

# Open space, public safety top residents' priority list

By Don Grigas

Staff writer

Views to be considered  
in budget process

Preserving open space -- with an emphasis on obtaining the 45-acre site owned by Community High School District 99 property near Woodridge Town Center -- and public safety awareness are the top two issues facing Woodridge officials as they begin setting goals and budget priorities for 2007.

Woodridge staff recently compiled results from data collected at the Oct. 3 Annual Town Meeting and submitted a report to Woodridge Village Board Trustees at a Nov. 2 goal-setting workshop.

The workshop initiated the budget process for Fiscal Year 2007-08, said Peg Halik, assistant village manager.

The board will review the results and provide direction to staff as budget preparations get under way over the next few months, Halik said.

"Our Fiscal Year 2007-08 budget will be driven based on the direction the board provides us, and that direction is based a great deal on the results of the Town Meeting and other past community surveys and dialogues," Halik said.

Over the next few months department heads will refine next year's budget, focusing on what the board perceives as the highest priorities, culminating with a budget workshop in March and adoption of a budget in April.

The village's fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30.

Specific budget line items won't be decided upon until April of next year, but based on the recent Town Meeting, obtaining land for open space and awareness of public safety issues are likely to be high budget priorities.

The possible purchase of 45 acres of School District-owned property just north of the Town Center on Plaza Drive received the most points overall -- 43 -- in a three-tier rating system used during the Oct. 3 workshop, attended by more than 150 area residents and civic and business leaders.

Another subtopic related to obtaining open space -- "Preserve and enhance existing open space" -- scored the second highest point total, 39.

Public education/awareness also scored 39 points under the sub-topic Public Safety.

Developing more senior housing and celebrating the community's diversity were ranked next in priority.

"An example of how this drives our goal-setting is senior housing, which was not a high priority until it was brought up about three or four years ago, and it remained a high priority the last few years," Halik said.

Earlier this year the Village Board implemented a sales tax increase to fund developing a broader base of senior housing in Woodridge along the Janes Avenue corridor north of 83rd Street, Halik said.

Other issues that received high ratings during the Town Meeting included traffic safety, enforcement of village codes, increasing property values and community attractiveness.

The village will conduct a public budget workshop Saturday, March 3, and is expected to conduct a public hearing to review the proposed 2007 budget during at its Village Board meeting Thursday, April 5. The village will adopt its 2007-08 budget at its board meeting Thursday, April 19.

"It must be done and on file before May 1," Halik said.

Don Grigas's e-mail address is:  
dgrigas@libertysuburban.com