IRON RIVER—“First of all, we wish to thank all who responded to the survey,” said Gene Callovi, president of the Iron River Senior Center Site Council. “We will try to address many of your concerns.”

Facing cuts in its nutrition program, the center began a survey in early June to address this concern and others, and to get input back from those who use or do not use the center’s programs.

“We do want everyone to know that all are welcome to attend the congregate noon meals,” said Callovi.

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“All ages are welcome. The difference is, anyone over the age of 60 is considered a senior, and a $4 donation is recommended.

“Those under the age of 60 years are asked for a $5 charge for the meal. These are required per federal regulations.”

Reservations for one to three people do not have to be made in advance, he noted

“We do ask for a one-day notice when there are five to 10 or more people, as meals are prepared on the numbers that we have available.

“We have heard your comments, and will try to do a better job regarding your concerns. One of the biggest concerns was the quality of the meal. We will try to improve on our menu. We hope you realize the meals are geared to our home-bound persons or ‘Meals on Wheels,’ as commonly referred to,” said Callovi.

“We do have to be concerned with those who are home-bound, sick or otherwise unable to get to town easily. We must serve those a well-balanced, nutritious meal, approved by a qualified nutritionist.”

Use of a salad bar is being tried, at first on a weekly basis, and more often if it works out well, he said.

“We are also looking into a meal later in the day. This is in the discussion stage at this time. It was mentioned that many did not feel welcome at the noon congregate meals. We do apologize for that and will try much harder to make you feel at home.”

Transportation to the center for meals is a problem, said Callovi, as all drivers and vehicles are delivering meals between the hours of 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

“We can pick you up earlier and return you later if that would help. Maybe you could get in a card game or some other activity before and after the meal.”

Regarding center activities, said Callovi, the center at this time is catering to those who want bingo and cards.

“We are open to suggestions here, and of course, participants. Movies and trips are being discussed. We do take a bus to Iron Mountain once a month. We can accommodate five to 15 people on these trips. If enough people are interested, other trips are certainly an option.”

A change of name, “senior center,” to something else could be considered, he noted.

“More advertising is difficult due to a limited budget. We do have the menus available at the center, and the newspapers do print them regularly. We do use Telephone Time on a regular basis, and that has helped many of our meals, our dances, and pancake day.

“The moneys realized from these activities helps to pay the heat, lights, water and upkeep of the building,” he said.

“The Iron River Senior Center is owned by the county, or actually, all of us. It is our building, and we ask that everyone use it. The Site Council is charged with the upkeep of the building and grounds, and also working with all the programs. DICSA, or Dickinson-Iron Community Services Agency, is responsible for meals served, transportation, weatherization, and the Out-reach program. “

Membership, he said, is basically a fundraiser to help finance bills, such as heat, lights and water. The cost of a membership is $5 per year.

“This is not required, but does give members a chance to vote on who serves on the council. If you are interested in serving on the Site Council, elections are coming up in December. We ask those interested to throw your hat in the ring.”

Some of the other programs under discussion are background music, a speaker system, round or octagon tables that sits six to 10 people, movies, and new lighting. A new automatic door opener will be installed shortly, especially for those who may be handicapped.

“What we are asking is greater participation from you, our center owners. We aren’t asking for everyday attendance, but once a week would help the program. Volunteers are welcome for special programs, such as pancake day, dances, etc.”

For information, said Callovi, call the center at 265-6134, or Char Soderbloom at 265-2954.