

Southeast considers indoor recreational center

By Brian Saxton
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SOUTHEAST, N.Y. -- The town board is weighing proposals for building an indoor community recreational and senior center in Southeast.

Armed with a positive response from senior residents, the board has now appointed a special advisory committee to test other public reaction to the proposal.

"I think it's a great idea and the town board totally supports it," Southeast Supervisor John Dunford said Friday. "In the end, of course, it's for the residents to decide."

Dunford said the proposal came in response to a resident's petition last year calling for a center for indoor sports.

According to Dunford, the committee will look into the recreational needs of town residents and the needs of seniors.

Southeast has a population of about 19,500. The most recent census figures kept by officials in Putnam County show there are more than 1,700 seniors living in town.

Without a specific facility of their own, seniors generally meet in a small, one-room building known as Lake View Manor, near Lake Tonetta. The building holds up to 140 people but has no facilities except a kitchen.

"As the town grows, its needs have become more pressing," Dunford said.

Billie Froessel, a member of the advisory committee, said a survey of seniors last year found unanimous support for a center that would provide programs such as health and nutrition care, food services and social activities.

A new survey being drafted by the committee and likely to be mailed next month will call on all residents for their opinions on the proposed joint recreation and senior center.

"We want to alert residents that we exist and that this project is really in the works," Froessel said.

Froessel said the recreation side of the venture might provide facilities such as a swimming pool, basketball courts, a weight room, a walking track, and meeting rooms.

Dunford said if the proposal ever becomes a reality, there is enough town-owned land available on which to build the combined center.

"Land is not an issue," Dunford said. "It's a great opportunity for the town to develop something that will offer more to our residents, but it's all dollars and cents. Can we afford it? The committee is doing a wonderful job looking at possible grants and other aspects of the proposal."

The committee expects to make a report on its survey to the board in June.

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