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Officials meet, look at four sites for tax increment area

Four areas of Hoopeston are being looked at to be part of a tax increment financing (TIF) district.

The Hoopeston city council met Monday with Gene Norber and Eric White of Economic Development Resources of St. Louis to discuss forming a TIF district.

The areas under consideration include the intersection of Rtes. 1 and 9, the Hoopeston Industrial Corporation site on Route 9, approximately 100 acres off Euclid for residential development and part of the downtown area, said Mayor Bob Ault.

Norber, Economic Development Resources president, explained a TIF is formed to "eradicate blight and ameliorate conditions which, if left unchecked, could become blight." The program is also used for new development, he said.

To qualify as a TIF district, existing development must either meet five of 13 criteria for determining blight, such as depreciation, obsolescence or lack of planning, or qualify for conservation, for structures standing 35 years or longer, White said. New development must include a plan to improve property, through such things as adding water lines, sidewalks, streets and lighting, he said.

Officials may either combine the areas into a large TIF district or separate them into smaller ones. Although planning smaller districts will cost more, White cautioned against forming a large district encompassing too much of the city. "This is going to freeze the property tax portion of your general fund," he said. "It's not going to be general tax dollars anymore."

Once a TIF is formed, the city, as well as other taxing bodies, will only receive tax dollars effective when the district was formed. Increases in the equalized assessed valuation (EAV) - and resulting higher taxes – will go into a TIF fund to repay program-related costs.

That money can be used for a variety of things, including improving infrastructure, land acquisition and addressing environmental problems. Other uses may include grants and no-interest loans.

The only prohibition is that TIF money may not be used to construct new buildings: "no sticks or bricks with TIF dollars," Norber said. However, that prohibition is lifted if a school district is negatively impacted by a residential TIF adding increasing numbers of students to overcrowded schools, he said.

Besides deciding where TIF areas should be, officials must also decide on the type of TIF they want. Residential, commercial and industrial districts are all available and more than one may be selected.

Housing and jobs were priorities for aldermen. "It's easier to try to attract new jobs and not take care of the ones who are here," said Alderman Bill Goodwine. "We worry about them leaving but we never do anything about it.

If an industry were to locate in Hoopeston, the city could not accommodate the influx of upper management people. "We have to provide housing for growth for industry," he said.

Once a plan is in place, a public hearing will be held and taxing bodies will be notified. An advisory joint review board comprised of representatives from the county, school district, township, library district and member of the municipality will go over the plan to determine if it meets the criteria.

Information from Monday's meeting will be compiled into a report for the council. Norber and White are expected to begin a study on the proposed area next week, Ault said.







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Gaining confidence, following laws part of successful statements: chief investigator

Getting information in a police investigation has changed in the past 20 or 30 years, according to the Vermilion County Sheriff's Department's chief investigator. The single bright light shining in a suspect's face and threats of beatings popularized in movies have been replaced by talking to and relating with the suspect, said investigator Gary Miller.

Miller spoke at Monday's Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting as part of the ongoing death investigation.

Changes in laws have changed how suspects, witnesses and victims are interviewed, Miller said. "We interview people, we don't interrogate," he said. "We don't vell and scream."

While suspects often lie about their involvement in a crime, alleged victims also lie. "There are a lot of falsely reported crimes," he said. For example, young people

A silver bicycle was reported missing Monday from

Margaret F. King, 40, of #43 Baer's Trailer Court,

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who are late getting home sometimes report they were followed and dragged out of a car by a suspect, rather than face their parents' anger for getting home late. "In today's society, truth is not always the majority of words spoken," he said. "We try to get at the truth."

Getting the truth is not always easy. "You don't walk into an interview room and say 'hey, did you kill this guy?' 'No, I didn't.' 'Ok, thank you,'" Miller said.

Stretching the truth by allowing a suspect to think investigators know more than they do is one tactic used. So is playing one suspect against another, or telling a suspect someone saw them commit the crime.

Sometimes, a suspect will confess, but "a confession doesn't automatically guarantee a conviction," Miller said. Defense attorneys put police on trial and, unlike the suspect, "we're guilty until we're proven innocent," he said.

Getting at the truth is important, but not at any price. "Cops are not supposed to get down to the level of the people they arrest," Miller said, addressing reports of police brutality in New York. "If you don't stay within the law, you become one of them and that's something you don't want to happen."

The nature of taking statements has also changed over time. First, police wrote what suspects said. Then suspects wrote and signed their own statements. Putting statements on audio tape came next. Now statements are often videotaped.

Defense attorneys, however, have questioned the validity of each method, from questioning whether the officer typed each word the suspect said to wondering what happened before the camera started. "There's just no foolproof way," Miller said.

The next Neighborhood Watch meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Aug. 2 at city hall.

Mark Murphy, an Illinois State Police polygraphist, is scheduled to speak and demonstrate former and modern polygraph machines.

county warrant. She was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville. Two people were arrested at 11:45 p.m. Monday,

was arrested at 7:16 p.m. Monday on a Vermilion

charged with illegal transportation of alcohol and illegal consumption of alcohol by a minor.

Manuel J. Rivera, 17, of 830 N. Market and a 16-yearold boy were charged and released.

A 23-year-old woman reported Tuesday that several clothing items were taken from 801 S. Dixie Hwy.

A set of keys was found Tuesday in front of Razor's Edge, 2031/2 W. Main. The owner may identify and claim them at the police station.

A black and green Huffy bicycle was found Tuesday by the Conservation Club. It was later claimed by the owner.

Weather

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Mostly sunny, more humid today. High 87. Tonight, mostly cloudy. Low 65. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 90. low 68.

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