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Attorney General's opinion may hinder hospital project

An Illinois Attorney General's ruling may halt Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital's renovation project.

In September, hospital executives were notified that a \$205,000 Illinois First grant had been awarded for the

construction project. However, the Attorney General issued a ruling that, effective in September, all construction done using Illinois First grant money must pay the prevailing wage scale, said hospital CEO Frank Caruso. Caruso's grant application, which began in January, did not include the higher wages.

"Nobody mentioned (the ruling) to me," Caruso said. "I didn't ask for funding to cover that. Even Rep. Bill Black didn't know about it."

Black (R-Danville) was instrumental in getting the grant.

The wage discrepancy might not be an issue if an anonymous complaint had not been made to the Illinois Department of Labor which oversees such issues. The complaint was apparently made by someone in Danville, Caruso said, adding the problem would go away if the complainant would withdraw his objection.

Hospital officials have not yet signed the grant agreement or taken the money and may not be able to do so unless an agreement can be reached. Caruso said the hospital has been in contact with Black as well as Vickie Stewart of Vermilion Advantage and others to work out a solution. "Otherwise, we may not be able to accept the grant," he said.

Black addressed the issue when he spoke at the Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting on Oct. 21. "It's going to present an obstacle," he said at the meeting. The grant is less than one quarter of the total project cost for a facility that operates "very close to the margin," he said. "Hopefully we'll get it worked out."

Black talked about Quincy College in Quincy which turned back a multi-million dollar grant because of the restriction. "I hope it doesn't come to that," he said.

The prevailing wage rule, which is adopted by government bodies such as municipalities and school boards,

See HOSPITAL on other side



Nice doggy

Brandon Smith, Haley Hagele and McCauley Ashby make friends with Maggie, the Hoopeston Police Department's K-9 crime fighter and Officer Ephriam Bolin, Maggie's owner. The duo, along with Chief Mark Drollinger, spoke Friday to Early Childhood students at Maple School.

Cemetery - Memorials

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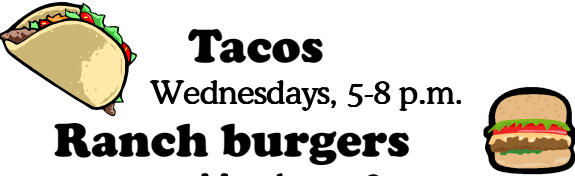
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Police News

No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 3:50 p.m. Monday at Schumacher Electric, 1025 E. Thompson.

Police said the cargo door of a 1997 Kenmore driven by George M. Ward of Del Rio Tex., was not secured. It opened and damaged a parked 2000 Sterling owned by Conway Transportation Service of Portland, Ore.

Joshua J. Edwards, 25, of 816 E. Main, was arrested for an incident at 2:24 p.m. Friday in the 200 block of South Fourth St.

He faces preliminary charges of aggravated fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, no valid registration, driving while license revoked, disobeying a stop sign,

operating an uninsured motor vehicle and driving on a sidewalk.

Police said officers saw Edwards on a motocross motorcycle and tried to stop him but that Edwards continued to drive, turned on a sidewalk, drove through a yard and failed to stop at the intersection of East Penn and South Fifth. He then drove through an alley and a yard.

Police saw Edwards in a truck on Tuesday, arrested

Fire calls



The Hoopeston Fire Department was called at 9:09 a.m. Tuesday to a car on fire next to a gas pump at Shell Mart, Rtes. 1 and 9. Police also responded.

Tiny Tots

"Pigtails" is the theme of Tiny Tots story program at 10:30 a.m. Friday in the Hoopeston Public Library children's room. Tiny Tots is for children ages 1-4 who are accompanied by an adult.

Meetings

Hoopeston Area School Board, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, high school library.

Briefly

Miracle Tree screening

Screening for Food Cupboard Christmas baskets, Toys for Kids and Miracle tree will be held Nov. 13-Dec. 6 at the Grant Township office, 525 S. Market Signup will be 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. each day. Proof of address, in-effect LINK card, proof and income and Social Security cards for all household members will be required.

Hospital continued from other side

governs the pay scale for all phases of construction work. For the hospital project, it would include "anything involving men working physically," Caruso said.

If an agreement cannot be worked out, hospital officials can tack an estimated \$300,000 to the cost or not accept the state funding. "We probably can get this project done without the grant but it gave us the cushion we needed," Caruso said.

If the hospital turns down the grant, it can choose whatever contractors it wants to do the work. Some work, such as masonry, has already been done by union workers who were paid prevailing wage. Other work already done was at a lower scale. "I can't go back and retro pay people for work that was done," Caruso said.

Although the person who turned in the complaint did so without identifying himself, Caruso said it could be a union representative looking for work for men during

the winter months. While Caruso understands that issue, "I can't turn it over to them," he said. "We're too small."

The complaint was made within a few days after the project was announced in September.

The problem comes at a time when the thrust of the project is set to begin. An enclosure for the ambulance entrance has already been built but work is expected to begin soon on interior modifications like the radiology suite, outpatient waiting room, new lab and new physical therapy and wellness center. "We're just now getting to the meat of the project," Caruso said.

Weather



Partly sunny today. High 55. Tonight, mostly cloudy. Low 38. Thursday, chance of showers. High 52, low 32.

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

him and took him to the Public Safety Building in Danville.

A representative of the Vermilion County Housing Authority reported Tuesday that someone took a 25" television from the Centennial Manor cafeteria.

Classifieds

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