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LOCAL/STATE

Psssst! Charges fly in convo center debate

Compiled by The Capital Times staff

Go ahead, make their day. Madison police detective Jerry Whitfield won the overall championship and officer Scott McConnell the championship for first-year officers at the Wisconsin Professional Police Association State Pistol Shoot hosted Aug. 17 by the Sheboygan Police Department.

Officer Cory Nelson took third among rookie officers.

A team made up of Whitfield, officers Marty Mieke and Jim Ellestad and retired officer Bob Sowls took third in Class A team with 1,084 of a possible 1,200 points.

A team of McConnell, Nelson and officers Dave Parrell and Lance Sheffer took second in Class D with 1,017 out of 1,200.

By Joanne M. Haas
The Capital Times

Mary Lang Sollinger says it would be the city's version of the Union Terrace.

Marjorie Colson says the wave action and soft-bottom Lake Monona conditions are enough to sink the project.

Dane County Supervisor Tammy Baldwin says the proposed Monona Terrace convention center and public place would add to an already heavy-weight property tax bill while doing nothing for the city's problems.

William Geist of the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau says about the only true item in the brochure distributed by project opponents is the spelling of Colson's name.

And so it goes. This isn't the Olin-Turville pool debate. But the faces are the same and the debate is just as deep.

In the past 24 hours in the city, there were at least three public meetings on the proposed \$65.5 million (in 1992 dollars) project designed by the late Frank Lloyd Wright.

The project, which would link the Capitol with Lake Monona, began with a set of drawings from 1938. That initial design was changed many times over the years.

During the early afternoon hours on Wednesday, members of the City Council met with city Comptroller Paul Reilly and Planning and Development Director George Austin to discuss a draft financing plan.

Wednesday night, roughly 15 or so Capital Neighborhood residents met at Cafe Europa to hear from Sollinger (among those appointed by Mayor Paul Soglin to serve on the commission that studied the project) and Colson.

And this morning, Downtown Madison Inc. held a breakfast meeting to hear Geist's side of the question that will be answered with a November public referendum.

Austin stressed to the council members that the draft financing plan was done in 1992 dollars.

That plan, expected to be finalized in several days, calls for \$18.1 million from the state (already approved by Gov. Tommy Thompson), \$2 million from a city tax incremental financing district, room tax revenues, \$8 million in private contri-

butions (\$4 million received to date) and \$12 million each from the city and Dane County.

Colson told the neighborhood meeting that her opposition was based on the potential cost impacts for city taxpayers and what the project would do to Lake Monona.

"It is a total gamble," Colson said, adding that she was a debtor of the project when it was debated years ago.

Geist said the environmental impact statement — due out in one or two weeks — should answer Colson's concerns.

Geist said the opponents are spreading lies by saying the convention center would need a \$2 million subsidy. "Hogwash," Geist said, saying that it would be closer to \$700,000.

Geist said the Civic Center,

despite its subsidy, has translated into increased property values downtown.

He also took aim at the opponents and said their statements about the taxpayers already spending \$220,000 on the project research is a lie.

"That amount was taken from hotel/motel room tax revenues," he said. "The visitors have paid for that."

Geist said the convention center would provide a meeting place for the city, add to the property values downtown and bring an end to east-side and west-side taxpayers paying for downtown.

And he said it would bring new dollars into the city.

"That translates into money for health and social services," Geist said.

Whitfield took first in "slow fire" (10 shots in six minutes) with 198 out of a possible 200 points, first in "rapid fire" (five shots in 10 seconds) with 191 of 200, and second in "timed fire" (five shots in 20 seconds) with 197 of 200.

Whitfield, a 29-year MPD veteran who also sometimes shoots with an Army National Guard team, earned two perfect 100 patches during the competition and scored 870 out of a possible 900 points.

McConnell scored 769 out of 900, recording the second-highest freshman scores in slow fire with 180 and rapid fire with 167 points.



New fieldhouse
Work continues into the just-started school year on the new \$3 million fieldhouse at Memorial High School. The fieldhouse, which has been under construction since July 1991, is targeted for completion Sept. 18.

TALKING PLATES

WISCONSIN

NAPHCC

America's Dailyland

The above plate belongs to Jim Pertzborn, Madison, who writes, "I am a past national director of the National Association of Plumbers, Heating and Cooling Contractors."

TODAY'S HERO

Deb Moen, 30, of 3148 View Rd., has been a volunteer at the East Madison Community Center for more than six years.

Moen helps coordination of center events, such as the summer community picnic and Christmas party. She also assists with clerical and fundraising activities. She volunteers between two and 10 hours a week.

Moen, who works as an assistant manager for the alcohol and drug treatment program at the Mental Health Center of Dane County, praised the East Madison Community Center's good community work.

She said the center's drug prevention programs target children at risk, and the center's positive options program locates job opportunities for the unemployed. The center also provides free clothing and operates a food pantry for area residents.

Know a hero who deserves to be recognized in this space? Send your nomination to "Today's Hero," The Capital Times, PO Box 8060, Madison WI 53708

JUST THE FACTS

On Aug. 27, 1957, Democrat William Proxmire won a special election to fill the unexpected Senate seat of the late Joseph McCarthy. Proxmire served until 1989.

SOURCE: "Wisconsin Facts" by John Clements, Clements Research III Inc., Dallas, Tex.

Autumn's colors here early

By Jerry Amelberg
Area News Chief

The calendar indicates autumn is still 3 1/2 weeks away, but the progressive fall coloring of leaves has already started in northern Wisconsin and is spreading south.

While there are a couple of weeks behind in growth patterns, the vivid coloring of leaves is slightly ahead of schedule and quite a few leaves are already dropping.

In the state's northland, sugar maples and birch "are beginning to exhibit a brilliant red, and roadside ferns are turning brown," according to Department of Natural Resources park officials.

In central Wisconsin, notably in the Wisconsin Rapids area, the

early fall colors are already making their appearance.

A reported 6 to 10 percent of wooded areas there are already taking on autumn hues, which is "very early to observe a color change in this area," said DNR personnel.

There is still considerable lawn-mowing time remaining in southern areas of the state, including Madison and Dane County, and it's too early to haul out the rakes to corral falling leaves.

But even here, maple, river birch and roadside trees under traffic stress are beginning to start the process and show signs of autumnal change.

DNR staffer Trent Marty doesn't see "a dramatic change in the arrival of peak fall colors unless there is a sharp early freeze or

other unusual weather occurrence."

Marty said he doesn't expect a variance of more than a week in southern Wisconsin peak fall colors.

It's based primarily on the amount of daylight, except for individual stressed trees, and Mother Nature keeps that fairly constant, said Marty, a forest geneticist and departmental spokesman on fall color changes.

Based on a slightly early arrival, he figures the fall color peak will arrive here the week of Oct. 6 and continue into the following week.

It's a bit early to take that fall drive to view northern color, he said, with mid-September a better time for such an outing.

Water cleanup effort hit

Associated Press

Voluntary efforts to curb pollution caused by erosion and runoff have cost the state nearly \$43 million without yet producing significant improvements in Wisconsin rivers and lakes, state auditors said today.

The Legislative Audit Bureau said a lack of penalties against property owners who do not curb erosion and runoff has hurt state efforts to reduce the largest remaining category of water pollution in Wisconsin.

Even so, the non-point source water pollution abatement program has been successful at spending money, and will be about \$30 million short of the money it needs by the middle of

next year, auditors said.

Pollution caused by urban and barnyard runoff and soil erosion from farm fields and construction sites is called non-point pollution because it does not enter a lake or stream at a single point like an industrial or municipal discharge pipe.

It can be reduced by improved farming methods, proper street cleaning and construction-site erosion controls.

The program has emphasized voluntary participation in cleanup efforts. This summer, Gov. Tommy Thompson vetoed a "bad actor" provision to penalize landowners who drag their feet in resolving pollution problems.

So far, participation in the

program has been "disappointing," auditors said in a 21-page report.

"Our review... found little evidence of improved water quality and indications that project participation rates are generally lower than required to achieve water-quality improvements," state Auditor Dale Cattaui said in a letter to lawmakers.

The program needs "a reasonable and effective means of enforcement," Department of Natural Resources Secretary C.D. Besadny said in agreement.

"To fully achieve water quality goals, changes are needed to improve participation and compliance," Besadny said.

Housing plan stirs up fuss

By Paul Norton
Correspondent for The Capital Times

MONONA — A battle is brewing over the character of one of this community's most treasured areas.

On one side are dozens of residents in a quiet wooded neighborhood between Monona Drive and U.S. 51 in Monona's southeast corner.

On the other are the developers of a proposed low-income, senior housing complex in that same neighborhood, and the Sand County Foundation, owner of the 48-acre parcel containing the Edna Taylor Nature Conservancy. 11 acres of which would contain the housing project.

Critics fear that city approval of the 140-unit, three-building

Tower Woods housing complex would worsen the traffic problem on congested Monona Drive, endanger the development's elderly residents and pave the way for further development that could threaten the environmental integrity of the entire conservancy.

More than 200 residents

Continued on Page 6A

Would Christopher aid gaming? Backer implies it; he says no

By Matt Pommer
The Capital Times

Gambling today joined the hot issues in the Democratic primary rumble between challenger Michael Christopher and incumbent state Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison.

Risser released a letter from Tony Urso, vice president of Madison Coin Machine Co., seeking funds for Christopher's campaign. The letter said in part:

"Sen. Risser has been in office for 30 years now. He represents the strongest opposition to gambling in the entire Wisconsin Legislature. His position as president of the Senate created an extremely unfriendly environment for the gaming legislation which was introduced this past session. He is also extremely anti-tobacco.

We feel that Michael Christopher's election could help bring some desperately needed changes in the Wisconsin state Legislature. I would appreciate it if you would read over the enclosed literature so you can become more familiar with our candidate."

Christopher, contacted by The Capital Times, scoffed at the idea that the candidate of gambling interests. The idea is "ridiculous,"

he said.

Christopher said he has told the Dane County Tavern League that he opposes "the proliferation of gambling."

Christopher also assailed the concept of Risser being the key opponent of gambling in the Legislature. As a member of a budget conference committee, Risser voted for unlimited simulcast betting at dog tracks, according to Christopher.

Christopher said Urso gave \$100 to his campaign, but he didn't know if Urso had raised other money for the campaign. He gave the money to a \$25-per-head fundraiser Monday hosted by John Kavanaugh, owner of the Esquire Club, 1025 N. Sherman Ave.

In another development in the 26th District Senate primary race, Christopher's committee was distributing six-minute tape cassettes to motorists as they left downtown parking ramps.

Madison voters are "very intelligent" and will be willing to listen to the campaign message on the tape, according to Christopher. The tape includes endorsements from the mayors of Madison, Fitchburg and Middleton.

Blaska suggests sales tax sharing

By David Callender
The Capital Times

A group of conservative county supervisors today unveiled a plan to share part of an estimated \$10 million in county sales tax revenues with local communities.

The plan, which would be part of the proposed 1993 county budget, would be the first such county revenue-sharing arrangement in state history, said County Board Chairman J. Michael Blaska.

Blaska said the county would share about \$2 million to \$3 million in sales tax revenues with local governments, according to existing equalized assessment ratios.

Under those ratios, about half of the money would go to the city of Madison, which accounts for almost half of the county's total property tax base.

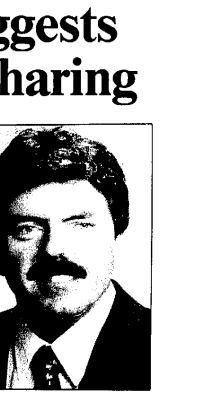
Blaska said the funds could be used to help finance construction of a convention center in downtown Madison, although he had not yet discussed the funding proposal with city officials.

Supervisors are considering the move because County Executive Rick Phelps has not used revenues from the new tax wisely, Blaska said.

"We've had this tax for a year and we can't have anything to show for it," he said. "We could have built the jail with cash in one year, or we could expand the Expo Center, or do a whole host of things if we had set the money aside."

Roughly \$5 million of the sales tax receipts is being used to finance construction of a new jail in downtown Madison, but the rest of the project is being financed with borrowed funds.

Part of sales tax revenues have been used to lower the county property tax levy, and an estimated \$3 million was used to



Michael Blaska

lower county borrowing for major projects early this year.

Blaska charged, however, that most of the sales tax funds were used to "build up the base," or fuel higher spending on existing needs — costs which will ultimately drive up property taxes.

"It went to build the base for salaries and administration," he said. "That didn't go for anything."

He said he believes some of the sales tax revenues would be better spent by local communities.

For example, he noted several communities are considering major building projects, but don't have the money to undertake them.

Phelps is expected to introduce his proposed budget in early October.

He has already promised to freeze the county's property tax rate at \$4.41 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, and recently sent back two of the largest county departments' budget with instructions to trim costs.