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Big hopes made for one of Hoopeston's biggest buildings

The new owners of one of Hoopeston's biggest buildings have equally-sized hopes for it.

SeedAmerica (formerly Business Reform Foundation) took ownership of the FMC Building on Friday, June 30, said Chris Zimmerman, vice-president of the company's real estate division.

FMC donated the building to the non-profit organization. It has been on the market since FMC closed several years ago but finding a buyer for the 320,000 sq. ft. property was difficult, Zimmerman said. "Nobody wanted the whole thing," he said, adding several companies wanted sections.

SeedAmerica's plan is to find one or multiple tenants and subdivide the property as needed. Zimmerman said likely candidates are manufacturing or warehousing businesses and that the office space "is ideal for an incubator" to start fledgling businesses.

Because the building was donated, SeedAmerica can be aggressive in its marketing strategies and be very flexible with the rent it charges tenants. Rent is decided on a case-by-case basis.

Companies which have already toured FMC will be contacted by SeedAmerica to see if owners would be interested in having a portion of the building. That companies have been interested in the building may make finding tenants easier than for other of the organization's buildings. "We're not starting at ground zero," he said. One existing lead may become the sole tenant for the



Hoopeston's FMC Building has new owners and new ideas for its use.

structure, he said.

There are several reasons why a firm would want to locate in Hoopeston, Zimmerman said. First, high taxes push companies out of cities like Chicago. Second, some companies like the labor force in a small town. Third, SeedAmerica will make good deals on rent. Also, he said, Hoopeston is within traveling distance of Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Indianapolis.

Hoopeston's location may be a disadvantage, as well, not being on an interstate. "We're up against some negative factors but we always are," Zimmerman said.

Business Reform Foundation changed its name to SeedAmerica (Supportive Economic & Entrepreneurial Development) due to confusion between the foundation and a Christian magazine, Business Reform. Although both are owned by the same person, company leaders wanted a clearer division between the publication and the business side, which began locating properties about

See BUILDING on other side

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Building continued from other side

two years ago.

FMC is one of eight buildings which have been donated SeedAmerica. Others are in Ohio, Indiana, Alabama, Massachusetts and Wisconsin. Of those, half are occupied, one fully.

Zimmerman said SeedAmerica is willing to take changes on businesses, such as start-ups, that might otherwise have difficulty finding a home. A committee looks at a prospective company's finances "but we don't scrutinize them to death," he said. "Lots of people wouldn't take a chance of them. We will. Are we going to win every time? No but I think we'll win more than we lose."

Company officials picked "Seed" as part of the name because "we want buildings all over the country," Zimmerman said.

City OKs photo studio, takes no action on liquor request

A Hoopeston alderman asked for and received approval to operate a photography studio from his home.

In a 4-0 vote, the Hoopeston City Council last week approved a request from Carl Ankenbrand for a conditional use for his home at 822 S. Fourth St., allowing him to operate a photography studio, Bonpas Creek Photography.

Ankenbrand abstained on the vote.

In unrelated business, the council:

- Heard from Ankenbrand that the city is applying for an ADM grant to repair the civic center kitchen. Ankenbrand also reminded residents to clean up after they walk their dogs at McFerren Park and asked residents to follow the two-per-day take limit at the park lagoon. The lagoon is primarily for children, the disabled and the elderly, he said.

- Took no action on a request from Convenient Food Mart for a license for hard liquor. Alderwoman Nancy Stipp said no licenses are available.

- Approved a bid from Russ Leigh & Associates for the annual audit for no more than \$4,400.

- Heard from Ed Hubbard of Witchschool who asked what happens to petitions not acted on by the city. The question was directed at a petition presented three years ago by those who objected to Witchschool opening in Hoopeston.

The idea for the organization came after founders noticed a trend. SeedAmerica's buildings are "typically owned by corporations, typically located in small towns and typically sitting empty," he said. "We thought 'why not take them and breathe life back into them?' Most are in areas of declining economy. "While most people are running from those economies, we're running to them."

SeedAmerica believes in the entrepreneurial spirit. "It's not government's place to protect business," Zimmerman said. "Our passion is for business and entrepreneurship. We firmly believe America was made great by entrepreneurship and we need to stay that course."

While believing that government should not protect businesses, Zimmerman said if tax incentive money is available, SeedAmerica will request it. "It's a group effort," he said. "If a business succeeds, it helps the

In related discussion, Hubbard summarized the last three years saying that while early on was "one of the most difficult moments," people are now "amazed at Hoopeston" because of the lack of violence or vandalism shown towards Wiccans. With the exception of a few private businesses and individuals, "Hoopeston has become a model of tolerance," he said. "It's the safest place I've ever been in my life."

Police News



Two people were injured in an accident at 9:03 a.m. Sunday.

Carie A. Brooks and Karen L. Steiner were both treated at Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital.

Police said Brooks, in a 2004 Pontiac Grand Am, and Steiner, in a 2000 Volkswagen Beetle, collided at Fourth St. and McNeil. Brooks was ticketed for disobeying a yield sign.

Nakisha Victoria Nicole McCullough, 23, of 120 California, Danville, was arrested after an incident at 6:20 p.m. Sunday at Parkview Court. She was charged with battery on a complaint from a 39-year-old Danville man who alleged McCullough struck him. She was released on a notice to appear.

community. But, "if they say no, we're not going to pack up our bags and leave," he said.

SeedAmerica officials are expected to be in Hoopeston this week to meet with economic and city leaders about their organization and their ownership of the FMC Building.

Weather



Chance of thunderstorms today, tonight and tomorrow. High today 83, low 67. Tomorrow, high 85, low 68.

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

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