

Parks prepares for referendum

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March 22, 2007

By **ANGELA D. SYKORA** Staff Writer

Lake Villa parks programs are growing every year, though space to hold them is becoming scarce.

"We're maxed out," Parks Director Rich Coles said. "We have nowhere else to go unless we build our own facility."

On April 17, the Village of Lake Villa will ask voters to approve its first referendum in 10 years -- a \$6 million building bond referendum to construct a community center adjacent to Lehmann Mansion on the grounds of the Longwood Centre Park complex on Route 83, north of Grand Avenue.

Actual construction costs are to be determined given the rising cost of steel and other supplies, but Coles said the village does not foresee spending the entire \$6 million the referendum will ask of taxpayers.

If approved, the owner of a \$250,000 home can expect to pay an extra \$14 a month in taxes. However, as more residential comes into the village, Coles said the cost to taxpayers will be spread out and decrease over time.

"The cost per family is reasonable," Lake Villa Mayor Frank Loffredo said.

Ground could be broken by late summer, if the referendum passes. The village's goal is to open the facility next year.

The proposed 37,000-square-foot will be a place where all community members are welcome, be it a Scout troop, dance class or senior program, Coles said.

"We can't have enough community rooms."

In addition to generous multi-purpose space, the facility would feature a walking and running track on the upper level; a gymnasium; two full-size basketball courts; dance studio; a dedicated senior room; a concession stand; and an 8,000-square-foot children's museum.

Alison Price, president and co-founder of Busy Brains Children's Museum, said they are planning on opening with four or five permanent exhibits, classroom space and birthday party rooms too. The exhibits will focus on the uniqueness of Lake County and incorporate science, art and humanities. The exhibits will be interactive and focus on the needs and interests of children up to age 10.

To handle future space needs, the proposed Lake Villa community center would be expandable up to another 8,000 square feet on the upper level.

Most desired

In a village survey conducted in 2002, respondents indicated a community center was their most desired recreational amenity, and one they would support.

At recent informational forums hosted in neighborhoods, Coles said the overall response to the referendum still reflects this, though many taxpayers have said they are also bracing for the future financial needs of the schools.

Two more referendum forums have been scheduled for 6:30 p.m. March 28 and April 11, at the Lake Villa District Library, 1001 E. Grand Ave., Lake Villa. All are welcome.

For more information, contact Rich Coles at (847) 265-1653.