

Grand Island board to explore sites for planned transportation center

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Exploring the use of town land for a new transportation center for the Grand Island School District will be on the agenda of a future Town Board work session.

The School Board has set aside \$800,000 from its capital project reserve fund for the facility as it looks at potential sites, including some owned by the town. The transportation center would be subject to a referendum.

The two boards held a joint meeting Monday night in the high school cafeteria. No votes were taken.

Councilman Ray Billica suggested the School Board consult its attorney and the state Education Department on the ramifications of various scenarios, including whether it could operate a transportation center on town-owned land through an agreement with the town.

Purchasing or leasing land are also options.

School Superintendent Robert Christmann said state building aid would not be available for the project unless it's built on district-owned land. But whether the definition of "owned" includes leasing needs to be further explored.

"There would, of course, be a savings if we use your property or ours," Christmann told the Town Board.

On other matters, the boards:

- Heard Town Assessor Judy M. Tafelski and a representative of the state Real Property Tax Services outline the reassessment process, which begins this year. It's the first reassessment since 1986.

The town just sent out requests for proposals from appraisal firms to do the work, which will get under way soon.

New assessments will be effective starting with the October 2013 school tax bills.

The school district is particularly interested in the process by which large commercial properties can challenge their reassessments, because any major change downward would require a refund, which would have a significant impact on the school budget.

Town Supervisor Mary Cooke agreed that there is a “communication component” that is important to both sides.

- Learned that the Town Board is considering offering a reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for the recent increase in graffiti.

Cooke said expensive town-installed reflective traffic signs have been “tagged,” and cleaning them is a costly and difficult process.

Cooke urged residents to report incidents to law enforcement agencies by calls the non-emergency dispatch at 773-7508 or the anonymous tip line at 774-8696.

She also suggested the town compile pictures of graffiti in a database to aid in identifying those responsible.

- Informally agreed to continue exploring joint purchase of a digital sign for outside the school complex on Ransom Road. The cost ranges between \$20,000 and \$35,000.

- Heard Councilman Richard Crawford say the town is looking at installing a gravel parking lot for eight to 10 cars and a sheltered bench for skaters at the town-operated ice rink at Kagebein Elementary School.

- Cooke also reported that the Thruway Authority said a rehabilitation project for the southbound lanes of the South Grand Island Bridge is expected to begin in the second quarter of this year. It will involve installation of overhead electronic signs.