

The Glen Ellyn Sun

Park District optimistic voters will OK projects

With the Nov. 7 general election next week, voters again will be asked to decide whether they want to approve a Glen Ellyn Park District referendum. In March, voters shot down a similar referendum that was more ambitious in scope. "We're optimistic that the referendum will pass this time," park district executive Cory Atwell said. "We listened to the public and scaled back some of our projects."

By Ron Pazola
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The district will ask voters for \$11.9 million. About \$7.4 million will go to the construction of a new recreation center at Ackerman Park, \$2.5 million to land acquisition and \$2 million to renovate the Main Street Recreation Center.

The previous referendum called for \$12.5 million in bonds that would have funded the construction of a new facility to replace the Main Street Recreation Center building. Other projects included expanding the Lake Ellyn Boathouse and installing bathrooms at Ackerman Park.

Local preservationists opposed tearing down Main Street Recreation Center, a former grade school they said was historically significant. The building was constructed in 1920.

Park District officials said the integrity of the building's exterior will be maintained in the renovation. The building will get a new roof, windows, bathrooms, carpeting, paint job and electrical and plumbing upgrades.

The park district also wants to construct a multi-purpose gym as well as an indoor Astro-turf field for lacrosse and field hockey at Ackerman Park. The indoor facility would allow area high-school teams to host home games in Glen Ellyn.

If the referendum is approved, the tax rate would remain equivalent to what it's been since a 1999 bond issue, but the payoff date would be 2017. The owner of a \$300,000 house would continue to pay about \$70 to the district next year.

"As with the last referendum, the approval of the bonds would not cause taxes to increase," Atwell said.

However, if voters reject the referendum, taxpayers would see a \$23.31 drop per \$100,000 in equalized assessed valuation on the district's portion of the annual property tax bill.

Long-time Glen Ellyn resident Bernard Walksler said he will not vote in favor of the referendum.

"Homeowners and businessowners have been taxed to death," he said. "The park district has to learn to make do with the funds it already has."

Lora Bak of Glen Ellyn said she is undecided about the referendum. She still wants the Park District to clarify some of the aspects of the Main Street Recreation Center renovation, and she questions the necessity of the Ackerman Park project.

Melissa White of Glen Ellyn supports the revised referendum.

"I opposed the March referendum because I didn't want the Main Street Recreation Center torn down," she said. "The Park District has shown a willingness to work with the community, and I respect that."

Contact Ron Pazola at rpazola@scn1.com or 630-416-5283.