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Just the Facts

Monday, March 25, 2019

Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication!

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Drug rehab group seeks Honeywell building, board votes to raze

A last-minute plea from a drug rehabilitation organization failed to sway Hoopeston Area School Board members to keep Honeywell School standing.

During the public comment section of Thursday's board meeting, Wendy Lambert, representing Jesse Hatchett House of Hope in Danville, asked the board to allow the group to have the school to use for those who have gone through drug rehabilitation programs.

Volunteers are in the process of setting up a House of

Hope residential facility in Danville, where those just out of rehab can stay in a structured environment as they work on staying clean and finding work. The program has been started by the family of Jesse Hatchett, of Rossville, who addicted to drugs and who committed suicide in January.

Citing a report listing Vermilion County 102nd of 102 counties in a recent state health survey, Lambert said violence and drug use are increasing and that "we need to

See HONEYWELL on other side



Bzzz burning

As smoke billows skyward, Hoopeston firemen battle an early Sunday morning blaze at Bssz Place 306 E. Main. Police noticed heavy smoke coming from the business at 1:34 a.m. Rossville, Wellington, Rankin East Lynn and Milford fire departments also responded. The fire is under investigation by the Illinois State Fire Marshal's office.

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for Hoopeston Area School Board April 2nd

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Hoopeston Area Schools
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✓ VOTE

Dave

McFadden

School Board

Paid political ad

Honeywell continued from other side

step up and take our communities back.” House of Hope would offer recovering addicts “a hand up not a hand out,” and said \$75 million is available for the worst counties to make improvements. “These kids are falling through the cracks,” Lambert said. “Grandparents are raising their grandkids and using up all their savings. We have to do something.”

Residents near Honeywell School, however, expressed concerns. Sally Birch said she feels passionately about the issue, saying she doesn’t want any more drug addicts in Hoopeston, a sentiment echoed by Tammy Dixon. “We’ve got enough drug addicts in this town,” she said.

Lynn Wyss said Centennial Manor once was a haven for senior citizens. “It’s not that anymore,” she said. She spoke of her parents’ home being broken into and robbed. “It’s not that I don’t have empathy for (recovering addicts),” she said, adding she thinks the facility should be demolished.

Todd Rush said an addiction recovery facility shouldn’t be in a residential area. “If it was somewhere other than a residential area, I’d be all for it,” he said.

For Denise Scharlach, the issue is a matter of affording upkeep. “If you don’t have money for maintenance and upkeep, then nobody else will,” she said.

When the board first announced it was closing the school, it cited operating costs of \$923,000 for the 2016-17 year, future upkeep costs of \$668,000, including a new roof and boiler, tuck pointing and other items. An additional \$253,000 would be spent on salaries for a principal, secretary, janitor, utilities of \$25,000 per year and other upkeep, costs the board hoped to save by closing the school.

At a public meeting in May 2016, the board and then-Supt. Hank Hornbeck assured residents they would not leave the building to deteriorate and become an eyesore. At that time, asbestos removal costs were estimated at \$133,000 while razing the building was estimated at \$170,000.

At its June 16, 2016 meeting, the board unanimously approved closing the school. On Thursday, a motion by Lawrence Jahn and seconded by Chris Small again resulted in a 7-0 vote, this time to tear the school down.

Once the building is gone, the board may then decide to

From the Blotter

Police are investigating a burglary reported at 4:32 p.m. Thursday. A 23-year-old Hoopeston woman said items were missing from her home in the 400 block of South Third St.

sell the property. Last July, the board heard from Luke Feeney of Monticello-based Miller, Tracy, Braun, Funk & Miller, Ltd., on school code requirements by which districts may dispose of unwanted property. The board has not announced if it plans to sell the property.

In other public comment:

• Kevin Moore said he was told by Supt. Suzzette Hesser and high school Principal John Klaber that the issue of teachers not standing for the Pledge of Allegiance was to be discussed at the meeting, which did not happen. He also stated that at no time did he say students should be forced to stand for the Pledge.

Moore has previously stated he believes teachers standing for the Pledge is part of their job in teaching citizenship values outlined in the school board handbook.

Moore also asked the board to investigate one of the companies used by IL-Empower, a state group that provides learning resources to school districts. One partner in IL-Empower is the Tides Center, part of the Tides Foundation, funded, in part by the open Society Foundation, which was founded by George Soros.

Billionaire Soros has been credited with breaking the British pound in 1992 and his Open Society funds progressive groups around the world.

The board was set to vote on a contract with an IL-Empower partner but Small asked the issue be tabled, which was granted.

• Connie Catron asked the board to consider naming Matt Colston as head high school basketball coach in the wake of coach Dave Cox’ resignation effective February 21. She also asked the board to continue Success classes.

In other discussion, the board heard from Klaber about proposed changes in graduation requirements and the high school football program.

He said Hoopeston’s method of awarding one credit per semester is unusual and that the state’s system allows a half credit per semester. To align with the state, he suggested changing the total number of credits needed to graduate this year from 52 to 44. Incoming freshmen next year would be required to have 22 credits to graduate.

Klaber expects the lower number to result in a higher graduation rate, as some students who were in Response to Intervention (RtI) or guided study classes have had to take advantage of credit recovery to earn enough credits to graduate.

Weather

Isolated showers then sunny today. High 45. Tonight clear. Low 25. Tomorrow, sunny. High 46, low 27.

He also suggested using the Latin system for grade point average recognition at graduation. Under his proposal, students with a GPA over 4.0 - four students - would graduate summa cum laude and wear a gold tassel. Seven students with a GPA of 3.7 to 4 would graduate magna cum laude and wear a silver tassel. Seven or eight students currently with a GPA of 3.25-3.69 would graduate cum laude with a bronze tassel. National Honor Society students would wear a blue one under the Latin system.

Klaber also suggested the district allow early graduation for students who have completed credit requirements in December. “We’re not projecting the whole senior class is going to graduate early,” he said. “It’s not an easy thing.” For those students who achieved the goal, early graduation is “a viable option to go out and start their education.”

Classifieds

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The City of Hoopeston is now accepting applications for Seasonal Employees for several of our departments. Applications are available at City Hall, 301 W Main St. Hoopeston.

Silgan Containers is hiring press mechanics. Please visit <https://silgancontainers.mua.hrdepartment.com/hr/ats/Posting/view/9958> for more info and to apply online.

Small Wonders Preschool is seeking applications for its Preschool Director/Teacher position for the 2019-20 school year. Please send cover letter and resume to First Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 297, Hoopeston, by April 10. Our program is a half-day program M-F during the school year for 3- and 4-year-old children. Candidates must be Director qualified by DCFS standards which can include sixty credit hours of college with eighteen hours in courses related directly to child development from birth to age six.

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