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Motor Fuel Tax budget includes covering brick streets

Street improvements made in Hoopeston this year will be at the expense of local history.

A \$235,000 Motor Fuel Tax street program budget approved at Tuesday's Hoopeston city council meeting, includes funds to cover brick streets on Fourth St. between Route 9 and Penn and Seminary Ave. between Market and the east side of Sixth St.

The budget calls for \$190,000 of bituminous concrete overlay to be used on the two projects, said engineer Jay Dingee.

"These brick streets have reached a point in time where, traffic-wise and maintenance-wise, we don't have many options to fix them," Dingee said. "We think of them as brick streets, but they've got a lot of scars in the last 75 years," he said, referring to concrete patches along the streets.

Alderman Bill Goodwine, the only member voting against the budget, said he would like to see more information on the cost of keeping the streets bricked. "I still haven't seen a lot of justification for covering up the brick streets," he said. Engineers deciding the fate of the streets is "like letting generals decide if we're going to go to war," he added.

Brick streets have received no maintenance in nearly 70 years, he added. "For 66 years, those babies have done pretty well," he said. "You let those other streets go for 66 years and see how they are."

Alderman Mark Drollinger, chairman of the street/alley committee, said the matter is one of economics and aesthetics. Retaining brick streets is less expensive and is most often done to match older homes. He compared keeping brick streets with more modern homes as "the drapes don't match the carpet."

After the meeting, Goodwine said he is unsure how much he would be willing to spend to keep the bricks.

"I'd like to know how much it would cost," he said.

The Motor Fuel Tax budget, which also includes road and bridge expenses, calls for \$10,000 for sidewalk patching in the 100 block of East Main St., in the third year of a downtown sidewalk renovation program.

Officials had discussed discontinuing the program, but "I think we felt some pressure that 'we started this project and if we don't finish it, they'll ask why,'" Dingee said. "On the other hand, we haven't had too many reimbursements on it."

Merchants were asked to donate \$1,000 each toward the cost of renovating the sidewalks.

Other items in the budget include \$8,000 for salt, \$2,000 for traffic signs, \$5,000 for patching material and \$16,500 for engineering fees.

The road and bridge portion has expenditures of \$77,500. Along with Main St. repairs, it includes \$7,500 for tree removal, \$10,000 for oil and chip and \$20,000 for Fourth St. curb repair.

In unrelated business, the former city hall may be getting a new lease on life.

The finance committee will accept bids on the site, with a \$500 minimum bid. However, Goodwine said, each bid must include what the new owner plans to do with the building, as well as how those plans will be financed.

Instead of taking the lowest bid, "we want to take the best package," Goodwine said. "It's a nice historic building," he said, adding the city will strongly consider the intended use when accepting a bid.

If no acceptable bid packages are received, the city will consider tearing the building down, he said.

The building, at the corner of Market and Penn, is nearly 100 years old, and has been empty since the new municipal building was completed in 1994.

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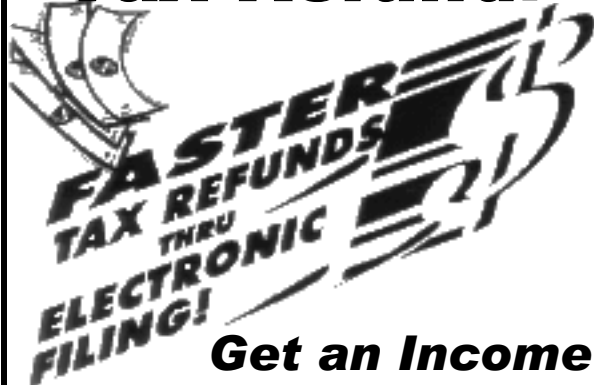
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Crimestoppers program makes telephone latest weapon in Hoopeston crime-fighting

Local residents can now fight crime with their telephones.

By dialing 283-4411, residents may anonymously provide tips on crimes to the Vermilion County Crimestoppers program, said Jim Wagner, vice president of the Crimestoppers board of directors.

The number, which rings into the Crimestoppers Danville office, is not recorded and does not have caller identification, Wagner said. "It's completely anonymous," he said.

People who call are not asked for their names but are instead given a number, Wagner explained. That number serves as identification for callers to later claim rewards paid by the program.

Crimestoppers pays up to \$1,000 for tips leading to the arrest and conviction of those committing crimes.

Tipsters may call the number again to determine if the

arrests have been made and a reward given. When rewards are approved by the board, directors, not police, make the payment, Wagner said.

For example, an armed robbery at First Midwest Bank in Danville banks resulted in multiple payments totaling \$1,250 to multiple tipsters, Wagner said. Simultaneous drops were scheduled with tipsters to avoid anyone discovering the identities of the tipsters, he said.

The amount paid is determined by the 13-member board, which includes Hoopeston resident Pat Bailey, Wagner said.

Hoopeston police Sgt. Danny Danner, the liaison between the department and Crimestoppers, said there will be little involvement by local officers, other than high-lighting specific crimes for tips.

The Feb. 15 armed robbery of the Hoopeston Clark

station is one crime the department turned over to Crimestoppers for tips, Danner said, stressing the anonymity of the program. "(Callers) don't have to leave their names or testify," he said.

With the phone number in place, Danner said police and Crimestoppers must educate the public about the program. "We can tell people their worst fears will not be met," he said.

Hoopeston is the first city outside Danville that Crimestoppers is focusing on, Wagner said. "We're committed to seeing that this is truly a county-wide organization," he said.

Crimestoppers is funded through donations from individuals and businesses. Money is used to pay expenses, such as telephone lines and personnel to answer the phones, as well to pay rewards.

The Vermilion County program, created Feb. 26, 1998, has helped law enforcement officials solve 156 cases, recovering nearly \$450,000 in merchandise and drugs. More than \$19,000 has been paid in rewards.

Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Crimestoppers,



Court Dispositions



March 5: April Russell, Ambia, Ind., paid in full.

Kenneth Ripa, Rossville, no valid driver's license, \$119 total, six months court supervision; no rear light, nolle pros.

Joshua Simonton, Hoopeston, speeding, ex parte judgment.

Christopher Smith, Hoopeston, speeding, \$95 total.

Jeremy Smolek, Danville, uninsured, nolle pros; no valid registration, \$200, nine months court supervision.

Heather Souza, Hoopeston, speeding; failed to appear.

Ellen Swing, Charleston, speeding, pleaded guilty; \$75.

Matthew Terrell, Hoopeston, no seat belt, \$55 total.

Nathan Walder, Cissna Park, speeding, pleaded guilty; \$75.

Police News



Charles Leemon of 11674E 4200N Rd. reported Tuesday that his front license plate, 6025NV, had been lost or stolen from his 1997 Dodge truck.

Sandra K. Thompson, 40, of 713 E. Honeywell, was ticketed for failure to yield at a yield sign following an accident at 12:33 p.m. Tuesday.

Police said Thompson, in a 1995 Jeep, was eastbound on East Honeywell when she stopped at North Seventh St. and entered the intersection. Thompson was struck by a 1989 Dodge pickup truck driven by Christopher K. Smith of 630 W. Washington.

Juan A. Martinez, 17, of #9 Hunt's Trailer Court, turned himself in to police Tuesday afternoon. Martinez, wanted on a Vermilion County traffic

In the Hospital



**Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
March 16, 1998**

Admitted: Harold Johnson, Hoopeston.

Discharged: none.

Weather



Rain likely today, tonight and tomorrow. Today's high 51, low 39. Tomorrow's high 50, low 37.

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

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