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Council approves \$300,000 for Prairie Meadows II

Those in favor of expanding Prairie Meadows by building a second phase of the housing project pulled out all the stops at Tuesday's Hoopeston City Council meeting.

Emotional testimonies by two residents, a letter from a third, and a handout listing the benefits of the existing Prairie Meadows preceded aldermen voting 5-2 to spend \$300,000 of Tax Increment Financing funds towards the nearly \$8 million project.

Alderman Randy Carter started discussion, saying there are "a lot of misnomers out there" about Prairie Meadows, including that many residents come from Danville and that it is a Section 8 project.

Section 8 is a federal program that provides payment of rental housing assistance to private landlords.

"It's a project with Section 8," Carter said, adding that of the existing 25 homes, 13 are occupied by Hoopeston residents; six are from Danville, two are from Chrisman and two from Rossville. The final two residents come from Bradley and Pontiac.

Niccole Clements, director of community and economic development for Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies in Springfield, called the numbers "a really nice breakout because that's bringing new residents in."

Hoopeston is receiving property taxes for the existing Prairie Meadows and will also on the expansion. The city's \$300,000 will be repaid by those taxes in nine



Mary Coberly talks about living at Prairie Meadows at Tuesday's Hoopeston City Council meeting as her husband, Patrick, looks on.

years," Clements said.

Addressing the issue of Danville Housing Authority, Clements said the agency is only involved to screen candidates to make sure they meet criteria, not to move Danville people to Hoopeston.

And regarding rent subsidies, of the current 25 residents, 13 are wage earners and 12 are either retired or receiving disability. "People are earning an income," she said.

Addressing complaints that government should not be involved in housing, Mayor Bill Crusinberry compared
 See MEADOWS on other side

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Meadows continued from other side

subsidized rent to government backed FHA loans, a means some Hoopeston people used to purchase homes. "There's no difference," he said.

Mary Coberly, and her husband, Patrick, waiting a year to get into Prairie Meadows. Before moving to Hoopeston, the couple lived in Chrisman. Mrs. Coberly broke her back and once she recovered from that, her husband had heart attacks and was diagnosed with COPD, diabetes and an aneurism. They were no longer able to stay in their home.

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Having relatives in Hoopeston, the couple looked for housing here but had difficulty finding well-kept rentals at an affordable price.

Once approved, the Coberlys started on the next chapter of their lives. "We even got to bring our dog," she said.

On the opposing side, Alderman Bill Goodwine listed five reasons why the housing project should not be approved.

First, he said, TIF is an economic development tool, government-subsidized housing is a social services project and it is wrong to use economic development money for social service projects.

Second, he said, as Alderman Chad Yaden noted at the previous meeting, based on the total project cost, each of the 30 new Prairie Meadows homes cost more than \$250,000. To spend that much for the size and quality of the homes is irresponsible, he said.

Third, renters moving into the new project will leave another round of vacant houses. "I'm not worried about who will live in the houses up here," he said, pointing to a handout listing the breakdown of Prairie Meadows. "I'm worried about who will live in the houses down here," pointing to a list of what happened to rental properties emptied by people moving into the existing Prairie Meadows.

Fourth, Goodwine asked who will fill the vacancies, especially in light of the lack of jobs in Hoopeston. "Are responsible people looking for no job and cheap housing," he asked. "Don't we want to do everything we can to attract responsible people to Hoopeston?"

Finally, Goodwine said the \$300,000 can only be spent once and suggested it should be held for a true

From the Blotter

Justin R. Plecker, 32, of Hoopeston, turned himself in to police at 8:36 p.m. Tuesday. Wanted on a Vermillion County traffic warrant for failure to appear, he was released on bond with a new court date.

Weather

Thunderstorms likely today. High 81. Tonight, chance of storms. Low 63. Tomorrow, chance of storms. High 80, low 66.

economic development job-related project presents itself and then use the money to make that happen.

When discussion was done, Carter made a motion to amend the budget to allow the expense, which was seconded by Alderman Bill McElhaney. Voting in favor were Carter, McElhaney, Alex Houmes and Brandon Hamilton. Goodwine and Alderman Chad Yaden voted against the measure.

Alderman Carl Ankenbrand was absent and the vote was one vote short because Ward 3 is missing an alderman following Larry Baughn's resignation, read at the last meeting.

Citing city ordinance that requires five yes votes on a resolution, Crusinberry voted yes.

In other business, Yaden, approached by representatives of Hoopeston Marathon and Hoopeston IGA about liquor licenses, said he would like to have five in each of the six categories. After brief discussion, Yaden tabled action on the request because the full council was not present.

Classifieds

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