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More than 100 Hoopeston area residents listen to Claudia DeWitt discuss plans for beautifying Hoopeston at Thursday night's Up With Hoopeston meeting at city hall.

Residents gather to discuss what is 'Up with Hoopeston'

A gathering place with a coffee house atmosphere, a downtown decorated with window murals and flowers and a historic district were among ideas discussed by residents and economic development experts at Thursday night's "Up With Hoopeston" meeting.

More than 100 Hoopeston area residents turned out for the standing room only meeting at Hoopeston City Hall.

The group heard from Peace Corps Fellow Shannon Ruh, Lance Raver of the economic development steering committee, Jean Minick, representing the Hoopeston Industrial Corporation, John Dreher of Downtown Danville and the Main Street program and Claudia DeWitt, head of a recently-formed Hoopeston beautification committee.

"Change isn't very comfortable," Dreher said, discussing how Danville's downtown merchants banded together to create a new feel to the area to keep it

alive. "We've had to reinvent ourselves," he said." He encouraged Hoopeston to "stop envying what other people have and create your own space. People have grown tired of cookie-cutter areas and are "looking for local flavor," he said.

Claudia DeWitt spoke about the need to improve the community's appearance, both in commercial and residential areas. Suggestions included creating murals on the windows of vacant buildings and creating flower boxes for the downtown, providing more color and texture to the area. The beautification committee is open to suggestion from residents. "Call me at home anytime," she said.

Along the floral line, Ruh talked to the group about the America In Bloom program, which encourages beautification through flowers, landscaping, heritage

See HOOPESTON on other side

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Sandy was recently diagnosed with liver and bone cancer and has no health insurance. All proceeds to Sandy and her family. To make a donation, call Stephanie Reffett, 283-4921 or Alisa Vogel, 443-2542.

Hoopeston continued from other side

conservation and other areas. Communities join the organization on a population-based fee scale which, for Hoopeston, would be \$690. Once the program is in motion, judges review community beautification and make suggestions for improvements, she said.

Residents had suggestions of their own to help Hoopeston.

Shelley Henk was among the most vocal, suggesting a community-supported volunteer coffee house, Cup of Hope, to help alleviate the "lack of positive things to do." And while Hoopeston needs new businesses, "we also need to be wise who we choose, to create an image," she said. The city does not want "somebody in there just to be in there."

Henk added that Hoopeston needs a "nice sit-down restaurant" and suggested the city look at attracting e-businesses, such as Haga's Party Shop, which does a great deal of on-line business.

Henk's comments drew ire from Jean Minick. "It offends me that (Margaret and Arthur Gonzalez, owners of Margarita's) are sitting right here and you say we need a nice sit-down restaurant," she said. "I'm offended by that. Minick also mentioned that Ed Hubbard of Witchschool has an e-business.

Hubbard said "the downtown is changing" with a new owner for the motel and café. "We've got a new bookstore coming in next month," he said, adding the problem is not a lack of business wanting to come to the city. "Business owners don't want their

Hoopeston Area wrestlers end season with losses at finals

Two Hoopeston Area wrestlers ended the season with losses at Friday's state finals.

TJ Warner was eliminated in Friday's preliminary round and Zack Crabtree lost in the quarterfinals at the University of Illinois.

Mario Martinez of Stanford (Olympia) barely made it past Warner in the 135 lb. class, winning 2-1 in overtime. Martinez was then defeated by Caleb Walk of Stillman



WARNER



CRABTREE

storefronts occupied," he said.

Catherine Novak of Beads & Botanicals agreed, telling the crowd that "it wasn't easy" to find a location in Hoopeston.

Mike Drollinger suggested the city market itself as a bedroom community to not only Danville but Lafayette. He also commented on the number of Chicago retirees moving here.

Marilyn Danner of Rossville encouraged the city to become involved with a Route 1 marketing program, similar to Driving the Dixie, to promote tourism in both towns and capitalize on the McFerren Park Civic Center, "probably one of the most underutilized facilities Hoopeston has."

Max Page said he would like to see flags flying outside each establishment. "Somehow we've got to get to pride," he said.

David Elliott, CEO of Hoopeston Regional Health Center, said that entity is trying to lead by example, building a new wall at the hospital and also with internal renovations. "We want to be out front and set an example," he said.

Betty Shaffer of the Hoopeston Multi Agency said that while ideas are good, action must follow. "We've had meeting after meeting after meeting and we go out the door and nothing ever happens," she said. "You can do things, you can move mountains but we have to be united. We have to work at it."

For Kristi Hudson, "the operative word there was

Valley in the quarterfinals.

Walk went on to take the championship in the weight class, defeating Cody Moody of Clinton 15-2.

Crabtree faced Kyle Cunningham of Robinson in the preliminary round at 152, and handily defeated him, 5-0. In the quarterfinals, he went down to Mark Gones of St. Joe-Ogen, 13-3.

Gones was later defeated 7-4 by Darren Olsen of Dakota.

'work,'" she said. "This is a small town and more people need to become involved."

Along with offering comments, residents were asked to complete surveys covering aspects of the city including beautification, thoughts on local government, schools and others. Ruh will tabulate the results of the surveys and release the results.

Weather



Partly cloudy today and tonight. High 31, low 19. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 37, low 24.

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

Lunch Menus



CRIS/SAMS Meals

MONDAY: Site closed.

TUESDAY: Turkey breast, yam patties, green beans, wheat bread, tapioca pudding.

WEDNESDAY: Charsteak, whipped potatoes, Italian mixed vegetables, applesauce, white bread.

THURSDAY: Chicken patty/cheese, baked beans, mixed vegetables, orange juice, wheat bread.

FRIDAY: Spaghetti/meat sauce, shredded lettuce/dressing, grape juice, Italian bread, peanut butter cookie.

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