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Park Board won't waive impact fee for The Birches

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The Clarendon Hills Park District denied a request from The Birches retirement community to reduce an impact fee from \$30,000 to \$5,000.

The Birches is proposing a two-story expansion of 21 units in the Encore Memory Care wing, which will be secured because the residents have some form of dementia. The proposal also includes an expanded secure garden and 14 additional parking spaces.

The Park Board voted Oct. 26 to apply the land/cash ordinance, which imposes a fee per unit for expected use of park land. That would result in the district receiving more than \$30,000.

"(Board members) felt with us building a park in that area, the money collected would be applied for that park," said Don Scheltens, park district executive director.

But Jim Curto, executive director and founder of The Birches, said residents of the retirement community would not benefit.

"While we want to be good citizens in the village, the additional people who would move to the village would not be users of the park," he said.

Curto said the \$5,000 donation made sense considering the expansion adds only 21 more units.

"It's what we donated in 1999 to the park district for about five times the number of units; there were 90 units then," Curto said.

On top of paying the park district impact fee, The Birches will have to pay a public safety fee of more than \$31,000. Village Manager Rob Bahan said this is for the ambulance service to the assisted living facility.

"The village has always had this to pay for equipment expenses related to fire and police," he said.

Bahan said the village receives about 80 emergency calls per year for The Birches, more than any other institution.

The Birches will not have to pay an impact fee to any of the school districts because the residents will not have school-aged children.

The existing site still contains a home, a small manmade pond and gravel parking lot, which employees use for overflow parking. The Birches has applied for a permit to demolish the home still on the site, but the pond will be drained and refilled.

A couple residents to the west of the proposed expansion have had concerns about flooding issues. Curto said his civil engineer is working on revisions to the stormwater management plans after discovering the expansion will need more detention.

Pending The Birches achieving financing for the project, Curto anticipates being able to break ground in spring.

At the Nov. 2 Village Board meeting, The Birches staff made a presentation about the expansion and included a traffic study for 56th Street, where the entrance to the new parking lot will be.

In a 24-hour time period, the study predicts an increase in 29 cars, which includes three new staff members per shift, visitors and overflow from the main lot on the north side of the property.

The Clarendon Hills Village Board approved the first consideration of the annexation at the Nov. 2 meeting and could give final approval Monday.

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