

MIDDLETOWN

New equipment might pay for itself

Making the room more user-friendly with items such as a large TV screen could attract outside organizations who might want to rent it for meetings and conferences.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

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A \$27,000 investment in new technology for the township meeting room could end up paying for itself, one Middletown supervisor said.

Robert McMonagle said planned installation of equipment for Power Point presentations and other things designed to make the room more user-friendly could make it attractive to outside organizations for meetings and conferences. That would mean rental income for the township, he said.

"By adding all these technological accoutrements, we should be able to offer the room for other functions and events," he said. "Those kinds of things should be happening more often. We have this excellent resource we're not using enough."

The \$27,000 for new equipment in the meeting room is allocated in the 2008 proposed budget. A vote to finalize the budget is scheduled for the supervisors' Dec. 11 meeting.

One of the pieces of equipment is a large screen that would allow the supervisors and audience to more easily view plans, blueprints and other images shown during meetings. The screen also could be used by outside organizations renting the room.

"I think it will make things much better," said township resident Phil Schieber, who frequently attends supervisor meetings. "It's often very difficult to see what some of the developers and engineers are trying to present, particularly on housing and water runoff type issues. Water runoff is a particularly sensitive issue and the more residents know about it the better off they are."

However, he doubts the wisdom of allowing the new equipment to turn the meeting room into a money maker.

"I have a little concern with that," Schieber said. "The purpose of that room should be to benefit and serve the residents and homeowners of Middletown, as far as I'm concerned."

But with expenses constantly rising, the board must always look for new sources of revenue, said Supervisor Jasper Caro. The proposed 2008 budget has a property tax increase of 1.5 mills, or \$43.50 for the average property owner.

"We were originally talking about \$100,000 worth of new equipment and I started favoring it when we cut it way down," Caro said. "I think trying to get outside groups into the room is a good idea, provided it's not used for political purposes. If we're allowed to do it and it can help the budget, it's a good idea."

McMonagle also would like to see other events in addition to the supervisor meetings televised over the township's cable TV government access channel.

"A good example is the global warming conference we had in the meeting room a few weeks ago, more things like that," he said. "We could televise cultural events, music events and maybe work in conjunction with the Neshaminy School District to bring in student functions."