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Residents overwhelmingly speak out in favor of prison

Area residents turned out in force Wednesday night to show support for Hoopeston's bid to land a maximum security prison.

Approximately 1,000 people, state and local dignitaries and four Illinois Department of Corrections representatives attended the public hearing at McFerren Park Civic Center, held to gauge support for a 1,800-bed prison west of Hoopeston.

Residents waved signs proclaiming "Prison Supported" and cheered and applauded as 65 residents spoke in favor of the prison. One resident voiced opposition to the prison, two said they were undecided and a few more asked questions but expressed no opinion.

All ages were represented by those favoring the prison, from grade school students to senior citizens. Representatives from Rossville, Watseka and Danville also spoke in support.

Most spoke of the good work ethic in the area, as well as the need for jobs and a boost to the economy. Pat Polson, who organized a petition drive netting 1,800 signatures supporting the prison, said the facility would be "a shot in the arm that we need for this community to grow and I think we should take the inoculation."

Bob Harwood, representing the Watseka City Council and Iroquois County law enforcement, said "I know how you operate your prisons. They're safe."

Hoopeston resident Kristi Evans noted the community's economic decline and unity on this issue. "They are getting to have hope," she said.

Terry Buhrmester, who lives on Rt. 9 near the proposed site said he has no concerns about his proximity to the prison. "I'm not at all afraid to have the prison across from my house," he said.

State Rep. Bill Black (R-Danville) said he has seen no detriment to Danville's prison and would expect none in

Hoopeston. "When we have an opportunity, we have to go after it," he said.

Questions concerned security and employment issues. Department of Corrections Director Donald Snyder provided most of the information. "Illinois is the only state that double bunks 95 percent of its cells," he said, explaining why a new prison is needed. "We have no more beds available in our system for that kind of inmate."

The prison will have an estimated annual payroll of \$45 million. Of the 760 projected jobs, more than 95 percent will be held by people living within a 40-mile radius of the prison.

While safety is a concern in communities vying for the prison, Snyder said the department has built one prison per year for the past 19 years and that during that time, there have been no prisoner escapes. Since Gov. George Ryan took office approximately two years ago, no prison guard has been stabbed by an inmate and violence by inmates towards staff or other inmates is down 20 percent, he said. "There's no other state that can match us on the violence that we've reduced," he said.

After the hearing, Snyder met with reporters and called the support offered by residents "overwhelming," saying such support is "very important. We want to be good neighbors. We want to be welcome neighbors."

Rep. Black said he and state Sen. Judy Myers will do what they can to bring the prison to Hoopeston but that their influence is "not as much as people think," saying where the prison is located will depend on what each community offers.

Mayor Bob Ault called Wednesday's turnout "terrific" but said he expected as much from the community.

Public hearings will be held tomorrow in Wenona and Saturday in Grayville. Gov. Ryan is expected to make a final announcement 60 days after the hearings.

A cheery note on the windowsill

A pretty little ivy plant

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New Books at the Library



Non-fiction:

Power of Focus by Jack Canfield
The Wounded Spirit by Frank E. Peretti
Just a Mom by Betty DeGeneres
United States Department of Agriculture Forest

Service Roadless Area

Conservation: Final Environmental Impact
Statement—4 volumes (reference)

The Faces of Tragedy: Drunk Driving—the Ripple
Effect

The Complete Guide to Homeschooling by John Perry
Mayo Clinic on Healthy Weight
Healing Moves by Carol Krucoff
Reversing Hypertension by Julian M. Whitaker
Is Your Thyroid Making You Fat by Sanford Siegal
Mayo Clinic on Prostate Health

Health department to offer free smoking cessation classes

The Vermilion County Health Department will offer free smoking cessation classes this month.

Classes will be offered in both the afternoon and early evening. The four-week sessions begin at 3 p.m. on Wednesdays from Jan. 24 through Feb. 14. Thursday classes will be offered at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 25-Feb. 15.

The classes, which last from an hour to an hour and a half, will include group discussion on why people smoke, methods for quitting, tips on dealing with weight and stress and ideas for how those who stop can stay stopped.

For the first time, the health department will make nicotine replacement patches available to those class participants who may need additional help. Tobacco settlement money from the states being used to cover the cost of replacement patches.

For more information or to register for the free classes, call the health department at (217) 431-2662. Calls may be directed to Melissa Bodensteiner, ext. 302 or email mbodenst.@vchd.org; or Linda Bolton, ext. 241, email lbolton@vchd.org.

In the Hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital

Jan. 16

Admitted: Agnes Seals, Watseka.

Discharged: none.

Weather



Mostly cloudy and tonight. High 27, low 15. Tomorrow, mostly cloudy, chance of flurries. High 23, low 15.

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

Fish Fry

5-8 p.m. Friday

American Legion

502 E. Penn, Hoopeston

Fish Dinner \$5.50 Shrimp Dinner
\$6.50, Chicken Dinner \$7.00

Includes slaw, baked beans, roll & fries.

Tax & Tip not included



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10AM-2PM (Saturday)



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Classifieds

LOST & FOUND

Lost: Male shepherd/dachshund mix. Last seen Jan. 14 in Cheneyville. Answers to "Rocky." Call (217) 339-2311.

PETS

Free to good home: flat coat black Retriever mix. 1½ years old. House broken, good with kids. All shots updated. (217) 283-4248.

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