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Friday, July 16

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and packages for UPS delivery.

Thanks to all who used these

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Hoopeston Area board to discuss education fund tax hike

Most families could not support their families today on what they earned in 1973.

That is what Hoopeston Area schools have tried to do but that may change in November.

At Thursday's meeting, the board will discuss whether to put a tax referendum on the November ballot to increase the district education fund by 90 cents, said Superintendent Mark Conolly.

The tax rate for the fund, which pays for staff salaries and other labor costs, is currently at \$2.06. If approved, the increase would raise the total tax rate to \$4.66. The education fund "is the largest fund we have and incurs the majority of the expense we have," he said.

The rate would boost Hoopeston Area from having the lowest tax rate in the area to "the middle of the pack," Conolly said. The new rate would be lower than Bismarck-Henning's \$4.71 and slightly higher than Rossville-Alvin's rate of \$4.65.

Declining enrollment is the reason for the requested referendum. The district has lost approximately 400 students - and the state aid they would have generated - in the last 10 years. "That's just under \$2million a year that we've lost," Conolly said.

Hoopeston Area receives most of its funding from state aid. "Local property taxes are just a fraction of the income we receive," he said.

Loss of students is directly connected to the economic climate of Hoopeston, which has seen jobs lost as Stokely and FMC closed and downsizing at the former Pillsbury plant (now Hoopeston Foods) and Schumacher Electric plants.

Enrollment for the coming year is expected to

"Not many (school districts) are working off a 1973 tax rate."

Mark Conolly
HA Superintendent

be down. The six-day enrollment figure - used to compute state aid payments - was slightly less than 400 last year and Conolly expects a 40-50 student drop this year. "All I see is people moving out of this town," he said.

If the board approves asking for the money and voters approve giving it, the new rate would generate about \$630,000 on the district's equalized assessed valuation of approximately \$67 million.

The rate would translate into a tax bill increase of \$300 to the owner of a \$100,000 home, Conolly said.

The last time the district requested a rate hike was in 1973 as part of the consolidation with East Lynn. Approximately 10 years ago, the district started dipping into surplus funds to cover shortages and has made staffing and programming cuts to make ends meet.

In the last several years, 30 positions have not been filled, with 22 staff positions cut or not filled this year.

For example, when graphics arts teacher Jerry Prorise retired, his position was eliminated and the program cut both because of funding and the difficulty in finding a replacement. This coming year, the nursing program, which trains students to be certified nurses' aides, will be transferred to Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital after teacher Elizabeth Johnson resigned.

A referendum proposed by the Rossville-Alvin district to deactivate its high school and tuition students to Hoopeston Area or Bismarck-Henning is expected to be on the November ballot as well, but even though HA might get an influx of students if it passes, "we don't want to presume," Conolly said. "Rossville is a big question mark right now. We have to proceed as if noth-

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ing is going to happen.”

Officials also do not know what the legislature will do about state aid payments for the coming year. “There are

See TAX on other side

Tax continued from other side

a lot of variables that we have no control over,” he said. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking in order to get a referendum before voters in November.

Conolly said Hoopeston Area will probably not be the only district seeking a tax hike in November.

Last year

was a banner year for such requests across the state and he predicts even more this year.

If the board approves putting the referendum on the ballot and the voters turn it down, the board will

Open house to mark anniversary

Barb and Elmer Foster of Hoopeston will celebrate their 50th anniversary with an open house beginning at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Chestnut Street Church of Christ. Friends are invited to join in the

Police News



Stephanie L. Woods, 26, of 708 W. Washington, was arrested at 7:07 p.m. Tuesday in the 700 block of East Young. She was charged with disorderly conduct after a telephone conversation with a 22-year-old Hoopeston woman.

Woods was released on a notice to appear.

The 1997 Chevrolet Lumina rental car reported stolen July 6 from Dick Jones, Inc., was found Wednesday in Kankakee.

Obituaries

GILLIS - Betty J. Gillis, 75, of Rossville died at 5:15 a.m. Tuesday, July 13, 2004 at Provena United Samaritans Medical Center, Logan campus, Danville. Funeral services will be at noon Friday at Chestnut Street Cowboy Church, Hoopeston. Burial will be in Rossville Cemetery, Rossville. Visitation will be 10 a.m.-noon Friday at the church. Wolfe Funeral Home and Cremation Service, Rossville, is in charge of arrangements. Memorials are suggested to the church or Hospice Care Program.

Weather



Mostly sunny today. High 81. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 62. Tomorrow, chance of thunderstorms. High 83, low 63.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service (217) 283-6221.

probably seek another referendum in April and make necessary cuts in staff and programs. If that happens, extra-curricular activities may be on the chopping block, too. “Extra-curriculars are under scrutiny and will continue to be under scrutiny with our budget concerns,” he said.

Classifieds

APARTMENTS FOR RENT

Rossville: 1-2 bdrs. Riverview Apartments. Completely refurbished, on-site washers & dryers. 1 bdr. \$310/mo., \$310 deposit; 2 bdr., \$360/mo., \$360 deposit. Call (217) 840-3672. 188-215

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PRODUCE

Blackberries for sale. (217) 283-7805

RUMMAGE SALES

Huge moving sale. Clothes, housewares, tools, furniture, appliances. Fri., Sat., Sun, 10-4. Inside Dixie Business Plaza at the flea market.

South Sixth Ave. behind Convenient. Fri., 8-4 Clothing for everyone, toys, Christmas items.

107 Summit, Rossville. Fri. & Sat., 11-6:30. Trampoline, bike, microwave, Indian artifacts, kitchen supplies.

816 W. Washington, Hoopeston. Sat., July 17. 8-2/ Girls size 12 most-3T, young boys, men's & women's clothes & much more!

420 N. Market, Hoopeston. Fri. & Sat., July 16,17, 7-? Selling house & everything must go. Rain or shine. Will also be buying gold & silver coins.

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