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Gaming fee vote doesn't meet state law, new vote expected

At its meeting next week, Hoopeston City Council is expected to revisit a vote taken at its June 7 meeting on an ordinance on a proposed new video gaming fee.

Earlier this year, Illinois amended its gaming statutes, allowing municipalities to levy a fee of up to \$250 per gaming machine, with half of the fee paid by the establishment in which the gaming machine is located and the other half by the terminal operator.

A proposed ordinance setting the fee at the maximum \$250 was discussed at the April 21 council meeting. At that meeting, Doug Wagoner, owner of Fast Lanes, encouraged the council to implement the fee in increments. Wagoner said he was speaking for other license holders, as well, who were not against the fee but hoped it could be done on a graduated scale.

The issue was to be voted on at the June 7 meeting and Wagoner again attended and again asked the council to consider the business owners' request.

Also at the June 7 meeting, Ald. Joe Garrett said he spoke with other business owners and substantiated that they, like Wagoner, would prefer it to be phased in.

Ald. Kellie Ferrell made a motion to impose the \$250 fee, seconded by Ald. Robin Lawson, which opened the

matter for further council discussion.

"Asking for (\$250) a year when they're making \$100,000, I don't feel guilty, to be honest," said Mayor Jeff Wise. "This could potentially do some things to help us." Wise went on to say that "everybody in here knows things are going to hell in a handbasket," and that Hoopeston has things "coming down the pike that are going to cost us big money. Where we're going to come up with that money, I don't know. If taxes on gaming helps us a little bit, I say let's do it."

The vote split 3-3, with Garrett, Kyle Richards and Stephen Eyrich voting no and Ferrell, Lawson and Bob Porth voting yes.

"It's a 3-3 split so it's up to you," Eyrich told Wise.

"It passes," Wise responded.

However, officials later learned the vote did not follow the state statute, which says all ordinances and any resolution or motion to create any liability against a city or for the expenditure or appropriation of its money requires a concurrence of all members then holding office, including the mayor, unless otherwise provided by other state regulations. To approve the ordinance, five votes were needed.

Briefly

Cooling center open

Hoopeston remains under an excessive heat warning until 8 p.m. today. During this heatwave, Hoopeston City Hall is open as a cooling center from 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Breast cancer support

Hoopeston Breast Cancer Support Group will meet at 6 p.m. June 16 at The Pit Stop at Fast Lanes Bowling Alley. Please spread the word and join us for a meeting to offer support to past and present breast cancer survivors.

For more information, call Pat Foster, (815) 984-4040 or (309) 208-9829.

At the library

Upcoming events at Hoopeston Public Library include:

"Oceans of Possibility" summer reading program, Thursday. Kids ages 4-8 will read "Ten Splishy, Splashy Fish," at 1 p.m. At the same time, kids in grades 6-12 will take part in the "It's in the Bag" reuse and repurpose program. Bring an old t-shirt for the craft, if you have one.

At 2 p.m., youngsters ages 9-12 will learn about "Kids Who Are Changing the World."

Membership picnic

All area women are invited to Hoopeston Area Women Making A Difference membership drive picnic on Tuesday June 28th at 6 p.m. Come meet members and see what we do. For meeting place and information email us at hoopestonwmd@yahoo.com.

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