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Hoopeston health center plans new nursing home

Hoopeston Regional Health Center plans to build a new nursing home if a USDA loan is approved.

HRHC CEO Harry Brockus was at Tuesday night's Hoopeston City Council meeting, seeking a letter of support to include with the facility's loan application and detailed plans for the new nursing home.

The health center plans to build the 75-bed nursing home on 25 acres on Route 1, across from Anthem Chevrolet. The structure will feature 180 sq. ft. private bedrooms with connecting bathrooms that will be handicapped accessible and include wheel chair accessible showers, Brockus said.

Construction is estimated at \$6 million, with another \$500,000 needed for equipment costs.

The project is part of a \$24 million investment the hospital hopes to accomplish as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Brockus said the project will meet ARRA mandates of job creation by adding an additional 15 jobs to the existing 243 full- and part-time employees.

If the loan is approved and the nursing home is moved, it will split the health care facility campus, which Brockus said, will help the hospital's government reimbursement rate. Currently, that rate is lower because

the hospital and nursing home are on the same campus.

Other components of the project include:

- A hospital renovation that will include 8,000 sq. ft. of new space and 3,000 sq. ft. of remodeled area. The emergency room will be revamped to consist of six private rooms with walls, instead of cubicles with curtains. Brockus said the emergency room had 10 percent growth in 2009.

- A revamped surgery suite, with 300 sq. ft. for minor surgeries and 500 sq. ft. for major surgeries. The expansion will accommodate two new general surgeons and the planned additions of OB/gyn and pain surgeons in March and an ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon this summer, Brockus said.

The hospital renovation project is estimated at \$4.6 million, with \$2.75 million in equipment.


- Construction of a new medical clinic in Rossville. Announced at Monday's Rossville Village Board meeting, the facility would include four exam rooms, and x-ray and lab services in a 2,000 sq. ft. building. The health center hopes to purchase one acre of property from the Rossville Fire Protection District for the clinic.

Longer-term plans are included in the \$24 million but See **HEALTH** on other side

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Health continued from other side

Brockus did not detail those plans at Tuesday's meeting.

Health center officials will hold a public hearing on the project at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Lorraine Theatre, prior to the annual Community Awards ceremony.

After the hearing, Brockus will compile the USDA application, which will include comments made at the hearing and letters of support from Hoopeston and Rossville officials. The application must be submitted by March 1.

Brockus said a pre-application to the USDA "passed with flying colors."

In unrelated business, the council heard a presentation from representatives of Greene & Bradford, Inc., contractors for Prairie Meadows, the affordable workforce housing development. Project manager Don DeFrates and project engineer Dan Gambill, discussed construction issues and answered council questions on the development, which will feature 25 single-family homes on 10 acres of former Hoopeston Industrial Corporation land on Route 9.

DeFrates told the council that 24" field tiles will

have to be relocated and that a retention pond is planned for the park area of the development.

Asked about child safety, Gambill said the pond should only have standing water in 100 year storms, and then only for a couple of hours. "We're not talking days, weeks or months," he said, adding the outlet for storm water will not pose a danger to children.

Alderman Jeff Johnson questioned the men on streets at sidewalks.

At the previous council meeting, Johnson suggested rebar be added to six inches of concrete for streets in the development. Tuesday night, he said rebar might not be best, but asked if fiber mesh would be added to provide support for heavy vehicles for things like snow removal.

DeFrates replied that he did not believe mesh would be needed and that engineers followed Illinois Department of Transportation regulations and the city's street ordinances in designing the streets. "It will be a good solid road," he said.

Johnson then questioned curbing, asking whether they would be regular or valley gutter curbs.

DeFrates said barrier curbs are normally used in high-traffic areas and that valley gutter curbing would be used in the development.

Valley gutters, which were also used in Southgate and FMC subdivisions, are U-shaped, with a higher back and lower front, that collect water and direct it to storm sewers.

In related discussion, Niccole Clements, development coordinator for Illinois Community Action

Development Corporation, reminded the council that tax credits for the project were awarded in August and that an investor was then sought to purchase the tax credits.

Due to the economy, an investor was not found but that the project will receive federal funds in the form of a grant from the U.S. Treasury, she said.

The tax credits that were allowed by Illinois Housing Development Authority were removed because of the grant money. The IDHA board is expected to vote on the financing at its February 19 meeting, Clements said.

In unrelated business, the council:

- Heard from Alderwoman Sue Comstock that a civic committee meeting will be held before the February 1 council meeting. The final draft of the contractor registration ordinance will be discussed at the committee meeting and is expected to be voted on at the full council meeting.
- Contractors and the public are welcome to attend.
- Heard from Alderman Bill McElhaney about a recent water/gas main leak on Market. McElhaney praised city workers and thanked Hoopeston Fire Department for their help and Dave Ervin for offering his garage to provide warmth for workers and also for offering food for them.
- Heard from Jean Minick that the annual community awards ceremony will be held Monday, Jan. 25 at the Lorraine Theatre. The evening will begin with a public hearing on the hospital construction proposal, followed by a performance by The Taffetas and then the awards presentation. Desserts and coffee will be served and admission is free.
- Heard from Mayor Bill Crusinberry that the next meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 1 because the scheduled date, February 2, will be the primary election.



Dan Gambill, left, and Don DeFrates, project engineer and project manager for Prairie Meadows affordable workforce housing development planned for Hoopeston, discuss the project at Tuesday's Hoopeston City Council meeting.

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Obituaries

HARRIS - Amanda Jo Harris, 27, of Mazon, formerly of Watseka, died as a result of an auto accident at 12:47 p.m. Monday, Jan. 18, 2010, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chicago. Funeral service will be at 11 a.m. Friday at Segur-Knapp Funeral Home, Watseka. Burial will be in Sugar Creek Cemetery, Stockland. Visitation will be 3-8 p.m. Thursday and one hour before service Friday at the funeral home. Memorials are suggested to Martinton EMTs, St. Jude Children's Hospital or a charity of the donor's choice.

Weather

Freezing rain advisory through 6 a.m. Thursday. Chance of rain today and tonight. High 34, low 31. Tomorrow, partly sunny. High 37, low 33.

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

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