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Council splits on reserve funds to balance 2020-21 budget

A unanimous nod on Hoopeston's budget last week was upended in discussion Tuesday at Hoopeston City Council's meeting.

In April, the council unanimously approved department budgets but passed on approving one-time expenses to better gauge the financial effect of COVID-19.

At a budget meeting last week, the council reviewed the complete budget, with income of \$1,964,177 from property and other taxes and \$350,000 from city reserves that, when expenses are deducted, would leave Hoopeston \$545 to the good.

In the time since the budget meeting, Ald. Alex Houmes and Chad Yaden separately reviewed the figures and reached the same conclusion: that reserve funds should not be used for non-accrued one-time expenses.

Ald. Lourdine Florek started the discussion, reporting for the absent Ald. Bill Goodwine, city finance chairman. She gave an overview of the budget and acknowledging the differences of opinion and asked Houmes to explain his position to the council.

Houmes pointed out some of the non-accrued one-time expenses, which together totaled \$155,400, asking whether officials should spend \$50,000 towards the police pension backlog or \$35,000 for a new building for Hoopeston Emergency Management Agency/Hoopeston Auxiliary Police.

Yaden questioned the expenses, saying, "You're spending close to a third of \$1,000,000 out of reserves," adding he saw "no sense in spending money on unnecessary things."

Ald. Carl Ankenbrand said the two wanted to get out of



Mike Davis, executive director of the Central Illinois Land Bank, addresses Hoopeston City Council Tuesday evening.

the emergency declaration, which allowed federal reimbursement on a portion of COVID-19 related costs but did not want to spend taxpayer money on items needed by city departments.

As discussion continued, Houmes indicated a willingness to consider some of the costs, which prompted Florek to ask him to consider the HEMA building. In light of the pandemic emergency, Florek said she was "appalled" at how few supplies the emergency group had on hand. She suggested that as an emergency group, they should have masks, gloves and sanitizer available, as well as a supply of other items - and a decent place to store them - before an emergency strikes the city.

See BUDGET on other side

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Budget continued from other side

Mayor Bill Crusinberry said money the city will receive from property taxes on new developments on Rt. 1 will reimburse those costs. "We're banking on the future when we do this economic development."

Florek said passing the budget was necessary to be able to hold a public hearing on the appropriations ordinance - which allows the city to spend money - immediately before the next council meeting and then approve the ordinance at the meeting. She made a motion to approve the budget as presented, seconded it by Ankenbrand. It passed, 5-2, with Yaden and Houmes voting no.

The appropriation ordinance will be available for public inspection beginning Friday at Hoopeston City Hall.

In unrelated business, the council heard from Mike Davis, Executive Director of the Central Illinois Land Bank Authority, formerly Vermilion County Land Bank. "Our goal is to acquire distressed properties, rehabilitate

them if we can and if we can't, demolish them," he said.

Signs look favorable for Hoopeston to receive matching funds for planned demolition of residential properties,

Davis said. He is looking into grants and Harry Brockus, of Hoopeston Retirement Village Foundation, has indicated that group may provide money, too.

From the Blotter

Antonietta R. Spina, 51, of Milford, was arrested after police were called to Olympic Hardware at 4:10 p.m. Tuesday for someone attempting to use a fake \$100 bill. Spina was located, charged with forgery and taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville to await arraignment.

Josh Hasbargen, 26, of Hoopeston, and Jared Zollar, 33, of Rossville, were arrested at 11:55 p.m. Tuesday. Each was charged with bicycle lighting re-

quirement and released on a notice to appear in Hoopeston City Court.

Fire Calls

Hoopeston Fire Department was called at 10:59 p.m. Tuesday to the 700 block of South Dixie Hwy., for a fire alarm at Gibson Health Care Clinic. No injuries were reported.

Classifieds

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