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Shimkus seeks investigation into housing authority loan mess

A U.S. Representative is asking some pointed questions about a previous director of Vermilion County Housing Authority (VCHA) and the agency's finances under him.

Congressman John Shimkus (R, Illinois-15) wrote to Department of Housing and Urban Development Acting Inspector General Helen Albert last week, requesting an investigation into whether any federal laws or regulations were violated with respect to previous business dealings of the Vermilion County Housing Authority.

"During a recent meeting involving officials from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, my staff, a local bank, and the chairman of the Vermilion County Board, several potential violations were brought to my attention," Shimkus wrote. "Accordingly, I feel it is my responsibility to request an immediate investigation."

In his letter to Albert, Shimkus outlined the history of
See HOUSING on other side



Photo contributed

Years of strikes and spares

Several Hoopeston Area bowlers were honored that the National Bowling Tournament held in Syracuse NY, for totaling a record 239 years. The tournament travels across the nation and is held from March until July 1. Hoopeston bowler David Gaddis was honored for participating in 40 consecutive years; Steve Bruens, 39 consecutive; Tony Gress and Mike Dean 30 years; Hank Longfellow 29 years; Doug Wagoner 28 consecutive; Keith Hicks 26 and "newcomers" Karen Porth nine years, Darrin Elghner six, and Cole Strawser two years. Pictured left to right are Wagoner, Dean, Bruens, Gress, Gaddis, Hicks and Longfellow. Individuals participated in team, double and single events. Next years tournament will be held in Las Vegas Nevada before returning to Reno, NV.



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Housing continued from other side

the situation which resulted in the VCHA board resigning en masse after a meeting in March.

He outlines how in 2004 or 2005, Tony Hasbargen, then executive director of the housing agency, entered into a loan with Capstone Bank (later acquired by MainSource Bank) for \$1,662,500, a loan that, according to HUD, was “not in accordance with the declaration of trust.” The loan was bought by First National Bank of Georgetown for \$872,619. Records indicate only one \$200,000 payment was made on the loan.

Shimkus’ letter continued that in 2013 or 2014, HUD

officials determined the loan violated HUD rules, although the loan was clearly noted in VCHA’s financial statements and that in 2013, two additional loans were initiated with First National Bank (now known as Longview Bank & Trust) and that funds from those loans were used to purchase supplies to rehabilitate other housing under VCHA control. After HUD notified the housing authority that the loans were not permitted, the supplies were sold but the proceeds were not used to pay First National Bank/Longview Bank & Trust.

According to VCHA, Shimkus wrote, an agreement

was made in which “capital funds” would be allowed to pay the loan; however the agreement was never signed due to a change of leadership at HUD’s Chicago field office. In a new revelation, HUD now shows all the \$1.6 million was drawn out of the “capital funds” account by VCHA and used to repay the initial loan.

After outlining the history of the fiasco, Shimkus asked Albert:

What actions, if any, have been taken against Hasbargen, who, on multiple occasions, entered into allegedly improper loans?

Where did the \$1.6 million go if not to pay the original loan?

Where did the proceeds of the sold supplies go, if not to pay the financial institution for the second round of loans?

What action is/has been taken against internal HUD auditors who did not call attention to the so-called improper loans, even though they clearly were on VCHA’s records and HUD is allowing for a \$1.6 million draw.

Vermilion County Board Chairman Mike Marron is tasked with finding new members for the VCHA board.



Photo contributed

Tournament success

Two students from the Okinawan School of Karate participated in the United States Association of Martial Arts Illinois State Championships on April 8 in Bradley. Wade Brost came in second in kata and fourth in weapons kata. Edith Conn took second in sparring and third in weapons kata. Both students train twice a week at OSK under the instruction of Mike Webb.

Briefly

Birthday wishes

Former Hoopeston resident Lila Gray will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 9 and would enjoy hearing from friends. Cards and well wishes may be sent to Lila Gray, 1035 S. Main St., #407, Decatur IL 62521.

Patriot’s Club seeks members

Hoopeston Patriot’s Club is looking for new members! The group, started when the VFW auxiliaries disbanded, is a community-oriented club that hold fundraisers to help local groups, such as the VFW, Multi Agency, Grant Township Food Cupboard and Hoopeston Animal Shelter.

Membership applications are available at Hoopeston VFW. Dues are \$40 per year. Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month at the VFW.

Military service is not required for membership.

Outdoor movie family night

Learn & Lead Academy, 409 W. Washington, will hold Outdoor Family Movie Night Thursday, May 3.

Obituaries

TEBO - Erma (Kaufmann) Martin Tebo, 92, of Cissna Park, died Friday, April 27, 2018 at home. Visitation will be 4-7 p.m. Wednesday at Knapp Funeral Home, Cissna Park, and 9:30 until the 10:30 a.m. funeral Thursday at Grace Bible Church, Cissna Park. Burial will be in Cissna Park Cemetery. Memorials are suggested to Cissna Park Education Foundation.

Weather

Sunny, breezy today. High 81. Tonight, mostly cloudy. Low 60. Tomorrow, mostly cloudy, thunderstorms likely late. High 81, low 64.

Classifieds

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