

Senior center poised to move June 2

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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Relocation of facility to former St. John's Church will mark end of era in historic Pier Street building

After more than a year of debate and planning, the Port Washington Senior Center is prepared to move to its new quarters in the former St. John's Church on Thursday, June 2.

"It's getting hectic coming down to the actual move date," center director Catherine Kiener said Tuesday. "We have boxes, we have empty boxes, we have them all over. The downstairs you wouldn't recognize with everything packed.

"There are people who are anxious. There are people who are sad. It's like leaving a house — you're a little sad because of the memories, there's a little trepidation, but it's exciting too."

Architect Mike Ehrlich of Haag Müller, who is overseeing the renovations of the former church on Foster Street, said that installation of the elevator at the new center should be completed Friday. That, he said, is the last of the major items to be done there.

"It's coming together quickly," Ehrlich said. "If it weren't for the elevator, the work would have been done long ago. There was a long wait for the elevator."

That wait was compounded by the fact that the firm building the elevator initially shipped it without controls, Ehrlich said. The complete elevator finally arrived last Friday.

By Tuesday, there should probably just be a few punch-list items left to complete, Ehrlich said.

"I think the seniors are going to be happy there," he said. "It's going to be a great space. It fits right into the building — it looks like it's part of the architecture."

The city has hired Lakeside Movers to conduct the move at a cost of \$3,045.

The move will likely take one day, Kiener said, adding that center programs, including the meal site, won't be held on June 2.

"There's just no way we can hold our programs that day," she said. "We hate to cancel the meal program, but it has to be."

She's hoping to be able to go through the building with the center's board and the volunteers who run the various programs on Tuesday so they can begin to familiarize themselves with the structure.

But until then, packing will continue, Kiener said.

As far back as last fall, seasonal and seldom used items were already being packed in preparation for the move, she noted.

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But in the past couple weeks, the packing has proceeded in earnest. Groups such as the Lakeside Tea Society and Chicks With Sticks have been purging their supplies of unnecessary items and packing those they will need in their new home.

“We’re hoping for the best, that everything comes together smoothly,” Kiener said of the move. “We’re making progress.”

The move will cap an exciting week for the seniors, she said, noting the Senior Games kick off on Wednesday, June 1.

“It’ll be a little hectic,” Kiener said.

“We’ve already been fielding calls from people who aren’t as involved with the center asking, ‘Are you moved yet?’”

To help get the word out, she’s already prepared signs announcing the move to place in the windows of the current senior center at the corner of Pier and Wisconsin streets on Thursday.

“It’ll take some getting used to,” Kiener said. “We’ve been here a long time. But this will be a new adventure for us.”

After the seniors have settled into their new home, she said, they will plan an open house for the community and especially their new neighbors.

“We want them to realize we’re all neighbors, that we have one community in common,” she said.