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Housing project delayed after council stalls TIF request

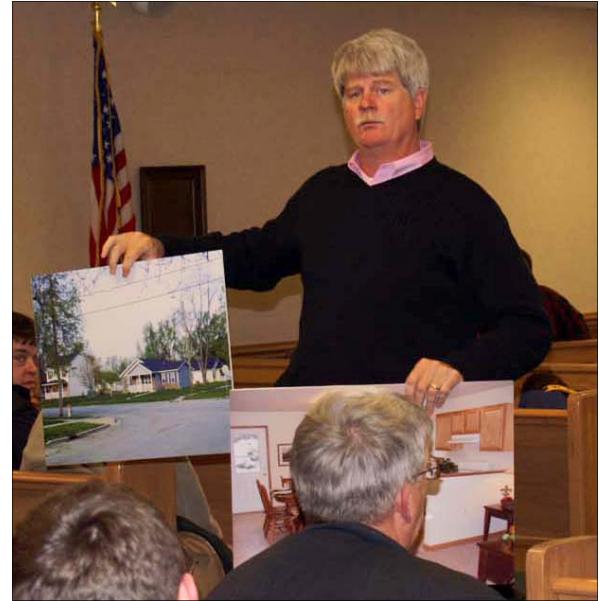
A proposed workforce affordable housing project for Hoopeston will probably not be able to meet an April deadline and may have to wait until December.

Despite a presentation and question-and-answer session by Mike Niehaus, who has developed single family housing complexes around the state, the Hoopeston City Council on Tuesday declined to approve a resolution earmarking up to \$400,000 for the housing program.

Alderman Jeff Johnson made a motion to set aside funds for the workforce housing project, with the money to be used for project infrastructure but his motion failed to get a second from any other alderman.

Goodwine said approving the resolution is "hard to do when we don't know where (the project) will be." Originally, plans called for the development to go on the Hoopeston Industrial Corporation ground but after receiving a nod, the Industrial Corporation board approved selling the property to an individual. That individual then agreed to sell the property for the project but only if the entire 30-acre parcel was purchased, rather than the needed 10 acres.

From there, discussion focused on the Larry Petry property east of Euclid, but that may have changed
 See HOUSING on other side



Mike Niehaus, developer of single family housing, displays examples of his work at Tuesday's Hoopeston City Council meeting. Approximately 40 residents turned out to hear about a proposed project in Hoopeston.

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**Hoopeston
American Legion**

502 E. Penn



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Sponsored by Hoopeston Jaycees
Saturday, Feb. 21 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
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Full & Half Racks



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Housing continued from other side

Tuesday.

All the changes "make me uneasy," Goodwine said, adding "a month ago, all we had to do was buy land. Now we have to put up \$400,000."

Goodwine and Brandon Hamilton each commented that ownership, rather than rentals, seems preferable because conventional wisdom says people take better care of what they own. "These are things we have to wrestle through," Goodwine said.

Hamilton said for the rental price - ranging from \$285 to \$500 monthly - residents could get a mortgage on one of many homes for sale in Hoopeston. "Wouldn't you rather own," he asked.

No, according to city Clerk Gail Lane, who said her husband plans to retire, their current house is too big, they're not sure they want to buy again and one of the planned workforce houses would be nice to move into.

Tony Hasbargen, manager of Vermilion County Housing Authority's Rossville office, oversees properties in northern Vermilion County, including Parkview Court and Centennial Manor, said 41 homes are for sale in Hoopeston, another 40 are presumed empty, and there are 300 rental properties in Hoopeston, not counting Section 8 homes. "To me, it's not needed," Hasbargen said, admitting there is a waiting list for the properties he manages.

Economic developer Dana Goodrum cautioned the council about homes for sale versus for rent. "Just because homes are for sale, don't mistake that for homes that are available for rent because it's not the same," she said, detailing the difficulty in finding a suitable rental property when she came to Hoopeston.

Niehaus had pictures of similar developments in Springfield, Jacksonville, Peoria, Taylorville and other communities.

The development proposed for Hoopeston would include 24 homes for the first phase. Homes would be a mixture of two- and three-bedroom and ranch and two-story homes, with a large park in the middle of the development. The project is estimated at \$3.5 million, much of which would stay in the area by using local contractors to build the houses. Construction for the 24 homes would take eight to nine months, Niehaus said.

Homes are energy-efficient and attractive. "These homes look as good or better than those new homes out

by the bowling alley," Niehaus said.

Communities that already have workforce housing developments find the complexes are rented quickly and waiting lists often develop. "(The only) people who don't like these are the landlords in town who have subpar properties," he said.

Niehaus stressed that the project is for working families, although senior citizens are also considered. Tenants must pass credit and criminal history checks. Felons are not allowed to rent and those with misdemeanor convictions are barred for three years.

The management company will be the key to the project's success, Niihau said. Strict management that adheres to the rules, such as no drugs allowed and property must be kept up or tenants will be evicted, will ensure the project's success.

The development is a 15-year rental project, after which homes may be sold. At about year 12, tenants may begin applying part of their rent towards purchase, Niehaus said. Tenants retain first right of refusal and cannot have their home sold from under them, he said.

In unrelated business, the council:

Police News



Christopher M. Herchuee, 25, of Hoopeston, was arrested after an incident at 8:40 a.m. Tuesday in the 700 block of South Market. He was charged with domestic battery on a complaint from a 19-year-old woman and was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville.

Benjamin J. Anthony, 26, of Sharpsburg, Ga., was ticketed for failure to report an accident to police after his 2004 Freightliner struck a stop sign at South Market and East Orange. The accident occurred at 11:47 a.m. Tuesday.

Weather



Blustery today. High 21. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 11. Tomorrow, mostly sunny, chance of snow at. High 32, low 18.

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

• Discussed adding a new fire/tornado siren but prefer to wait to include the cost in the new budget. One siren is about \$22,000.

• Approved changing residency restrictions for firemen from within Grant Township to within five miles of Hoopeston city limits. The restriction now matches others in the city.

• Unanimously approved Scott Strawser as a new auxiliary police officer.

Mardi Gras Party
Saturday, 9 p.m.-1 a.m.
June 'N Transit DJ
(Josh & Randy)



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Classifieds

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