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Dropped phone tax may fund new emergency equipment

Money paid in a telephone tax that was declared unconstitutional may help fund new 9-1-1 equipment in Vermilion County.

Vic Vanesse, county 9-1-1 director, on Tuesday night asked the Hoopeston City Council for a resolution allowing him to seek a \$3,479 grant to be used towards new computer aided dispatch hardware.

Vanesse said the money was generated after the wireless communication portion of a telecommunication infrastructure tax was declared unconstitutional. The tax was implemented in 1997 and collected from 1998-2002. Under a 2005 settlement agreement, municipalities that imposed the tax were ordered to refund 70 percent of the amount collected on wireless communication only. The tax on landline phones was not struck down.

That tax is separate from the 9-1-1 surcharge of 75 cents per month per telephone customer, Vanesse said.

Refunded money was to be paid by December 19, 2005. According to a ruling on the matter, money collected was to be split with 60 percent being awarded as grants for 9-1-1 communications equipment and 40 percent to hospitals, trauma centers and emergent care facilities and providers, primarily in rural areas to enhance their emergency care services for indigents.

Vanesse said two Vermilion County communities are affected by the decision. Danville may apply for \$114,400 and Hoopeston's share of \$3,479 may be sought in a grant that must be submitted by 9-1-1 board.

Many municipalities in the state have separate 9-1-1 governing boards, he said. Vermilion County is different in that Hoopeston, Danville Police and Vermilion County Sheriff's Department are in the same 9-1-1 organization.

Money from the settlement is earmarked for a new computer system for the Danville communications center, estimated at \$98,000, plus \$3,884 for a desktop com-

puter and ancillary equipment for the Hoopeston dispatch center. On top of those costs are bid specifications and installation, estimated at \$15,000, Vanesse said.

Total cost for the project is estimated at more than the \$118,282 expected to be available in the combined grants. Vanesse said the 9-1-1 board would pay the difference from money collected through the surcharge. "We feel it's in everybody's advantage to get back that money that was paid in," he said. That will allow the 0-1-1 board to save its money for other needs in the future, he added.

New equipment will replace a system that is five and a half years old. "It's not breaking daily but it is time to consider a new computer," Vanesse said.

The council voted 7-0 to allow the resolution to allow Vanesse to seek the funds. Alderwoman Nancy Stipp was absent.

In unrelated business, the council learned that modern means were used to sell an old truck.

Alderman Brandon Hamilton, fire/ambulance committee chairman, reported that a ladder truck donated to the city by the Watseka Fire Department was sold on e-bay for \$5,000, the exact amount paid to purchase a newer ladder truck.

The winning bidder was from New York, who plans to add the truck to a museum, he said.

Hamilton requested that money from the sale be returned to the fire department budget's accrual fund.

In related business, Hamilton said the department purchased a brush truck for \$3,500 from Key Automotive in Danville. Field fires in rural Grant Township and covering Landfill Road provide a good base for the truck purchase, he said.

Money for the truck came from department fundraising efforts, such as the annual Firemen's Ball and Crash **See TAX on other side**

B I N G O

every Thursday 7 p.m.
**Hoopeston
American Legion**
502 E. Penn

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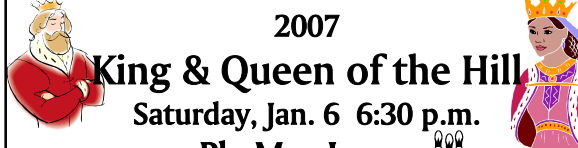
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Questions? Call Doug Wagoner, 283-6541
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 Friday 5:30-8 p.m.
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 502 E. Penn, Hoopeston
No carryouts



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Come Early!!

Tax continued from other side

& Bash.

Regarding Grant Township, Hamilton said the department will continue to provide coverage in the rural area even though a requested fee increase for rural township protection has not yet been approved.

The city and township signed an agreement in 1993 setting coverage at \$13,000 per year, Hamilton said.

Last year, the Grant Township Board received a letter from Hamilton asking that the amount be increased to \$30,000.

Township and city officials were unable to meet before the township board passed its levy in December.

Hamilton cited inflation and other causes as the reason for the requested increase.

In additional department news, Hamilton said firemen will request an International Standards Organization (ISO) review to try to lower the city's rating from a five to a four.

As a city's fire rating lowers, so, too, may insurance premiums for homeowners and businesses. Hamilton said Fire Chief Greg Shipman informed him that less than 10 percent of fire departments in the nation have a rating of four or lower.

Briefly

Meeting change

North Fork Conservation Club has changed its meeting nights for 2007 to the first and third Thursday of each month, starting with January 4, 2007. The first Thursday is the board meeting and the third Thursday is membership meeting. All members are urged to attend.

Police News



Sheila M. King, 77, of Hoopeston was ticketed after an accident at 11:13 a.m. Tuesday in the 200 block of South First Ave.

Police said King, in a 1996 Buick, was southbound and tried to pull into a parking space when she hit the driver's side door of a 2000 Hyundai owned by Jacqueline Ashby of Hoopeston.

King was cited for improper turning and operating an uninsured motor vehicle.

The ISO evaluation will include all areas of fire protection, including equipment, training and water supply.

In other business, the council:

- Heard from Stan Steiner about a meeting scheduled before the Illinois Commerce Commission between Milford and CSX Railroad. Steiner suggested Hoopeston representatives attend the meeting.

Mayor Bill DeWitt said Hoopeston has been invited to the meeting, along with road commissioners from Ross and Lovejoy townships. A representative from the Illinois Department of Transportation is also expected to attend. "In all probability, it will probably be very beneficial to us," DeWitt said.

- Learned this year's Firemen's Ball will be Saturday, March 31.

- Heard from Alderman Carl Ankenbrand that new swings have been built for McFerren Park. The swings are expected to be set in cement.

- Learned from Alderman Bill Crusinberry that over the holidays, two to three water main breaks were repaired. The number, he said, "seems about normal."

Also, the city is waiting on an estimate to refurbish

Officers, board members sought

Anyone interested in becoming an officer and/or board member of the Hoopeston Youth Football League, needs to attend our next meeting at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 14 at the Hoopeston Public Library.

For more information,, call Lee, (217) 283-7883 or Brandi, (217) 339-2211.

Trip changed

The Hoopeston Multi Agency van trip for Tuesday, Jan. 30 has been changed from Bloomington to Kankakee.

Weather



Chance of rain today, tonight and tomorrow. High today 50, low 41. Tomorrow, high 51, low 38.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service (217) 283-6221.

ground and aerial water storage tanks, he said.

- Heard a request from Alderman Bill Goodwine that suggested changes in the draft of a new employee handbook be submitted to him within the next two weeks.

Suggestions may be made by aldermen, department heads and employees

Flea Market in January VFW

428 W. Orange, Hoopeston
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