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Voters to decide fate of Vermilion County's nursing home

Voters will be asked to determine what the Vermilion County Board should do with Vermilion Manor Nursing Home.

At Tuesday's meeting the board voted to put the fate of the nursing home on the November 2 ballot. Voters will be asked two questions, said District 1 representative Gary Weinard: are taxpayers willing to pay an additional tax of one-tenth of one percent to fund the nursing home and are taxpayers willing to let the board sell the nursing home.

The vote, 18-4 in favor of putting the issue to voters was "a very strong bi-partisan vote on an issue," Weinard said.

Weinard, along with other local representatives Chris Leigh and Mark Drollinger, favor getting the county out of the nursing home business because of the drain it causes on county finances. While the budget shows Vermilion Manor runs in the black, once capital improvements, FICA, employee insurance and other payments are deducted, the facility has run in the red for 10 of the last 14 years. Last year, Vermilion Manor lost about

\$350,000, he said. In 2002, the loss was about \$430,000.

The suggested tax would add about \$33 to the tax bill on a \$100,000 house. The total collected would be "just about what the shortfall is right now" but would not cover losses from increased costs in the next few years, Weinard said.

If voters allow the board to sell Vermilion Manor, the board should be able to divest itself of the responsibility fairly quickly. Weinard said nursing home companies regularly approach the county about purchasing or leasing the facility. "If we can do that, then we can turn our attention to things we can't put in the hands of the private sector" like animal control and mental health, he said.

Money saved on funding the nursing home could be used in other areas, such as providing employee raises. Some workers have changed job classifications but haven't been given raises to go along with them because of a shortage in funds, caused in part by the county funding the nursing home, Weinard said.

See NURSING HOME on other side

Briefly

Music Booster winners

This week's winners in the Hoopeston Area Music Booster calendar drawing are: Aug. 16, Melia Shipman; Aug. 17, Hoopeston Express Lube; Aug. 18, Don Tate; Aug. 19, Craig and Gail Lithgow; Aug. 20, Charlene Young.

Multi Agency van schedule

This week's schedule for the Hoopeston Multi Agency transportation project is: Monday, Hoopeston/Rossville shuttle; Tuesday, Rockome Gardens, Arcola (leave at 8 a.m.); Wed-nesday, Danville; Thursday, Hoopeston shuttle; Friday, Danville. To arrange a ride, call the

Multi Agency at (217) 283 -5544.

Community center activities include: Monday, ladies cards, noon; Tuesday, ladies euchre, noon; Thursday, men's coffee, 9:30 a.m., men's euchre, noon; Friday, ladies cards, noon.

Festival gate passes available

Gate passes to the 2004 National Sweetcorn Festival are now available. The cost is \$7 each and they are available at Jerry's IGA, Hoopeston Multi Agency, Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce and The Chronicle.


The cost is 50 cents less than half price of daily admission for the festival which is \$3 per day this year.

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Police News



No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 1 p.m. Thursday on Main at First Ave.

Police said John E. Hanson of Hoopeston, in a 1987 Chevrolet pickup, had been parked in the drive of an abandoned gas station, backed out to leave and hit a parked 2003 Pontiac owned by Madge L. Douglas of Rossville.

A 31-year-old Hoopeston man reported Thursday that someone broke into his home through the back door and took video games, DVDs and a speaker. The burglary occurred in the 600 block of West Lincoln.

No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 8:29 a.m. Friday in the 200 block of South Sixth St.

Police said Charles Whiteman of Hoopeston, in a 2000 Buick and Joyce Cottingham, also of Hoopeston, in a 2002 Toyota, backed from private driveways and collided in the middle of the street.

Marilyn M. Coon, 55, of 721 S. Market, was ticketed for improper backing after an accident at 4:53 p.m. Friday at 317 S. Market.

Police said Coon, in a 2000 Ford, backed from a parking space at Price Less into a 1988 Oldsmobile driven by Sumer J. Horton of Hoopeston which was southbound on Market.

No injuries were reported.

Police are investigating a hit-and-run accident reported at 12:57 p.m. Saturday at Rtes. 1 and 9. Police said Darrin Armstrong of Rossville, in a 1995 Ford F-150, was leaving a driveway on Route 9 when an un-

known vehicle slowed to turn into the drive. Armstrong pulled into the lane of traffic but the other vehicle did not turn and the two collided. The other vehicle then left the scene.

Police are investigating a hit-and-run accident that occurred Saturday night or Sunday morning when an unknown vehicle sideswiped a parked 1996 Mercury owned by Daniel E. Coon. The accident occurred in the 600 block of South Sixth Ave.

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Bountiful harvest

Molly Culbert of Flowers & Gifts by Molly Culbert displays the winning tomatoes in the shop's annual tomato contest. Approximately 75 tomatoes were entered this year in categories such as biggest, hydroponic and heaviest and featured red, yellow and green varieties. The winners are on display at the shop at 702 W. Main, Hoopeston.

Nursing home continued from other side

Vermilion Manor started in the 1860s as the county poor farm. In the 1930s or 40s, it became a nursing home.

Weinard, a proponent of selling the home for some time, credits county board chairman Bill Boyer with bringing the issue to the table. "It's finally come to the point where everybody thought 'we've wrestled around with this and we think we've put it to bed and then we wrestle with it again.'"

"I don't count it so much a victory or personal satisfaction but we're now at the point where the voters will have a say in this thing," he said. "That's all I've ever wanted."

Between now and Nov. 2, Weinard said he, Drollinger and Leigh are willing to speak to local groups to talk to them about the situation and educate the public. Groups interested in learning about the issue may contact Weinard at (217) 339-2310.

Weather



Partly cloudy today. High 80. Tonight, chance of thunderstorms. Low 62. Tomorrow chance of thunderstorms. High 80, low 62.

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

Classifieds

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In Hoopeston. 5 room duplex. Living room, dining room, kitchen downstairs, 2 bedrooms upstairs. Full basement. Gas heat, central air. Stove, refrigerator furnished. 1 car garage. \$400/mo. + deposit. (217) 283-7146.

1 bedroom apt. Some appliances furnished. \$375/mo., includes utilities. Deposit, references, no pets. (217) 304-3477 after 5 p.m.

1 bdr., \$400/mo., 2 bdr., \$425/mo., includes garbage, water. New carpet, refrigerator, on-site laundry. Appointments- (217) 304-7341. 219-232

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