



December 16, 2007

Senior center in Sleepy Hollow to open this month

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The Journal News*

SLEEPY HOLLOW - Seniors will receive a big gift from the village in the form of a new senior center this Christmas.

The haven for Sleepy Hollow elders is to open near the end of December, almost two months after a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark phase one of the development.

"It's a wonderful thing," said Jack Downing, who has lived in the village for 40 years. "It brings the people together, and we need more of that."

The 1,400-square-foot space for the senior center on Elm Street includes a meeting area to accommodate small groups and two individual offices.

Sean McCarthy, the village's architect, said heat, electricity and some furniture already have been installed in the center.

"We are working on last-minute kinks," he said.

More chairs, a refrigerator and other appliances will be placed in the center this week.

The village soon starts the second phase of development, which will expand the size of the facility.

The first phase began with a donation of modular buildings from Ginsburg Development Cos., the developer of Ichabod's Landing townhouses. The company used the buildings as sales offices before donating them to the village.

Phase two will add 6,000 square feet to the center to include a meeting room, multi-purpose room, kitchen, bathroom and lounge.

McCarthy said Sleepy Hollow has spent about \$200,000 to complete phase one and build the foundation for the second part of the project.

In addition to grants and donations, the village will begin to take bids from companies in the spring to finance the interior construction and additional structures for phase two, he said.

Though many longtime residents are happy to have a center, some are less enthusiastic about the location. It will stand about 75 feet from a planned cellular tower to serve Sprint, Nextel and other possible phone providers.

Adamant seniors have attended Planning Board and Board of Trustees meetings to express their opinion that the close proximity of the tower is hazardous to their health.

Lifelong resident Mafalda Tornello said she supports her fellow seniors' concerns, but also believes

the village needs a place for the seniors.

"I don't think it's a good situation, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages," Tornello said. "It's important that we have one. We all get along fine, and we need a place to go to in the afternoons to play bridge or drink tea and have lunch."

The seniors now use St. Teresa of Avila Church and Holy Cross Catholic Church as meeting places.

Village officials hope construction for phase two will begin in the summer.

"They don't have a place to call their own," McCarthy said. "So this would be a start of it."
