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BUDGET

From page A1

signed up to offer any sort of opinion on the 2005 budget.

Much of the approval came from organizations or local community groups that have praised the budget since it was presented in November. The Aurora Tri-County Association of Realtors, Waubensee Community College, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the East Aurora School Board all gave ringing endorsement to the trio of initiatives.

East Aurora School Board member Russell Pietrowiak told aldermen that the district spends \$100,000 each year on Internet service. Building a WiFi network would allow schools to divert that money to computers or two additional teachers, he said.

Pietrowiak also stressed the importance of Web access in students' homes, adding that neighboring school districts have a supply of laptops to loan out to students.

"If we give them a laptop to take home, all it is is a fancy typewriter" without Internet access, he said.

Brigitta Toth, president of the developer behind the Orchard Corridor Office Park under construction, said the far West Side park will attract companies "likely to be using state-of-the-art technology equipment as part of their daily business."

Some potential businesses "are reluctant to consider an Aurora address," she said, and WiFi could be "a significant influence in changing (their) minds."

Much of the discussion centered around WiFi, a concept more debated and less understood than a new sewer system or police station. Several Aurora residents spoke against spending \$15 million on the Internet set-up, though they also acknowledged they work at SBC Communications, which currently provides a bulk of local high-speed Internet access.

Dan Conzak questioned spending so much money "to provide a redundant network" when his employer has laid fiber-optic cable throughout

Budget highlights

- 3 new police officers
- \$2 to 6 million to build a highway interchange at Interstate 88 and Eola Road
- \$2.8 million in 2006 and 2007 to refurbish the Illinois Avenue and Downer Place bridges
- \$800,000 for North Avenue dam removal
- \$725,000 to refortify the GAR Memorial Hall on Downer Place downtown

downtown and much of the surrounding area.

"The City of Aurora is not a telecommunications company," he said. "What's going to happen if that network goes down?"

Other speakers raised questions about other parts of the 390-page budget, particularly the decision to outsource much of the legal department.

"The city will still have to be represented in court," noted Mark Wade, a former prosecutor for at the Aurora Branch Court. He questioned the goal of becoming a "first-tier" city when Aurora does not even have a full legal department.

Fourth Ward Alderman Rick Lawrence, who cast the lone nay vote, said he would like to see more money for ward funds and more information and studies on the WiFi proposal.

"We make (developers) do a tremendous amount of market research. Then, we question that research," he said, lamenting that City Council didn't get nearly the same level of information on the Internet proposal.

Third Ward Alderman Stephanie Kifowit said she would still like to examine partnering with a private company for WiFi.

Weisner agreed, although he had some fiery words for private telecommunication companies.

"They bundle this service in such a way that only some people can afford it," he said. "That's the way they want to keep it."

Eighth Ward Alderman Chris Beykirch praised the budget but made one of the few statements everyone in the room could agree upon.

"Mayor Weisner's legacy will be determined by the success of these initiatives."

AIR

From page A1

third nationally, behind only Pennsylvania (388) and Ohio (368), with most other states far behind.

Five Illinois neighborhoods were among the nation's 30 riskiest. Twelve were ranked in the top 100 nationwide, including two in Decatur and four in Granite City, near St. Louis.

Poor, minorities most at risk

The AP study looked at data provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that uses emission reports from industrial plants to calculate health-risk scores for long-term exposure to air pollution.

The study found that minorities and the poor in Illinois were more likely to live in these high-risk neighborhoods than their general population numbers would suggest.

Of the highest-risk neighborhoods in Illinois, an average of more than 20 percent of people there are in poverty. Hispanics and blacks were more than twice as likely as whites to live in the areas.

Fewer than half of Illinois' high-risk neighborhoods were in Cook County, home to Chicago.

An Associated Press analysis of that data shows black Americans like the Browns are 79 percent more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of posing the greatest health danger.

Residents in neighborhoods with the highest pollution scores also tend to be poorer, less educated and more often unemployed than those elsewhere in the country, AP found.

"Poor communities, frequently communities of color but not exclusively, suffer disproportionately," said Carol Browner, who headed the Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton administration, when the scoring system was developed.

unprecedented amount of conditions" to the project.

The 38 requirements include guidelines for fences, planting and other buffers meant to appease neighbors, who spoke at a public hearing.

"Plainly, we do not want Wal-Mart at our site," Kirkland Farms resident Dean Johnson said. "The size is just too big for the area."

Residents also had concerns about Wal-Mart's interest in a property two miles south, near Indian Trail and Farnsworth Avenue.

Johnson called the decision "arrogance and hubris to think they both can succeed. They are way too close together."

Roger Vernon, head of the Big Woods Marmion Neighborhood Association, noted that their neighborhood plan cited traffic as the number-one concern and feared planned road



Coming Thursday Beauty & the beast

Classy remake remembers what made original 'King Kong' work. GO

WAL-MART

From page A1

improvements wouldn't be enough to handle the onslaught of Wal-Mart traffic.

Schuler praised the developer, TMK Development of Barrington, for "an unprecedented approach for working with the neighborhood." The group had several neighborhood meetings and walked the adjacent backyards to develop a buffering plan.

Tim Brinlee, who sits on the neighborhood group's executive committee, said he supported the project because of "the need for transportation improvements and a grocery store."

Schuler said that the project did not put existing businesses at risk because "there's no small businesses up there to start with."

The project could bring Aurora an estimated \$200,000 a year in sales tax. Property taxes, however, would go to the Batavia School District. Mayor Tom Weisner stressed that school district boundaries never have been up to the city.

details on fees or to request a Keepsakes form to submit your information. We accept either black-and-white or color photos. Provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return.

Material must be in our possession by noon Friday 17 days prior to the Sunday of publication.

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Besides basic, free announcements, Keepsakes may be enhanced with additional information, larger photos or color photos for a fee. Laminated copies of your item are available for a fee.

Sharpen your pencil.
The Beacon News Sunday crossword



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For the Record

The Beacon News tries to be accurate and fair in every story it publishes. When a mistake occurs, we want to fix it. To report errors, call Associate Editor John Russell at 844-5902.

U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert's security team is made up of members of the U.S. Capitol Police. This was incorrect in a story Tuesday.

One winning Lotto number published Tuesday was incorrect. The numbers in Monday night's Lotto were: 2-28-30-33-36-40.

Recent Deaths

Obituaries / Page C8

- Anselma, David M., 38, Batavia
- Cherry, Jayme Lee Deshon, 35, Waterman
- Glass, Robert E. Jr., 22, Aurora
- Hart, Florence J., 94, Aurora
- Koehn, Alfred O., 81, Geneva
- Leasure, Marjorie, 86, Hinckley
- Magnusen, Edith M., 89, Bolingbrook
- Piatz, Shirley, 57, Aurora
- Vest, Virginia Dare, 90, Aurora
- Schulze, Louise, 99, Yorkville

News tips

If you have a news tip or want to alert us to an interesting story, call City Editor Mike Cetera weekdays at (630) 844-5853.