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Emotions run high for Hoopeston council, Wallace family

Tears and thanks mixed at Tuesday's Hoopeston City Council meeting.

Alderman Carl Ankenbrand, representing the council, presented a framed proclamation from Gov. Rod Blagojevich to Tammy Grabinski, mother of Pfc. Jeffrey Wallace who died May 23 in Iraq.

The family received a standing ovation from the council and audience and Mayor Bill DeWitt offered the city's condolences. "May the faith of the good Lord get you through this," he said.

Representing the family, Larry A. "Red" Wallace thanked the city, including the mayor, council, police and fire departments, for their help. "We were totally overwhelmed by our community and the surrounding area," he said.

Other aldermen expressed how the incident, while tragic, was a coming-together of Hoopeston. "Hoopeston's a small city but it has a big heart," said Alderman Bill Crusinberry. "I'm proud to be a citizen."

In unrelated business, the council:

- heard from Alderman Ed Lotz regarding concerns about bb guns. The guns often look like pistols, he said, urging residents to use caution when using them in

the city.

- heard from Alderwoman Gail Lane that the east entrance gate at Floral Hill Cemetery was damaged over the weekend. Estimates are being sought for repairs and police are investigating the incident.

- heard from Ankenbrand that the sixth annual Oat's Bait Shop fishing derby will be held at 8 a.m. Saturday at the McFerren Park lagoon.

He also said the city is accepting bids for painting the interior of the McFerren Park Civic Center. Specifications are available at city hall and bids will be opened June 21.

Ankenbrand further reported a complaint about speeding in the area of Fifth St. and Chestnut. Extra police patrols will be in the area.

- heard from Crusinberry that 480 new radio-read meters have arrived and will be installed. Hoopeston has 1,100 such meters already installed, which allow city employees to read meters via a computer in a truck, saving several man-hours each month.

- heard from Alderman Jerry Yonkers about citizens mowing into the street and suggested police begin issuing tickets for the violation.

Briefly

Blood drive

The Hoopeston VFW will hold a blood drive from noon-6 p.m. Monday, June 13 at the post home. Anyone is eligible who last donated on or before April 18. For an appointment, call Marie Brown, 283-7850. Walk-ins are welcome.

First aid/CPR classes

Anyone who needs certification or recertification in first aid or CPR is invited to attend classes at the Rossville Ambulance Barn. A first aid class

will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 15 and CPR classes will be offered at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, June 16.

Advance registration is required. For information or to register, call Brenda Judy, (217) 748-6377 or (217) 497-4143.

Hydrant flushing

The Hoopeston Water Department will start flushing fire hydrants of Fridays starting May 27. Flushing will continue throughout the summer.

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Former Milford man grieves loss of second son, murder charge filed against babysitter

WATSEKA—A former Milford man is grieving the death of a second son in little more than a month.

Tucker Fleming, four-month-old son Dan Fleming and his wife, Christina, who now live in the rural Gilman area, died Friday at the children's unit of University of Chicago Hospital.

Tucker is the second son of Fleming's to die recently. Cole Fleming, 19, son of Dan and his former wife, Brenda, died April 20 of an illness.

Tucker's situation was different, according to Iroquois County State's Attorney James Devine, who has filed a first degree murder charge against the child's daycare provider, Constance M. Rieken, 46, of Danforth.

Devine alleged that the infant died of severe closed head injuries which occurred April 27, just one week after Fleming's older son died.

An investigation into the timeline of events led Illinois State Police investigators to arrest Rieken Friday. A preliminary hearing is set for June 15 but Devine will present the case to a grand jury Thursday. The grand jury is expected to return an indictment which will negate the preliminary hearing, he said.

According to Devine, Tucker was in

Rieken's care when he stopped breathing. Rieken, who has provided child care without incident for more than 20 years, sought medical attention for the child who was first treated at Riverside Hospital in Kankakee before being transferred to Chicago.

Doctors at University of Chicago Hospital diagnosed his injuries as closed head trauma, commonly called "shaken baby syndrome." Devine said he talked "extensively" with a team of doctors to rule out every possibility. The talk "leaves no conclusion other than he was injured while in Connie's care and he was injured in a violent way," he said.

Devine said doctors explained that Tucker's head injuries were similar to if he had fallen from a nine-story building or been in a head-on car crash. "These are the references I'm hearing," he said.

One of the possibilities ruled out by the investigation is that the baby's death was connected to an incident several days prior to April 27 when Fleming was carrying his son and fell.

Fleming received minor injuries but "there were no injuries (to Tucker)," Devine said. "There were no cuts, no welts, no bruises. He ate and slept normally. There were no symptoms of any problems."

Devine said he does not know why Rieken,

the mother of two grown children, allegedly injured the baby. To suggest a reason he would "strictly be guessing," he said, adding "motive is not an issue."

The minimum sentence for first degree murder is 20 years with a maximum of life in prison, Devine said. He did not seek the death penalty because the case does not meet statutory requirements.

Funeral services for Tucker were held Tuesday. The Flemings have another son, Trace, who is approximately four years old, Devine said.

This is the second shaken baby case Devine

Classifieds

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HELP WANTED

Full time, dependable outside help wanted for local grain elevator. Must be able to climb and not be afraid of heights. Apply in person at Kaufman Grain Co., in Rossville. No phone calls, please.

Personal aides/Special Education Aides for Special Needs Children beginning August 18, 2005. Applications are available at the Hoopeston Area Superintendent's Office.

IL Migrant Council/Project Max hiring home visitor to serve migrant families in Hoopeston. Bilingual Spanish/English a must. Literacy services provided primarily during evening and on weekends in the home. High School diploma or GED required. Min. \$8.45/hour. Send resumes to: IL Migrant Council/Project Max, 530 E. First North, P.O. Box 136, Attn.: Maria G. Linares, Wellington, IL 60973.

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New Books at the Library

Children's Room Non-fiction

Boredom Blasters by Helaine Becker
Encyclopedia of Aquarium and Pond Fish by David

Alderton

The Loathsome Dragon by David Wiesner
Oh, No! Where are My Pants? And Other Disasters by Lee Bennett Hopkins

The Voice That Changed a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights by Russell Freedman

Where Washington Walked by Raymond Dial

Fiction

Henry's 100 Days of Kindergarten by Nancy

Weather

Partly cloudy today and tonight. High 90, low 69. Tomorrow, chance of thunderstorms. High 90, low 68.

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

Police News

Jerry D. Sisk, 49, of 301 E. Washington was arrested after an incident at 12 a.m. Tuesday in the 300 block of East Washington.

A 48-year-old Hoopeston woman alleged Sisk pulled her hair, pushed her into a wall and tore her clothing. Officers found Sisk hiding in bushes outside the home and arrested him.

He was charged with domestic battery and was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville.