsider the proposed fees during a 6 p.m. meeting Wednesday, Sept. 23, at the Multipurpose Senior Center.

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