

Swartz Creek Senior Center opts for scaled-down expansion plan

by Jill Blondin | The Flint Journal

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SWARTZ CREEK, Michigan -- Every seven seconds, another baby boomer turns 60. And with 1,700 members, the Swartz Creek Senior Center has been feeling the squeeze. "All of our activities are at capacity," said Center Director Melinda Soper. "We've been turning people away from events because we don't have enough room."

The Swartz Creek City Council this week approved a scaled-down version of an expansion plan approved in December. The larger center would have required a loan from the city of Swartz Creek, a debt the center didn't want to take on in the current economic downturn.

"Economically, that didn't make sense," said Jim Florence, president of the center's Board of Trustees. "We decided to downsize so we wouldn't have to borrow."

The original 6,605-square-foot expansion would have cost \$836,000, Florence said. The scaled-down 4,416-square-foot expansion will cost \$500,000.

A basement included in the original plan has been eliminated and no additional parking will be added, as originally planned. The expansion will more than double the size of a common area now used for dancing, yoga and other classes, Florence said. And there will be plenty of members to fill it. "There's a great need," Soper said.

Jan Basco, 65, of Swartz Creek, takes an exercise class at the center twice a week, and sometimes visits to play cards. She's never been turned away, but has noticed the crowded conditions at the center.

"When we have two or three things going on, we don't have an extra room," she said.

The center, built in the early 1980s, has added 87 new members since January, Florence said. Last year, it averaged 25 to 30 new members per month.

Florence expects to break ground on the expansion in May or June, after final plans are approved by the Swartz Creek Planning Commission and the City Council.

Construction will take about four months, he said.

The center, located at 8095 Civic Dr. in Swartz Creek, offers lunches, potlucks, dances, card games, exercise classes and wood carving. Services include information and referral, education, health screening and nutrition. Membership is open to anyone over the age of 55 who lives within the Swartz Creek School District and the Swartz Creek/Gaines United Way Area.