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Increase in rent imperils center

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By KELLY HANNON

Soaring rent will force a telework center in Stafford County to move later this year or, at worst, to close.

The U.S. General Services Administration has notified the George Washington Regional Commission in Fredericksburg that it will not fund the Stafford telework center in its current location in the Doc Stone Commons shopping center, near the intersection of Garrisonville and Onville roads.

The rent has been deemed too high, said Bob Wilson, the GWRC's executive director.

Also, the current space is considered too large for the 23 registered users of the telework center. About 10 to 12 people are working at the center on a typical day.

The commission wants to keep a telework center open in North Stafford, Wilson said. A new site nearby would charge 40 to 50 percent less in rent, and the commission is waiting for GSA approval to move the telework center there.

"We feel it's a better location," Wilson said.

A move would not take place until fall.

Keeping the center open provides continuity of operations in government, Wilson said. That means workers who could not reach their Washington-area offices during an emergency would have a place to go in Stafford.

One year remains on the commission-GSA contract for the Stafford telework center, Wilson said, hopefully clearing the way for a move to a new location.

"We're hopeful that door isn't closed yet," Wilson said.

Stafford's telework center is one of three centers in the Fredericksburg area operated jointly by the GSA and the commission.

Workers can reserve cubicles for a workday, a week or a month instead of driving to their permanent offices or working from home, where they may be distracted. The telework centers have Internet access, copiers, fax machines and technical support staff.

The other telework centers are in Woodbridge and the Southpoint shopping center in the Massaponax area of Spotsylvania County.

The Stafford center has 19 work stations, compared with 16 work stations in Woodbridge and 25 in Spotsylvania.

Opening a new telework center would require several months of preparation, Wilson said. He hopes to hear from the GSA within the next two weeks so the commission can give the current landlord required notice, he said.

The commission's governing board was notified of the funding situation at a meeting Monday night.

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