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Monday, March 8, 2004

Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication

P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942

www.justthefacts.net

Consultants recommend area school districts come together

ROSSVILLE—Three consultants who spent four months doing a feasibility study are recommending three school districts combine into one new one.

Consulting & Research Group recommends that Rossville-Alvin, Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning districts merge into a new district with high schools in Hoopeston and Bismarck and a vocational center at Rossville-Alvin High School.

Creating a new district would have several advantages, according to a report presented to representatives of Hoopeston Area, Rossville-Alvin, Bismarck-Henning, Armstrong-Ellis and Armstrong-Potomac schools last Thursday.

One boost would come in the form of state financial incentives. A combined district would receive more than \$4.6 million in incentives, according to the study.

If a combined high school were formed now, it would have slightly more than 900 students divided between the two locations. With more students, a new district could offer more courses, not only at the high school level, but also at the junior high/middle school level. The report recommends

more electives for students at the younger level, including foreign language classes.

Combining districts would mean paying less property tax for residents of some districts and more for others. Based on current data, the report projected a tax rate of \$3.39 in the education, operating/building maintenance and transportation funds, the largest three funds. That rate is 63 cents more than Hoopeston Area residents pay and less than the amount paid by residents of all the other districts.

Interviews were conducted with 51 residents, board members and administrators in the five districts. All districts by Armstrong-Ellis and Armstrong Potomac showed high interest in some kind of reorganization to offset declining enrollment and finances. Representatives from the Armstrong districts showed more interest in the possibility of merging with Champaign County schools which are closer, according to the report.

With the feasibility study released, boards of each district will now discuss what steps to take next. Early indications are favorable to the recommendation.

Hoopeston Area Superintendent Mark Connolly said he likes the recommendation. "I think it's very viable," he said, adding it will lead to further discussion among the districts.

Dennis Price, president of the Rossville-Alvin board president also praised the report and said it is time for school officials and residents to take a hard look at themselves and their districts and "stop putting our own wants and desires before what's best for the districts.

As for Rossville-Alvin High School becoming a vocational center for northern Vermilion County and perhaps other schools, "I think that's a

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Navel Oranges \$1.49

\$3.26 w/o coupon. Limit 1 coupon per family, 1 coupon per purchase. Subject to state & local taxes.

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We reserve the right to correct printing errors



Police News



Zachary R. McKenzie, 17, of 724 Scott Dr., was arrested at 9:10 p.m. Thursday in the 700 block of East Elm. He was charged with battery on a complaint from a 42-year-old Hoopeston man and was released on a notice to appear.

A 17-year-old Hoopeston woman reported Thursday that someone took her purse from Hoopeston Area High School, 615 E. Orange.

Zachary R. McKenzie, 17, of 624 E. McCracken, was arrested at 8:15 a.m. Friday at Hoopes-ton Area High School, 615 E. Orange. He was charged with disorderly conduct - verbal threats on a complaint from a 16-year-old girl who alleged the threats came from an incident March 4. McKenzie was released on a notice to appear.

A blue Nokia cell phone was turned in to police Friday after it was found at the Jerry's IGA parking lot. The phone was later claimed by the owner.

No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 11:40 a.m. Friday in the 700 block of North Dixie Hwy.

Police said Thomas A. Tiernan of Danville, in a 1999 Freightliner, was southbound when he was hit by 40 m.p.h. winds and went into a ditch, striking and snapping a utility pole.

Tiernan was treated and released from Hoop-eston Community Memorial Hospital.

Obituaries

Joseph P. Wagoner, 81, of Hoopeston, died at 9:20 p.m. Wednesday, March 3, 2004, at his home. Funeral services were at 11 a.m. Saturday, at Hamilton-Orr Funeral Home. Burial with military rites was in Floral Hill Cemetery. Visitation was 5-8 p.m. Friday, at the funeral home; Memorials are suggested to Carle Hos-pice, 2300 N. Vermilion, Danville, IL 61832 or a charity of the donor's choice.

Weather



Partly cloudy today. High 45. Tonight, chance of snow. Low 27. Tomorrow, chance of snow. High 40, low 26.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston

Floyd E. Gaines, 42, of 41 Parkview Court, was arrested at 11:03 p.m. Friday after a traffic stop in the 200 block of East Main. He was charged with driving on revoca-tion and operating an uninsured motor vehicle and was released on \$100 cash bond.

Victoriano Marti-nez, 18, of 859 E. Seminary, Rafael Resendez, 18, of 709 S. Third St., and a 15- and 16-year-old Hoopeston boys were arrested at 11:57 p.m. Friday, charged with illegal consumption of alcohol by a

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