

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS

From
KATHLEEN M. FALK



DANE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Greetings! Spring is just around the corner - - I sure hope! In the winter newsletter I talked about the challenges that youth gangs present to our community, and I outlined some of the steps that the county is taking to meet these challenges. We are making progress and I want to share news and ask for your participation.

The first recommendation in the "Dane County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force Proposed Community Response Plan" called for an "enhanced" Task Force to include broader community involvement.

I am happy to tell you that a co-chair "dream team" has graciously agreed to take leadership roles in this important work. The Task Force co-chairs being appointed by Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz and myself will be Milt McPike and Luis Yudice.

Milt McPike recently retired as principal of East High School where he devoted 23 years to his students and the community. Luis Yudice recently retired from the Madison Police Department where he served the Madison community for 32 years. They are both terrific.

Please help us to broaden the discussion about gangs and the ways that they manifest in different parts of our county and to help to get the word out

about this important work. Everyone has something to contribute to the solutions.

If you are interested in participating on the "enhanced" Task Force as a member, sub-committee member, or in some other way, or to receive an electronic version of the plan, please contact Ken Haynes in my office. He can be reached at (608) 266-3197 or haynes@co.dane.wi.us.

On another note, I need your help on another very important matter. Last year Dane County established a special fund to help deployed military personnel who are serving, or have served, on active duty in the Middle East. This assistance is also available to the families of these brave servicemen and servicewomen.

The special fund cannot speed up the safe return of loved ones stationed in the Middle East, but it can help to take the sting out of possibly mounting bills such as those connected to rent, mortgage, medical, dental, utilities, household and other emergencies. Please help to spread the word about this program. Our servicemen and servicewomen and their families deserve it.

Interested persons should call Eleanor Harris at the Dane County Veteran Service Office at (608) 266-4158 or email her at harris@co.dane.wi.us to make an appointment to fill out the application or bring in a completed application.

I'm sure we all join in wishing the safe return of all military members serving in the Middle East.

County Executive Falk can be reached at 266-4114 or falk@co.dane.wi.us

From
PAUL RUSK



DISTRICT 12 SUPERVISOR

New Courthouse Difficulties My standing committee, Public Protection and Judiciary, has had several meetings concerning safety, parking and child support efficiency problems with our new courthouse that opened in January. When such a large public building opens you would expect some initial glitches, but I have been surprised at the resistance to acknowledging problems combined with a less than open attitude by leaders of the judges to address them. Many county employees have been reluctant to speak up which is very unfortunate so we keep learning more as time goes on. The County Board has formed a special committee to study issues and make recommendations.

I'm pleased that the parking issue has apparently been rectified. We were informed by the Coroner that he was having problems doing autopsies efficiently as there wasn't sufficient space for his larger vehicles in the public safety building while there were dozens of empty spaces under the new courthouse. Some of our post 9/11 safety equipment has special parking requirements which were not being accommodated. Our shared system with authority among three branches of government (legislative, executive and judicial) provides a forum to address these issues so that all taxpayer dollars are well spent.

I am especially concerned about arresting angry people under court supervision in public waiting rooms, the lack of efficient working space for our nationally recognized child support enforcement unit, and the lack of appropriate storage space for court records. Many court records are now

being stored in the old nurse's dormitory on the Lakeview Hill where they are covered in plastic as the roof leaks! The vacant space provided for future courtroom expansion would be an ideal location for records. Child support enforcement is projecting a 17% annual decrease (1400 fewer hearings of a total of 8000) they can perform because they only have a small working room in the courthouse and now must transport staff and files back and forth all day between two buildings. This means significantly less money for kids as "deadbeat dads" are not held accountable. In addition to the dollars we lose from child support for children, as revenues and efficiency drops, so do the federal and state dollars the county receives, leading to less resources to collect dollars—a classic domino effect. Hopefully in the next few months we can address these problems so that our tax dollars are being used efficiently and children do not suffer.

Homeland Security Volunteer Grant. Since September 11, 2001 Dane County has been receiving significant dollars from the federal Department of Homeland Security to help law enforcement and emergency management prepare for disasters. These dollars are approved initially by my standing committee, PP&J. Although we sometimes wonder if the federal dollars are needed, we are careful to be sure they are put to good use locally. Dane County is in the process of receiving \$53,000 to train citizen volunteers with medical, law enforcement and emergency medical service backgrounds to help respond to natural disasters. Groups like the American Red Cross are included. Training volunteers with specialized skills is a positive approach that should pay major dividends as government responds to future disasters, including tornadoes.

Supv. Rusk can be reached at 249-9667 or rusk@co.dane.wi.us

From
DOROTHY WHEELER



DISTRICT 18 SUPERVISOR

The Campaign I am writing this before April 4th but, by the time you read this column, the election will be over. Democracy is alive and well in the 18th District. I was one of eight incumbents who had a challenger. Of course, I was disappointed on January 3rd when I made that discovery because I knew that running for office was hard work. Luckily, I had held a fundraiser early in December when many of my wonderful supporters helped me raise most of the money I needed, so I hit the ground running. Now that the campaign is almost over, I can say without reservation that it was a very good experience and maybe even a necessary one for a politician still in the early stages of representing a few thousand people in the government! I got out into the district and talked with people finding out first hand what their concerns are. I had to rethink my positions on some issues to bring clarity to the forums, and reevaluate my own performance in doing the job of representing my constituents. Then I had lots of fun reconnecting with my supporters, meeting with my awesome kitchen cabinet, and doing doors in nice weather. I got some good exercise and even lost five pounds!!

Lake View Hill Yes, a Lake View Hill resolution is again before the county board making its way through commit-

tee. You probably thought we were all done protecting our urban green spaces after the county board passed two resolutions making both the Hill and the Woods parkland putting them under the jurisdiction of the Parks Commission. However, there was a glitch that needed to be addressed. The Hill and buildings are still zoned R-1 by the city of Madison so we needed to finish the job.

We are now working to rezone all that property to Conservancy just as the Woods is zoned, bringing another layer of protection to bear because the area of the buildings with parking lot is not parkland and it might be vulnerable to development. Moreover, the Dane County Human Services Building, the old sanatorium, is on the National Register of Historic Buildings and is built like a fortress on a rock foundation so it can be preserved for a long time into the future. After this resolution passes the county board, the county staff will petition the city for the rezone and that action must pass the city council. (And we thought this would be easy!) When it does, we will have accomplished everything the law allows to protect our treasured green space. Now the real work by the Friends will continue - to restore and preserve the land to its natural splendor.

With deepest gratitude Thank you to all my supporters for their hard work during the campaign and thank you to everyone in the 18th District (the best one in the county!) for the honor and privilege of serving you by representing you on the county board.

Supv. Wheeler can be reached at 244-4711 or djwheele@juno.com

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