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Rossville board member, residents question deactivation

ROSSVILLE—The Rossville-Alvin School Board's plan to deactivate the district's high school received some criticism at a public meeting Thursday night. The most vocal critic of the proposal came from one of the board's own members.

More than 100 people turned out for the meeting in the Rossville Grade School gym. After presenting information on why the board hopes voters will approve a referendum to deactivate on the Nov. 2 ballot, board president Dennis Price opened the meeting to questions. It was during this time that board member Craig Potter spoke.

"I've been called the lone dissenter," Potter said to a smattering of applause, referring to an Aug. 23 meeting of the Rossville-Alvin, Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning boards at which Potter voted against putting the question of deactivation on the ballot.

At that meeting, Potter said he wanted R-A students to be able to change their minds about which high school - Bismarck-Henning or Hoopeston Area - they attend if deactivation is allowed. He also said intergovernmental agreements should be in place with the other districts before the R-A board approved putting the referendum on the ballot.

He expressed the same sentiments Thursday, saying the board "sort of sold the students out" for not allowing them to make a second choice and saying again that the district's attorney advised to have the intergovernmental agreements in place before the board



Rossville-Alvin board president Dennis Price responds to a question during a public meeting last Thursday in the grade school gym.

approved the referendum. "I'm sorry but I don't necessarily trust our neighbors to the north and south," Potter said, adding that without intergovernmental agreements, there is no guarantee that Bismarck-Henning and Hoopeston Area will later agree to offer vocational courses in Rossville-Alvin's high school building. "We need to have those in place before we go forward," he said.

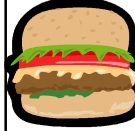
Potter added that while he does not support deactivation now, he may when the intergovernmental agreements are in place. More applause followed his statement.

Residents also questioned the plan. Amy Martinez, a 1989 R-A graduate, questioned Price on whether the board had made enough cuts, especially in the area of administrative staff. "We don't have enough kids to

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Deactivation continued from other side

keep our school open but we keep hiring more people,” she said, citing a high school principal, grade school principal, deans of students, athletic director and superintendent as being more administrators than were on staff when she attended school.

During Price’s presentation on why deactivation is necessary, he said the district will save nearly \$450,000 paying tuition of \$6,072 per student to Hoopeston Area and Bismarck Henning compared to a per-student cost of \$9,957 currently. During the question and answer session, former board member Bob Ray asked how much savings the district will truly have with increased transportation costs and those associated with upkeep on the high school building. “We don’t want to be back here in two years saying we deactivated but we didn’t save enough and now we’re going to have to do something else,” he said.

Early in the meeting, Price outlined reasons why the board agreed to pursue deactivation, including:

- decreasing enrollment. In 1998-99, Rossville’s average daily attendance was 414.37 students. The num-

ber dropped to 389 in 2003-04 and is expected to continue declining.

- decreased funding which, in large part is based on attendance. Because of a “hold harmless” clause in school funding, the district has managed to maintain approximately the same per-student funding and had a one-percent increase. However, federal revenues dropped 25 percent, Price said and local revenue also decreased by a one-time loss of \$96,000 when ConAgra disputed its taxes and an ongoing loss of \$44,000 each year from ConAgra’s drop in assessment.

- increased costs, which are up about 24 percent, Price said.

The factors have left the district with a nearly \$485,500 deficit and the board facing a need to do something about it.

Briefly

Multi Agency van schedule

This week’s schedule for the Hoopeston Multi Agency transportation project is: Monday, Hoopeston/Rossville shuttle; Tuesday, Lafayette, Ind., (leave at 9 a.m.); Wednesday, 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; Thurs-

Obituaries

BERGLUND - Delmar Berglund, 86, of Rossville, died at 1:20 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2004 at home. Funeral services were Saturday at Wolfe Funeral Home, Potomac. Burial was in Potomac Cemetery. Visitation was Friday at the funeral home. Memorials are suggested to the American Heart Association.

LUNDBERG- Bruce L. Lundberg, 76, of Milford died Saturday, Sept. 11, 2004 at Provena Covenant Medical Center, Urbana. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at St. John’s Lutheran Church, Schwer. Burial will be in St. John Lutheran Cemetery, Royal. Visitation will be 4-8 p.m. Monday at Knapp Funeral Home, Milford and one hour before services Tuesday at he church. Memorials are suggested to the Milford Ambulance Fund.

The board surveyed residents and found that of the more than 300 people who responded, the vast majority did not favor a tax increase or borrowing. Most preferred to keep at least the grade school open. The vote was nearly equal in where Rossville-Alvin should sent its high school students.

From there, the board hired a consultant to do a reorganization study with Bismarck-Henning, Hoopeston Area and Armstrong-Potomac. The Armstrong-Potomac board later did not approve continuing reorganization talks with the other districts.

The Rossville-Alvin board favored forming a cooperative high school with Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning, which would have created a new high school board and given R-A some degree of control. However, there are no financial incentives for a coopera-

day, men’s coffee, 9:30 a.m., men’s euchre, noon; Friday, ladies cards, noon.

Music Booster winners

This week’s winners in the Hoopeston Area Music Booster calendar drawing are: Sept. 13, Casey’s on Penn; Sept. 14, Elsworth and Sherry Sipes; Sept. 15, John Lee; Sept. 16, Eileen Leemon; Sept. 17, Monical’s Pizza.

The Music Boosters will meet at 7 p.m. Monday in the chorus room. Everyone is invited.

Neighborhood Watch

Coroner candidates incumbent Peggy Johnson and Democrat challenger Raymond Skidmore will speak at the Sept. 13 Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting at 6 p.m. at Country Terrace.

Bowling teams needed

Tuesday Night Classic League needs two three-man teams. Anyone interested may come at 7 p.m. Tuesday to Pla-Mor Lanes or call Doug Wagoner or

Weather



Partly cloudy today and tonight. High 86, low 62. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 83, low 62.

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

tive high school and neither Bismarck-Henning nor Hoopeston Area was interested in pursuing that option. That left deactivation as the Rossville board’s best option.

Since then, the boards and superintendents of the three districts have met to discuss issues like tuition rates, when R-A would need to choose a school.

Price said if the referendum doesn’t pass, the board will seek a tax hike in the April 2005 election of at least \$1 per \$100 assessed valuation.

Another public meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Oct. 26 in the grade school gym.

Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning have scheduled open houses for Rossville-Alvin students and their parents. Bismarck-Henning’s will be at 7 p.m. Oct. 5. Hoopeston Area will

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