

## Council struggles with tax increase decision

### Members hear creative proposal for budget woes from ambulance director

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

The Carroll County Council must soon make a decision about raising income taxes in the form of the "Local Option Income Tax" or LOIT. There are several different ways in which the additional tax rate could be levied to replace disappearing state income for county general.

Sifting through the information to reach the most logical course of action for Carroll County taxpayers is a decision with which some council members struggle. Different council members have gathered varied

amounts of knowledge and understanding of the different components, as well as the ramifications of each, due in part to their attendance, or lack of attendance, at seminars and presentations about LOIT.

The council approved approximately \$2,500 to hire legal advisors Barnes and Thornburg LLP to recommend a financial advisor and develop an ordinance for LOIT increase adoption by the end of the year at last Thursday's morning meeting. However, the decision was not without controversy.

Council member Ron Slavens voted against the measure. He said that he attended several LOIT work-

shops and learned nothing new from the Barnes and Thornburg presentation. He said it cost nothing to learn identical information from Larry DeBoer of Purdue.

The legal advisors will advise about the legal ramifications of a council decision while financial advisors will help the council understand the consequences of each component of the proposed tax levy. Barnes and Thornburg's recommendation will be heard at a special council meeting Oct. 6 at 3:30 p.m.

Members voted to pay the legal and financial advisors from the legal line item in the commissioners budget with supplementation from

the Rainy Day Fund.

"There is no free lunch," commissioners attorney Barry Emerson said as he recommended Barnes and Thornburg for the work.

**EMS ambulance service**

Emergency Medical Services Director Mike Durr said his department could only survive an additional \$250,000 budget reduction from the amended 2008 budget if the Yeoman and Burlington ambulance garages were closed.

"The only way to survive is to shut down services," he told council members.

Durr then presented a proposal to privatize the service using a new

company he would establish. He said the new company would use contracted employees and would lease county equipment for a nominal annual fee. The county would provide the necessary housing to maintain four garages and would provide insurance for the vehicles used in the service.

Durr said the new company would provide the service for \$420,000 each year for the next five years and would set the rates and collect fees for providing the service.

Council members considered the savings in overtime wages, em-

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## Federal grant awarded for communications radio tower

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

In a special Thursday morning meeting, Carroll County Commissioners signed an acceptance letter for \$475,000 in federal money from the Integrated Public Safety Commission (IPSC) to install a four-channel "Intellirepeater" in Flora. The funds will be administered through the state Emergency Management Agency office.

Local EMA Director Dave McDowell said the project is part of a state-wide effort to provide "interoperable" communication between all emergency responders. Installation of the tower is expected to improve reception and transmitting ability of radios already in use by Carroll County Sheriff's Department, local police and Indiana State Police while in Carroll County.

The 340-foot tower will be located on the corner of Elizabeth and Easy streets in Flora. The land was purchased by Emergency Radio Services who will build the tower.

According to former EMA Director Justin Darling, public safety individuals in Carroll County requested a solution to portable radio transmission issues for the county from ISPC three to four years ago. Darling said ISPC controls federal department of homeland security money which is funneled to the state to improve local emergency radio communications.

He said ISPC controls the digital 800-megahertz (mhz) public safety radio system for the state. The tower will be owned and maintained by the state.

Darling said the county will reap the benefits, but have none of the responsibility for the improved system. The system was designed

to provide enhanced emergency radio coverage throughout the county by being located in Flora. According to McDowell the tower will also support 54 new radios given to area firefighters through a separate but related grant.

McDowell told commissioners software, included in the package to upgrade the siren alert system, will allow him to map out potential flood areas before the National Weather Service becomes aware of them. He said he would be able to send out early flood warnings to residents.

McDowell said most agencies have older radio equipment to use in the event failure of the 800mhz system occurs. He said his office maintains a military-designed unit which allows interoperability between all equipment in the county, including aging gear.

"Former director Justin Darling was well ahead of his time," McDowell said. "Carroll County had interoperability long before it was even thought of in other counties. We still owe Justin a great deal of respect and appreciation for the skill with which he handled the EMA office."

## Always Reddy, but not always on time!



**Judith - "Reddy" -Conner wins Universal Clown of the Year Award**  
Judy Conner of Delphi shows off a portrait of her "Reddy the Clown" presented to her along with "Clown of the Year for 2008" award and plaque. She also won third place in the makeup competition at the convention. Conner has been clowning around for 20 years as a member of Smiles Unlimited Clown Ministries. Photo provided

By Theresa Replogle  
Contributing writer

When Delphi resident and long-time clown Judy Conner of Delphi attended the annual Smiles Unlimited Clowning Convention in Indianapolis recently, she thought she was there to receive a life-time achievement award. She also thought her husband Bob at-

tended with her to receive the award. However, there was a surprise in store for her.

Known as name "Reddy" for 20 years, Conner was

named the Universal Clown of the Year for 2008.

"My insides were shaking," Conner said. "You never think it's going to be you.

Then you start to cry. After that, it was just excitement, excitement, excitement!"

The award is given each year by Smiles Unlimited Clown Ministries that supports 17 chapters located in Missouri, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. Conner was nominated by her chapter of Smiles the "Laffy-ette" Chapter.

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**Smiles Unlimited**

Smiles Unlimited Clown Ministries was established in 1981 by Don "Ski" Berkoski who, as a clown, volunteered at a prison. He decided he wanted to train others to do similar things so he started his first class in 1986. Berkoski passed away in 2001 but his family continues to grow the ministry.

## Moonlight Madness is coming to Flora Saturday

Comet staff report

Flora's annual Moonlight Madness event will be Saturday. Activities will begin at 8 a.m. with town-wide garage sales. Maps will be available at local businesses and gas stations. New this year will be a trolley shuttle to area garage sales. Pick-up will be at the park and other strategic locations.

Downtown events will begin

at 4 p.m. and conclude at 10.

Children's games and activities will include a moon walk, pickup pumpkins, ball pitch, and hole-in-one. For the adults, bingo will be offered at Flora Pizza King.

A returning event is the popular hay dig. Times are: 6 p.m. for children 3 years and under; 6:15 for 4 & 5 year olds; 6:30 for 6 & 7 year olds; and 6:45 p.m. for 8 & 9 year olds.

Payne's Pharmacy is sponsoring a pumpkin weight guessing contest. The prize is a pumpkin.

Entries in the chili contest should be at the Dime Store building between 5-5:30 p.m. with judging to begin at 6:30. Top prize is \$25.

Judging for the scarecrow contest will be at 7 p.m. Entries may be taken to the Dime Store building on Friday from

6 to 9 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.

Voting will continue until 7 p.m. in the Dime Store building for the Cutest "Moonbeam" Baby. Winner will be announced at 7:30 p.m.

The Idlers Cruise-In will be from 5 to 9 p.m. Dash plaques will be awarded to the first 75 entries.

Ramblin' Fever band will provide live musical entertain-

ment from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

A food and craft court will also be downtown, as will a silent auction to benefit the Helping Hand Fund and an art show featuring various mediums by area artists. Several businesses will have extended hours with special sales and door prizes.

Moonlight Madness is sponsored by Flora Community Club and supported by local businesses.

## Greater need than ever for Helping Hand Fund

By Jennifer Archibald  
Staff writer

The Helping Hand Fund has been quietly helping families in the Flora area since 1977.

It was conceived, organized, and is being carried out by the Beta Alpha (Flora) chapter of Psi Iota Xi, a philanthropic sorority.

From the very beginning, the special Psi Ote fund has helped local people who are down on their luck and need a helping hand. Contributing factors to their need might be loss of employment, severe illness, family tragedy, the economy, etc.

For many in the Flora area, the face of the Helping Hand Fund is Judy Ayres. She has been helping with or in charge

of the fund since 1981. If someone temporarily needs assistance with a utility bill, rent, fuel, or medical expense, they can start with Judy. She said after a quick assessment, the Helping Hand Fund may offer all or partial assistance, or the people may be referred to another helping source, such as the township trustee.

Judy said the same family can only be assisted by the Helping Hand Fund a couple times a year in order to help more families and not deplete the funds.

"In the beginning we helped people with food and clothing, but now the Food Pantry and Thrift Shop can help with those needs," she said.

Judy also pointed out that more local churches are now helping out, too. She explained that the amount of a utility bill might be shared by Helping Hand and one or two churches.

Pat Calhoun, who writes the checks for Helping Hand, added that two churches donate regularly to the fund, through their women's groups.

"No money is given out directly," Judy said. "We make arrangements to pay the bills."

"Sometimes I won't get a phone call in a month, then maybe I'll get four or five a month," she continued.

Judy estimates that an average of \$2,000 a year is expended from Helping Hand for utility payments (Flora Utilities

and NIPSCO), rent, car, and medical expenses.

Miriam Robeson, chapter treasurer, said sometimes there are larger, specific needs in the community, and the Psi Ote membership votes on helping with those expenses.

Psi Ote president Teresa McGill, in a recent letter to businesses, gave some examples of that extra help given.

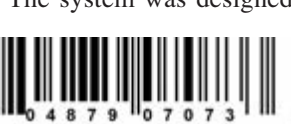
"The Helping Hand Fund provides special medical equipment to families so that their lives may be a little easier when a loved one is ill or disabled," she wrote. "Some of the things we've helped purchase include a handicapped-converted van for a little girl, a special chair for a homebound

lady, a customized hospital bed for a disabled youth, and medical equipment for several families. We have helped provide fuel for families forced to travel back and forth to doctors and hospitals to care for sick or injured loved ones."

Teresa said another benefit of the Helping Hand Fund is a hospital equipment lending bank. Crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, hospital beds, and other medical equipment are loaned at no cost.

Miriam said the sorority commits part of its annual budget to the Helping Hand Fund, and with increased need, the fund sometimes has to be supplemented by the chapter's

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