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Managers group to consider modifying COVID restrictions

COVID-19 restriction in Hoopeston, especially those involving parks, will be looked at with an eye towards easing them.

At Tuesday Hoopeston City Council meeting, EMA Director Brad Hardcastle said the emergency managers group met to discuss how to adapt the local plan to Gov. JB Pritzker's latest pronouncements.

The group is looking to "loosen control, mainly in the park area," by the end of May, said Hardcastle, a member of the emergency managers group. This is expected to include opening the tennis courts and baseball fields, as long as state guidelines are followed.

Ald. Bill Goodwine, another emergency group member, said he read where some areas are opening tennis courts for singles play only.

Recognizing that the city is still under a state of emergency to receive reimbursement for costs associated with the pandemic, Ald. Alex Houmes asked why officials couldn't return to the regular structure, which would allow the city parks committee to decide what happens at the parks. And "operate things as we normally would."

Get your movie concessions fix at the Lorraine Saturdays

It's Saturday night and you and the family have a hankering for a movie and some awesome movie theater popcorn.

The Save the Lorraine Foundation can't do anything about the first part of your desire, but they're happy to assuage the second.

Saturdays in May, the foundation will have "Concessions to Go" from 5-8 p.m., at the Lorraine Theatre, 324 E. Main, serving popcorn, Dippin' Dots, candy and drinks under the marquee.

To meet COVID restrictions, orders must be placed online at TheLorraineTheatre.com/curbside. Pick up your goodies during the time noted at checkout (usually 15 minutes after placing the order). Use the alley west of the Lorraine Theatre for pickup, enter-

Ald. Chad Yaden, who voted against the city emergency declaration, asked, "Did we not fight for five days to close the park?" He also asked whether there was a plan to purchase snow fence to put around areas of the park to keep citizens out, such as playground equipment.

Goodwine said the snow fence was one possibility that had been discussed but not implemented.

Hardcastle told the council that the number of COVID-19 cases in the county rose from 17 to 25. (Editor's note: the number was 26 Wednesday.) "That's a reason why we have to keep this going for a little longer," he said.

While local people, including a city employee, have been on home quarantine for possible exposure to the coronavirus, no confirmed cases of the virus have been reported in Hoopeston.

Expressing confidence in the recommendations of the first responders on the emergency group - including Hardcastle, Fire Chief Joel Bird and Police Chief Jim DeWitt - "It's the credibility of the group that gives them their power," Goodwine said. Besides, he said, "The

See COVID on other side

ing from the north and exiting onto Main.

This will be the second time the Lorraine Foundation has offered its treats to the public. The first venture, "Popcorn Drive-Thru," put more than 50 lbs. of popped corn into the hands of local residents.

While "Concessions to Go" is fun for Lorraine volunteers and those who take part, there is a serious reason behind it.

"Like many businesses, the effects of COVID-19 closures and restrictions have put a great strain on the Lorraine Foundation," said board member Alex Houmes. "With movie showings canceled and events postponed, our primary source of operating capital has been cut off."

See LORRAINE on other side

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COVID continued from other side

mayor and city council can overrule them - with some risks," he added.

Ald. Carl Ankenbrand said he has "full faith in the people who are making the decisions." While he doesn't agree with all their decisions, "I just go on."

In related action, the council approved a COVID-related employee policy that will cover employees who exhibit symptoms of the disease, not just exposure or confirmation of the Chinese virus.

Employees who stay home to take care of a family member who has symptoms, has been exposed or is confirmed to have COVID-19 will be paid at 100 percent, rather than the two-thirds rate suggested by the US Labor Department.

In unrelated discussion:

- Mayor Bill Crusinberry said he recently twice witnessed a presumed father allowing a child, estimated at seven to 10-years-old, drive a golf cart on Penn St. By city ordinance, golf cart drivers must be at least 16 years old and have a valid driver's license.

- In another matter, Crusinberry said questions and complaints about Hoopeston's sign ordinance have arisen. He suggested an overhaul of the ordinances is needed.

- Crusinberry said he has submitted three properties to the land bank for demolition. All the properties are still owned by individuals and have not been turned over to

From the Blotter

Police are investigating a report made at 11:52 a.m. Wednesday. A 54-year-old Hoopeston man said someone took a red and black two-seater go-cart from his property in the 800 block of East Seminary.

Lorraine continued from other side

One of the largest expenses for the theater is utilities. "We've been able to put the theaters in a 'hibernation state,' but they can't be shut down completely, Houmes said. Circulation fans and the dehumidification systems must operate 24/7 to prevent damage that high moisture levels cause.

"The foundation entered this time with a reserve that has allowed us to weather the storm so far, but the future is uncertain," Houmes said. "Public venues like the Lorraine and Little Lorraine may have to remain closed through the summer and assistance programs are less prevalent for volunteer-operated nonprofits."

the tax trustees.

- In a related matter, he said that some houses that have been cited are used by the fire department for training. The owner of those properties pays only for the cost to clean the site after the burn. Others, whose houses are not used for training, have to pay more due to demolition costs, as well as cleanup costs. "I think there should be a fee," he said, suggesting to "maybe look at a more progressive community to see what they have on the books."

- Heard from Houmes that park employees are doing spring cleanup. The new scoreboard at the Pony field should be installed within a month or so. He also reported that, unlike Ald. Jeff Wise, who is occupied with taking trees down, the parks department is working to add more. A gravel bed nursery has allowed the department to purchase various bare rootstock trees, which are placed in the nursery. While the trees do not grow much there, the nursery allows the trees to strengthen their root systems, readying them for fall planting.

Classifieds

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- Heard from Goodwine, who said the city has received no information on sales tax or income tax figures since the coronavirus shutdown.

Sales tax received in April was from February sales. "Due to the lag, we have no idea at all," about recent months' totals.

He expects information sometime this month, which will allow the council to better budget for the year.

Last month, the council approved a budget excluding all one-time purchases.

Weather

FREEZE WATCH from midnight to 8 a.m. Saturday Today, breezy, showers. High 50. Tonight, clear. Low 30. Tomorrow, frost, then sunny, chance of showers late. High 5, low 40. Sunday, showers likely. High 57, low 36.

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