

MIDDLETOWN

Supervisors consider upgrading meeting room

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Instead of straining their eyes or moving around the room to get a good look at development and other plans, audience members at Middletown supervisors meetings soon will be able to view them on two large television screens.

The screens are part of proposed meeting room and broadcast equipment upgrades being put together by public information coordinator Lisa Berkis and video technician Dave Kelliher. He produces the telecasts of supervisors meetings over Comcast Cable Channel 22 through his Lower Makefield company Foster Digital Media Productions.

"It's time to take our system up to the next level," Berkis told the Middletown supervisors at Tuesday night's meeting.

In addition to the two screens for the audience, the proposal also includes a large screen facing the supervisors so they can get a better look at plans. Documents are currently placed on an easel where they are hard to see for both the supervisors and audience members, especially those seated near the back of the meeting room.

Berkis said the upgrade will mean a better viewing experience both for those at the meeting and those watching on television. She estimated the cost of the upgrade, including installation, at \$19,594. Much of the installation can be done either by an information technology consulting company the township already employs or the public works crew, Berkis added.

Supervisors Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer told Berkis to work on lowering the cost and come back before the board in a few weeks with a revised presentation. The upgrade will be done sometime this year, said Berkis, who couldn't give a more specific time estimate.

While working on the upgrade, Berkis also is looking to beef up the content on Channel 22. Among her ideas are public service videos highlighting township-owned properties like the Middletown Country Club and the Styer store and orchards.

"I don't think many people realize these are Middletown-owned facilities, even though they are run by private individuals or companies through license agreements with the township," Manager Richard Gestrich said. "Anything we do to rejuvenate interest in these facilities will come back to help the township."

The township gets percentages of revenue earned at the properties.

Supervisor Robert McMonagle suggested a volunteer firefighter recruitment video. Other board members suggested the township could get volunteer help for the new programming through intern arrangements with local colleges.

"If we can get colleges to partner with us, we can come up with some pretty nice pieces," said Supervisor Chuck Thompson.

Berkis said there is \$2,000 in the township budget and a \$600 grant from Comcast for programming enhancements, and she will look for other money. Also, whatever is not spent from the \$20,000 budgeted for the meeting room and broadcast equipment upgrade can be used for programming, she added.

Some residents are getting Verizon cable but the company hasn't set up its government access channel to carry supervisors meetings and other programming, Berkis said. It's required to do that by November, she added.