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City asked to pump more funds into ailing ambulance service

Hoopeston Regional Health Center hopes city officials can pump new blood into the financially ailing ambulance service.

Health center CEO Frank Caruso reviewed the ambulance service budget from Oct. 1, the beginning of the hospital's fiscal year, at Monday's Hoopeston City Council meeting.

The health center took over ambulance operations in August 2000.

The service generated \$152,000 in gross revenue for the five-month period, but netted \$88,200 Caruso said. Deducted from the gross total were things such as Medicare and Medicaid write-offs, supplies, maintenance and approximately \$100,000 in salaries needed to maintain an advanced life support ambulance service. Expenses totaled \$119,000 for the same period, leaving the service about \$31,000 in the red, or about \$6,000 per month.

Where to cast your ballot

Voters will cast their ballots Tuesday in primary races. Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Area polling places include:

Butler 1	Village Hall, Rankin
Butler 2	Fire Station, Rankin
Butler 3	Fire Station, East Lynn
Grant 1	Hoopeston Fire Station
Grant 2	City Hall, 301 W. Main,
Grant 3	Masonic Temple, 206 W. Orange
Grant 4	St. Anthony Parish Hall, 313 E. Lincoln
Grant 5	St. Anthony Parish Hall, 313 E. Lincoln
Grant 7	Twp. Highway Garage, 701 E. Orange
Grant 8	Antioch Church of Christ
Ross 1	R-A High School, 350 N. Chicago
Ross 2	R-A Grade School, 349 N. Chicago
Ross 3	Rossville Church of Christ, 514 N. Attica
South Ross 1	Township Garage, Alvin
South Ross 2	Village Hall, Henning

Since October, the service has been awarded two grants: one to cover basic level training and the other, from Southern Illinois University, for a new ambulance. The grants will exceed the net loss by more than \$11,000 but Caruso said the grants are one-time awards that will probably not be received again.

While the health center will continue to apply for grants, Caruso hopes to find additional revenue from the city through such things as stipends, consulting fees, looking at shifting some money from the ambulance replacement fund to operating costs or raising the ambulance tax levy to the maximum amount.

The city had run the service at a deficit for some time before the health center took over operations. That deficit was attributed to lack of collections and billings, Caruso said. Those areas have been improved but costs have increased, especially for salaries from what was previously a volunteer service. "The volunteer service of 20 years ago is gone," he said.

Also, when city officials looked at outside providers to run the ambulance service, they were willing to pay \$3,000 to \$5,000 per month to another provider, which they are unwilling to do for the health center, Caruso

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