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Wednesday, April 26, 2000
 Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication
P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942 **www.justthefacts.tm**

City officials offer to sell ambulance service to health center

In an unexpected move, Hoopeston officials have offered to sell the city's ambulance service to Hoopeston Regional Health Center.

The offer came at Monday's ambulance committee meeting, held to hear the health center's proposal to manage the ambulance service.

After hospital CEO Frank Caruso made the facility's pitch for managing the service, Mayor Bob Ault asked if the health center would be interested in purchasing the service outright.

"We have not discussed that opportunity," Caruso said, adding the suggestion would be discussed at Thursday's hospital board meeting.

Caruso had planned to have a final presentation on managing the ambulance service for the May 1 city council meeting, but plans for a buy-out "would take a little more to work out that scenario."

Alderman Dave Borders, ambulance committee chairman, said a decision on the ambulance service could be postponed a few weeks. "My personal feeling is if you showed a great interest in that, we would be more interested," he said. "I think it's a great idea."

If the hospital board is interested in buying the service, Caruso suggested a staggered lease/purchase agreement might be worked out. "I'm not going to say we're disinterested," he said.

PRO Ambulance of Champaign, which also made a management offer, will be given the chance to submit a purchase proposal, Borders said.

City officials have considered for months allowing an outside company to manage the ambulance service. "It's getting too technical," Borders said. "We don't need to be in the ambulance business."

Under the management proposal suggested by Caruso, the health center would take over day-to-day operations, billing, stocking supplies and general maintenance of the

ambulances and ambulance barn. Someone would be hired to supervise the service. Two emergency medical technicians (EMTs) would be on duty at all times and crews would work 24 hours on duty, 24 hours on call and 24 hours off duty.

Additionally, the hospital would upgrade the service to advanced life support capabilities within one year, a process Caruso estimated to cost \$25,000.

The city's part of the bargain would be to continue to provide ambulances and a place to house them, contribute money to an ambulance reserve fund, provide an estimated \$2,000 for major repairs and provide a sleep/shower area for EMTs.

Additionally, the city would provide a monthly stipend to the hospital, estimated at \$4,000 the first year, \$3,500 the second year and \$3,000 the third and subsequent years. The stipend could come from the tax levy for ambulance service which currently nets about \$50,000 annually.

Caruso estimated the city would save "at least \$132,000 in year 1, \$138,000 in year 2 and thereafter, well over \$140,000." However, Ault disagreed with Caruso's estimated savings.

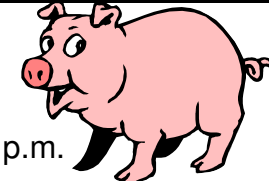
"I think your projected savings to the city aren't right," he said. Under the hospital plan, the city would contribute \$48,000 in stipends and an additional \$48,000 in reserves for a new ambulance. The city's current ambulance budget is \$180,000, which includes \$60,000 in the ambulance reserve fund.

Under the hospital's proposal, as under the PRO plan, the cost of ambulance calls would increase, although Caruso could not say how much the increase would be. A higher flat rate would be implemented, plus additional charges for services and supplies used. Using figures supplied by Arrow Ambulance, a Carle affiliate, Caruso

See AMBULANCE on other side

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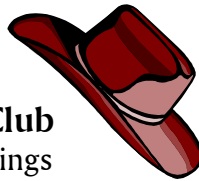
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Briefly

Tiny Tots

"Farms and Farmers" is the theme of this week's Tiny Tots story program at the Hoopeston Public Library.

The program begins at 10:30 a.m. Friday in the children's room. It is open to children ages 1-4 who are accompanied by an adult.

Rummage fundraiser

The Rossville-Alvin High School Beta Club will

sponsor a "Rummage in the Gym" sale from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. Donations of saleable items will be accepted through Friday evening, April 28.

Proceeds from the sale will help defray expenses for the club's trip to the national convention in Arlington, Tex., in June.

Rurilnet closing

Rurilnet internet service will no longer offer dial-up service at the end of the day April 30.



Police News



A ladies' white gold diamond ring was found Monday in the 500 block of West Maple. The owner may identify and claim it at the police station.

A 38-year-old Hoopeston woman reported Tuesday

that her purse was taken from the back counter at the Hoopeston-Cissna Park Veterinary Clinic, 901 W. Main. The purse contained credit cards, her Social Security card and cash.

Ambulance continued from other side

estimated a net cost of \$250-\$350 per run.

Whichever entity takes over the ambulance service will be faced with purchasing a new ambulance, Borders said. The service currently has 1998, 1993 and 1989 models. The oldest one will soon have to be replaced at an estimated cost of \$100,000. The 1998 model, purchased used, cost \$75,000, Borders said.

Caruso said he sees the proposal as a long-term agreement between the city and the hospital. "I don't think the residents would take kindly to the city and hospital making an agreement and then switching it around," he said.

Also, he said, there are several good reasons why the city should allow the hospital to manage the ambulance service. "First and foremost, taxpayer dollars stay in

Hoopeston," he said. "As a taxpayer, I'd like to see my money stay in town.

Second, the city would save money by allowing the hospital to manage it. Third, the service would be run by local people and fourth, the agreement would alleviate the city's need to oversee day-to-day operations while the hospital could provide direct support to the ambulance staff.

The committee will make a recommendation on which option it favors then present that recommendation to the full city council for approval.

In the Hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
April 24

Admitted: Mary Daugherty, Hoopeston.

Discharged: Pauline Prickett.

Weather



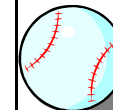
Sunny today. High 70. Tonight, clear. Low 40. Tomorrow, chance of showers and thunderstorms. High 72, low 50.

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

Those with questions should call their local library.

2nd Annual Legion Bartenders' Baseball Nite Sunday, July 23

Join the Legion bartenders on a trip to Chicago to see the Cubs vs. the Brewers. 90 tickets available. **\$30** includes ticket, bus fare, snacks & all the beer you can drink to and from the game.



Sign up now at the Legion or call Vickie (217) 283-6312

Classifieds

HELP WANTED

Production workers needed for factory in Hoopeston. Please apply in person at 701 W. Main St., Hoopeston. 104-117

HOOPESTON MIGRANT HEAD START is now accepting applications for Health Coordinator, Teachers, Mental Health Consultant. For more information, call Joan at 815-984-3706. Applications must be postmarked by April 28th, 2000. Send applications to P. O. Box 136, Wellington, IL 60973. EOE.

Now hiring daytime and weekend help. Apply in person at Hoopeston McDonald's or call (217) 283-9333. 112-122

The Village of Rossville will be accepting applications for maintenance worker until Tuesday, May 9. Applicants must be 18 years of age. Applications may be picked up and returned to the Village Office. 116-126

MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

Good used lawn mowers. \$20-\$50. Call Larry or Joe at (217) 283-5380. 110-116

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