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City council takes no action on paper's request for fees

Whether city officials will pay half a local paper's legal bills may not be decided by the deadline given by the paper.

The Hoopeston city council took no action Tuesday night after an executive session to discuss payment of a legal bill incurred by the Hoopeston Chronicle.

The Chronicle requested the city pay half - \$3,292.23 - of a legal bill incurred when the paper sued the city for violating the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

Failure to pay the amount by Jan. 15 would result in further legal action, according to a letter to city officials from Chronicle publisher Howard Hewitt.

Last year, the city was found in violation of the act for closing revolving loan committee meetings to the public.

While a judge ruled the committee violated the act, no ruling was made on whether the city should pay the paper's legal fees.

The act, which mandates when government meetings may be closed to the public, states governmental bodies

may be held liable for legal fees, but does not say they shall be held liable, said city attorney Jim Spiros after the meeting.

Spiros said he believes no action was taken because aldermen Drew Allen, Mark Drollinger and Harold Cox were absent. "They wanted to wait until everyone was present," he said, adding he will contact Chronicle attorney Don Craven to explain the delay.

In other business, the council learned the city will pay more for garbage pickup this year but residents won't.

The city will pay \$13,615 monthly, up from \$12,607, and is the first increase since 1994, said alderman Bill Goodwine.

Residents will continue to pay \$4.75 per month, even though the city's actual cost has risen from \$5.25 to \$5.67 per home, he said.

The hike will be offset by real estate taxes, Goodwine said, and will, if the landfill expansion is approved, freeze rates until 2008.

New chief financial officer named at Hoopeston hospital

Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home has a new official - and perhaps its next administrator.

Frank Caruso, 34, began his duties as chief financial officer/chief operations officer on Monday, said administrator Darryl Wahler.

Caruso, who comes to the facility from Danville Care nursing home where he was the administrator, Wahler said.

Introducing Caruso to hospital employees, Wahler said he told them the newcomer could someday fill the administrator's position. "If everything works out well, he'll probably be my replacement," Wahler said, "but

that's several years down the road."

In hiring a new CFO, Wahler said he looked for someone who could one day be his successor. "That's something they've never had here," he said. "Every time someone's quit, they've had to go outside."

Caruso has spent 10 years in healthcare. "If you count the time when I was in high school, it's closer to 20," he said.

As a high school student, Caruso worked in a nursing home. He attended the University of Indianapolis where he received associate's and bachelor's degrees in accounting. While in college, he worked as a Medicare

See OFFICER on other side



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CRIS programs, services for elderly discussed at Monday's Neighborhood Watch meeting

Several programs offered through a Vermilion County agency are designed to keep older residents healthy and safe.

CRIS representatives René Riegle, protective services/elder abuse caseworker, and Joyce Latoz, outreach/protective services supervisor, spoke at Monday's Neighborhood Watch program. The women outlined programs and services available to senior citizens in the Hoopeston area.

Services offered by the Danville-based agency include:

- ☐ in-home care, comprised of homemaker services and certified nurses aides for personal care. Cost of the program is based on ability to pay.
- ☐ transportation services, which are also provided

Officer continued from other side

bookkeeper.

He is also a licensed nursing home administrator.

After graduating, Caruso worked as a public accountant at an Indianapolis firm. While there, he handled many healthcare clients, leading him to specialize in health care accounting in Elkhart, Ind.

He then worked at Decatur Memorial Hospital for three years, serving as comptroller for two. He was administrator of McKinley Court nursing home, one of Decatur Memorial's subsidiaries, and was administrator of Carle Arbours in Savoy for three years.

The position at Hoopeston is "the job I've dreamed of for the last 10 years," Caruso said. "I've always wanted to be CFO and COO of a small rural hospital...in a community that I can have friends in and not worry about walking down the street."

His immediate focus will be on the financial aspect of the hospital, including a computer conversion expected to take up to six months.

As he becomes more familiar with the facility, Caruso said he will assume leadership of more day-to-day operations, freeing Wahler to work on long-term planning and development.

This is not the first time Caruso has had a brush with working at Hoopeston Community Hospital. In 1996, he considered applying for a position "but I missed my

locally by the Hoopeston Multi Agency.

☐ Senior Adult Meals (SAMS) program at central sites, such as Centennial Manor in Hoopeston and home-delivered meals.

☐ outreach services, for assistance with government forms and other problems.

☐ information and referral, helping seniors find answers to questions on topics ranging from Medicare to driver's license renewals.

☐ protective services/elder abuse, the thrust of Monday's meeting.

Protective services, part of the Victim Assistance Program, helps victims and witnesses who are 55 or older deal with the judicial system by accompanying them to court or other crime-related issues.

chance," he said.

The service aspect of the field is what Caruso said he enjoys most. Also, "I like to have impact - that's part of who I am," he said. He said leadership and team building are strengths he brings to the position.

Although dedicated to his career, Caruso considers himself a "family man." He and his three and a half-year-old daughter, Madalene, will move from Ogden to Hoopeston later this month or in February, a move he hopes will be "uneventful."

In the Hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
Jan. 5, 1998

Admitted: none.

Discharged: Earl Gaffney, Fran Merckle, May Lily Wells.

Weather



Partly cloudy with a chance of showers today. High 43. Tonight, cloudy. Low 33. Tomorrow, partly sunny. High 36, low 31.

For current weather conditions, call the **Hoopeston Weather Line** at (217) 283-6221.

The elder abuse program intervenes when seniors are abused physically, sexually, emotionally, are confined, willfully deprived, passively neglected or financially exploited.

Names of those reporting abuse are kept confidential from both the abuser and the abused, Latoz said, adding services are provided only if requested by the victim.

Services may be requested, or more information

Police News



Lucas A. Hollen, 18, of 426 N. Fourth St., Apt. B, turned himself in to police at 11 a.m. Tuesday. Hollen, wanted on a warrant, was taken to the Public Safety Building, Danville.

Classifieds

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