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## Proposed community center in jeopardy

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/lakevilla/news/359294.lv-parkref-042607-s1.article>)

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The founders of a children's museum who planned to open in Lake Villa will be looking for a new home in light of the village's failed referendum, which sought a tax increase to support construction of a community center.

Busy Brains Children's Museum intended to inhabit 8,000 square feet of the proposed community center, planned for the Longwood Centre Park complex on Route 83, north of Grand Avenue.

On April 17, Lake Villa voters rejected a \$6 million building bond referendum by a 60 to 40 percent margin. Had the referendum been approved, the owner of a \$250,000 would have paid approximately \$14 more a month in taxes.

"Busy Brains was definitely disappointed by the Lake Villa vote," said Alison Price, president and co-founder of Busy Brains Children's Museum.

"However, we believe that the need for a children's museum in Lake County is stronger than ever, and will continue to look for a permanent home."

The museum would have opened in Lake Villa with four or five interactive exhibits, classroom space and birthday party rooms.

Despite the latest setback, Price said several communities had expressed interest in having the museum prior to negotiations with Lake Villa. Therefore, museum organizers will continue to pursue all options in the hopes of finding a donated space or a reasonable lease.

"Most children's museums are independent of municipal buildings, so it definitely can be done," Price said.

Fund-raising for a museum, regardless of where it will eventually locate, will continue as planned. Organizers said they need \$1.5 million to create the exhibits within the structure, and another \$1.5 million for a three-year reserve.

Tough sell

As for Lake Villa's proposed community center, outgoing Parks Director Rich Coles said it was a tough sell despite being named the most desired amenity among residents in a 2002 village survey.

Given rising gas prices and other economic strains, these are tough times for taxpayers, Coles acknowledged.

"It was a tough luck battle," Coles said of the parks referendum, which was presented to Lake Villa voters along with a proposition from Antioch Community Consolidated School District 34 to issue \$46.95 million to build a new primary and middle school, and fund upgrades at existing schools. That referendum was also defeated.

The good news, Coles said, is that 495 residents voted for the parks referendum (740 voted against), which means there is support for building a community center. In the future, he said, those people may rally for another referendum, when the timing is right.

In the meantime, the parks department will begin work this summer on other improvements to the 50-acre Longwood Centre Park, with the help of a state grant.

Last December, the village was awarded a \$300,000 Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to help develop the 50-acre park.

Because the OSLAD is a matching grant, the village put up \$600,000 and will be reimbursed for half once the project is completed.

Longwood Centre Park is slated to be developed with two football/soccer fields; a baseball field, skateboard and

BMX bike park; winter ice skating rink/summer roller-blading rink; fitness trail; picnic pavilions; public restrooms with hot and cold running water; and an access road to the site with parking.