

ELECTION

**Six people
file to run
for 2 village
board seats
in Mount
Horeb**

The filing deadline for the Spring Election came and went Tuesday and local voters will have an array of choices on the ballot when they head to the polls. A total of six candidates have filed the requisite paperwork to run for two seats on the Mount Horeb Village Board.

Incumbents Ben Jones and Jason Fendrick are both running for re-election along with four new candidates: Stephen Sopcak, Michelle Kelley, James Brager and Tamiko Clary.

The crowded ballot marks a big change from recent years, in which most races for village board have been uncontested. In both 2024 and 2025, every village board candidate ran unopposed. Trustees in Mount Horeb serve at large and have no specific districts, so the top vote-getters win seats.

Village Trustees serve three-year terms.

Check back soon for detailed profiles of every candidate and their policy positions.



Langhús on Main

**MH village attorney says no
conflict of interest for trustee**

Lawyer says Marc Schellpfeffer can vote on Langhús on Main

By MATT GEIGER
Mount Horeb Mail

In a Dec. 29 letter, Mount Horeb village attorney S. Bryan Kleinmaier wrote that village trustee Marc Schellpfeffer does not have a conflict of interest and is not prohibited from voting on the Langhús on Main Mixed-Use Building proposed for 208-220 East Main Street.

“In my opinion, the codes of ethics for local government officials, employees and candidates contained in Wis. Stat. § 19.59 and the ethics opinions issued by the Wisconsin Ethics Com-

mission (or its preceding bodies) allow you to participate in and vote on the applications (rezoning, general development plan, specific implementation plan, and certified survey map) associated with the Langhús on Main Mixed-Use Building, 208-220 E Main Street, project,” wrote Kleinmaier.

The decision came in response to a formal ethics complaint filed by a citizen on November 30 alleging that Schellpfeffer has a conflict of interest and should recuse himself from any vote on the Langhús on Main development proposal due to what it calls a “pat-



Schellpfeffer

tern of a working relationship” with the developer. The complaint did not appear to show any direct link between the village board member and the specific proposal in question.

The Mount Horeb Village

Board was initially scheduled to vote on Langhús on Main at its December 3 meeting but delayed the vote to its January meeting so it could review the complaint regarding Schellpfeffer.

According to Kleinmaier, “Mere speculation is not sufficient to require a public official to recuse himself/herself from a matter. Thus, if reasonable people cannot foresee the effect that a public official’s action may have on the official’s financial interests, or if they disagree about whether the effect will be positive or negative or will be substantial or insignificant, the official should

participate in the matter. See 2007 Ethics Board Opinion 9.”

Kleinmaier cited an Ethics Board opinion (2002 Wis. Eth. Bd. 02) that states: “Section 19.59, Wisconsin Statutes, is unlikely to restrict the village trustee who owns a company that, in the past, has done business with the company seeking the rezoning to vote on the petition.”

The attorney said that Schellpfeffer’s role as an architect with CaS4 Architecture, LLC does not prohibit him from voting on the Langhús proposal.

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**Shirley Martin recognized for decades of
service to Mount Horeb Area Historical Society**

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society (MHAHS) continued its 50th anniversary celebrations this past fall by hosting its third Legacy Volunteer Reception recognizing Shir-

ley Martin for more than two decades of dedicated service to the Society.

Martin embodies the local history that MHAHS was founded five decades ago to

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The Historical Society recently honored Mount Horeb native Shirley Martin for her years of service to the community. Image courtesy of the MHAHS.



Letter to the Editor

Grundahl makes his case for downtown development

There have been a lot of online posts, published letters, complaints, opinions and rhetoric, regarding the Langhus on Main project. Most if it is just that- opinions and rhetoric. Facts are, this project meets every goal of every plan that is currently in use and published by the village planners, plan commission, and village board. The opposition that is compelled to publish this information is a small minority, albeit a VERY loud small minority, but very resourceful and willing to post and publish anything that will create drama and doubt in the minds of those that are not as informed. I would like to offer some of the facts that truly surround this project and the accusations about it.

–The complaints filed with the village are disruptive and have proven to be either false, or not based on factual information, with intent of creating doubt.

–These accusations and complaints are put forth with “their own facts” only to stir the pot, and they continue to post and publish opinions without ever offering any solutions or suggestions other than to do nothing with the property and to let it stand as is. Well in that vein I believe it is important that the facts are

published: on December 4/5 after removing the project from the last months agenda, I called Mr. Alex Pfister and offered via phone call, the opportunity for the opposition group to acquire the land and buy me out of the project so they can preserve the buildings and space they care so much about. (Alex is the opposition group’s self-appointed negotiator with myself), They were given a non-negotiable price and closing required by Jan 6 2026. NEEDLESS to say, I have yet to hear anything back from this group. Nor did they even engage any further with an offer to purchase. They only continue to publish their opinions and accusations/false information relating the code, ordinances, and the governance of the village. They have been given a very fair and open opportunity to put money where their opinion is, and not one single response, word or further call from the group. So with that, one can only surmise that they really only want to complain and don’t have anything other than those opinions to offer on this project.

We once again have changed this project to reflect the few concerns that were brought last month at the PC level prior to the vote recommending approval. With that we have taken those concerns into consideration and modified once again to solve for them. This leaves us with a project that has now addressed every single concern brought about from the commission. Summary of those changes:

–Safety- mirrors at back

alley exit, sidewalk crossing marking at garage entry

–Scale and Visibility from the back to help the North side neighbor- see NE changes, renderings, decks, windows, etc.

This project is by NO means TOO BIG. It needs to be realized that if this were built as separate buildings, they would look exactly like they are presented. They have been reduced in height, scale, mass, density and all other factors of concern and they will look identical to buildings being built “one at a time” like much of rest of main st. They are shorter than the two tallest buildings on Main Street by anywhere from 5’ to 15’ from Village Hall and opera house

–If we built them one at a time with same result in scale and mass, then they would not interact internally and would be less useful for retailers

–Lastly it also needs be realized that the village zoning code in the “CB” district requires buildings to be built on the entirety of the lot and be “lot line to lot line.” So that requires buildings to look exactly like the proposed Langhus building and exactly like the rest of the CB district.

–The notion of “TOO BIG” is simply not true or relevant any longer and especially since the 4th floor was removed. These buildings proposed are synonymous with the scale of others previously mentioned in this letter and remainder of main st.

The scaled model created in conceptual form by Ms. Scott that was built and distributed in previous

meetings, via direct mail, and posted online, while it is certainly accurate down to inches I have been told, it is completely out of character for how the building will be viewed, noticed and interacted with, by every pedestrian. When you show something from a bird’s eye view at perspective, which, as a reminder is a place and a view that NO ONE will ever see it from. It can look very obtrusive. If you did that same rendering from Duluth trading store looking east towards the village hall and compared how those blocks of buildings scaled against the adjacent residential neighborhood, it would look considerably worse. However, the real look and feel of this project is represented to scale in live photo real renderings that are presented in our submissions. They are all viewed and scaled from pedestrians viewpoint. You will never ever see this building from the air unless you want to view it from a drone. Nor will it fit or diminish the scale of surrounding buildings as depicted.

This project will without a doubt enhance the main street façade and extend our historic downtown retail district by 9000sf, allowing more tourists to enjoy downtown.

Keep in mind that there is less than half of this available in the two spaces that exist and neither of them engage the street/sidewalk and neither of them are sustainable or accessible.

This project has been vetted, beat up, turned around, redone, reconsidered and much improved, and it fits

the scale, mass, strategic and planning goals of the future of Mt. Horeb.

This project as it relates to traffic- albeit admittedly we have not “redone” the traffic study, will be reduced from the 66 units proposed when the study was done to the 44 units proposed today, which will reduce the traffic automatically by 33 percent and that is factually correct and undeniable. So the minimal impact on traffic that was created, will all but be negated as it relates to a change in the intersections performance at 3rd/Main. It Is also worth noting that since that study we have revised the project to control all building traffic inside the building and to create a ONE WAY INTERIOR traffic flow. In on 3rd and out into the alley to the stop light. So there is no exit on to a residential street, nor will it create any sort of traffic issue at 3rd and main. So I would be fair to surmise that since this project will produce NO traffic entering 3rd street, that there will be NO impact to that intersection related to time to wait, visibility, safety for children or any other pedestrian. For what it is worth, the average wait time at red light- assuming you only wait one cycle of light changes in WI –“According to the National Association of City Transportation, a red light will last 60-90 seconds (average wait time of 75 seconds)”

–The wait time in the worst case scenario with 66 units was proven to be only 19.4 seconds in the am and 37.5 seconds in the pm at peak times. So it is very clear that nearly all of us

who wait at a red light are more than able and willing to wait 19-37 seconds for a turn, out of a stop sign. However, this stat is no longer relevant as the unit count has decreased by 33%. So it is reasonable to surmise that the traffic count and the potential wait times are also reduced commensurate with those totals. The new projected “wait time would be approximately 13 seconds in the am and 25 seconds in the pm, both at peak times. This is anywhere from 81% to 59% less than the shortest time all of us spend waiting at a stop light. For example, if you drove this route every day, on Monday morning you may be stopped for 10 seconds, Tuesday morning for 30 seconds, etc. such that the average delay for the week would be about 19.4 seconds.

–Further our professional design and engineering team has offered some solutions to the village for their consideration as it relates to the parking spots/ loading zone on 3rd st and the exit from the alley going west bound to the stop light.

I look forward to moving this project forward, with the final result being a much improved and more vibrant downtown Mount Horeb, more residents to support our businesses and more accessible, useable retail that extends the downtown shoppable district by three quarters of a block.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeff Grundahl

Recreation Notes

2026 facility reservations are now open! Create an account with our new CivicRec software and book your event online or at the Rec. office today. The new software change will provide a more user-friendly experience, improve mobile access, and allow our customers to register for programs and events while also renting a Facility or Park Shelter within the same transaction.

Chess class is starting soon! Open to beginners and casual players, this class teaches chess basics, strategy, and sportsmanship in a

fun, relaxed setting. **Grandmasters of Chess** keeps chess students progressing through 60+ chess lessons and thousands of puzzles as well as guided games and in-class tournaments. This class is for K-5th graders every Wednesday from 4 to 5 pm beginning January 21st. The cost is \$105 for residents and \$115 for nonresidents, and the deadline is January 14th.

Does your child enjoy LEGOS? Sign them up for **Extreme STEM: Copters & Spy Planes!** Students in K-3rd grade will build a helicopter, eggbeater, paddle boat, and

spy plane with LEGO bricks and challenge themselves to problem-solve and innovate. This class runs Mondays from 5:15 pm to 6:15 pm, January 26th through March 2nd. The registration deadline is January 19th. \$90 for residents and \$100 for nonresidents.

NEW PROGRAM! Learn the essential techniques of **Doll and Toy Restoration** in this hands-on workshop. Learn how to: detangle and restyle doll hair, remove marks, stains, and grime, soften plush for faux fur, and prevent future wear and damage. Each par-

ticipant will be provided with a doll and all necessary restoration supplies. This class is on Thursday, January 29th, from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The registration deadline is January 21st; the cost is \$40 for residents and \$50 for nonresidents.

HOW TO REGISTER: There are multiple ways to register for programs and activities.

Online (go to <https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/mhrd>)

In-person at 105 N. Grove Street Place completed registration form (found on Rec Dept website) and payment in 24-hour drop box

Email completed registration form (found on Rec Dept website) and payment to mhrec@mounthorebwi.info

UPCOMING REGISTRATION DEADLINES

1/13, After School Art Class Sess. 1

1/14, YEL Grandmasters of Chess Sess. 1

1/19, YEL Extreme Stem

1/21, Doll & Toy Restoration

1/26, Babysitting Class Sess. 1

MARTIN

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preserve and share. She was born in Mount Horeb and is the daughter of Carl and Lucille Brechler. Her father worked for the State Bank

of Mount Horeb before becoming co-manager in 1942 with Fred Hanneman of the then newly discovered and now world-famous Cave of the Mounds. A young Shirley appeared as a model in several early promotional

pictures and postcards advertising the Cave, and she later worked as a Cave guide. She graduated from Mount Horeb High School in 1947 and went on to earn a two-year degree from Stevens Point College later

taking courses at California State University in Northridge, CA.

Shirley married the love of her life Sam Martin on January 2, 1955, and they spent 60 years together before Sam’s passing in 2015.

They had three children who have expanded Shirley’s legacy to six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Outside of a few years that Sam convinced Shirley to move to California, she

has spent her life in Wisconsin. In fact, she lives today in her Mount Horeb childhood home, just down the street from the Driftless Historium museum.

An encyclopedia of local

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Gleanings

By **BARB JOHNSON**
Mount Horeb Mail

140 Years Ago- Jan. 13, 1886

A fine lot of all wool dress tricots at cost, at O.C. Nuubson’s.

Attend the meeting at the schoolhouse on Thursday evening, for the organization of a Literary Society and Debating Club.

The extreme cold of Sunday last (-20), made the attendance at the church very limited; the pastor, however, was present and addressed the flock.

John G. Cowie and A.F. Gramm, of Madison, were in town over Sunday, and experienced the salubrious atmosphere existing at the time.

130 Years Ago- Jan. 9, 1896

Rev. Irish was made the recipient of a very fine overcoat from his congregation at this place at Christmas.

The way a certain class of rowdies behave when young ladies appear on the streets in bloomers or skating costume only makes it a matter of regret that a few score of big brothers are not there to knock the rowdies down. The ladies should not be deterred. For skiing or bicycling they have the right to choose a suitable garb. Those who oppose it do so

from a notion of taste. Some people can see a woman dressed at a ball in very low dresses and busts and backs nearly bare, simply because fashion tolerates it, though both unhealthful and immodest, but are horrified at the appearance of a lady in suitable dress to walk the streets, ride a bicycle or skate. Stick to it ladies. It is a war between common sense and vulgar, ignorant prejudice. Democrat.

Harold Thompson of Elgin, Ill., is in town selling a very fine automatic doorbell, a description of which is found in the double column advertisement on this page; read it. Mr. Thompson will call on all of our residents and show the novel invention which he sells at two dollars and places the bell in position.

120 Years Ago- Jan. 11, 1906

Mr. Riley informs us that the price for sugar beets next season will be \$5 per ton. This increase in price will undoubtedly be an inducement for many to go into the new industry. The grower receives back pressed pulp, an amount equal to ¼ of the weight of the beets delivered, which is good feed for milk cows.

Town treasurer Heuser made a big haul in town

Tuesday, collecting over \$1400 in taxes.

Ole Jelle, Sr., passed away at his home in the township, Monday morning at 7 o’clock, at the age of 81 years, 8 months, from cancer of the stomach. Mr. Jelle immigrated to America from Norway in 1849, was married shortly before their departure from their native land. Seven children blessed their union; three died in infancy.

Mikkel Mandt was in our village a couple of days last week to introduce his cement block machine and arrange for the operating of same for next season. Mr. M. has certainly something valuable in this invention, for cement is unquestionably the coming building material.

110 Years Ago- Jan. 14, 1916

The taxes in the Town of Riley are very high, the roads and the new town hall being the cause.

Two Chinamen were here last Saturday looking over the village with a view of starting a laundry, which is needed.

Fresh fish, five cents a pound this week at Sylvesters.

Mrs. Lars Jevne of the town of Blue Mounds passed away Sunday morning at 10 o’clock, aged 75 years. Mrs. Jevne has been an invalid of the past 40 years being badly crippled with rheumatism, and death to her was a great relief.

Mrs. Sam Martin, C. Shoots, S. Gesme and Ida Fosshage charter members of the Thimble Club gave a banquet for the new members and their husbands on New Year’s Eve at the home of S. Martin. The tables were decorated with carnations. A five-course dinner was served. The first being tomato soup and cheese straws; second, turkey, cranberries, potatoes, lemon pie and scalloped oysters; third, salad; forth, brick ice cream and cake; fifth, fruit cake and coffee.

100 Years Ago- Jan. 12, 1926

The dance given by the Firemen last Thursday evening was very well attended there being 325 tickets sold. Music was furnished by King’s Lively Five of Mazomanie. Prizes as follows: Best old time waltz- Martin Field and Mrs. E. Locke, prize camera donated by Milo Evans; Modern Waltz, Geo. Fosshage and Viola Ayen, prize toilet water donated by C.C. Robertshaw; One Step, Knutson and partner, box cigars donated by Olson’s Restaurant; Charleston, Sylvan Syverud and partner, prize 10 pounds cup grease, donated by A. Lee.

The Mt. Horeb Advancement Association held their annual election of officers Wednesday eve. at 7 o’clock a baked ham supper was served at the Mount Horeb House with Mr. Fred Werner, champion butter maker

of the State of Wisconsin was guest of honor.

Palmer Orin Thompson was born April 3rd, 1889 in Primrose township. He joined the Madison police force in in 1924. On Monday evening January 4, 1926, he was shot and killed by Rudolph Jester while attempting to enter the restaurant conducted by Mr. Jester. The body of the young officer was dressed in his police uniform and lay in state in the Schroeder funeral home Wednesday night, where hundreds of Madison citizens gazed upon the remains of the slain policeman.

I have taken over the business and equipment of the O.J. Bakken Barber Shop and will continue to serve the public in the same prompt courteous and efficient manner for which this shop has always been noted. I have in my employ, two first class barbers, so that you may be speedily and satisfactorily taken care of at all times. The ladies will find this an excellent place to get hair bobbed, or a shampoo. Special appointments may be made. Your patronage is respectfully solicited. Raymond Bakken.

In an interesting basketball game coach Kindshi’s “Crimson tide”, ran rough shod over the Mineral Point aggregation to the tune of 24-15 on the latter’s court Friday night.

80 Years Ago- Jan. 10, 1946

Einar Peterson has bought

the former Harry Garfoot residence on North Third Street and took possession Jan. 1.

Lt. Randall Sale, who is stationed on Manila, has been promoted to the rank of captain.

Eric Furuheim has bought half interest in the Hanley Auto Co., effective March 1.

50 Years Ago- Jan 8, 1976

Club 18 Tuesday Night Features: Steak special, \$2.95. Hop Polka Lessons by Sue and Bob Gerber, \$1 per 1-1/2 hour lesson.

“More enthusiasm” is what John Moreland will look for when he takes over as head football coach for the Mount Horeb High Vikings.

30 Years Ago- Jan. 11, 1996

The State Bank of Mount Horeb was selected by a vote of the village board to manage the investment of village funds. Last spring, the village board discussed moving funds out of the State Investment Fund, which has lost millions of dollars through investments in risky stock derivatives.

Tracy and Jill Haag announce the birth of their son, Jordan Arthur, born Friday, Jan. 5, 1996.

Nathan Chappell, son of Terry and Roberta Chappell of Mount Horeb received his Eagle Scout award during a ceremony January 9.

Mt. Horeb FFA Alumni Toy Show Show is Sunday



The Mt. Horeb FFA Alumni is holding their 33rd Annual Toy Show on Sunday, January 11. The show runs from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm in the High School Main Gym and Commons. Vendors will be on hand with toy farm machinery, construction equipment, NASCAR items and more. The show also features a free pedal tractor pull competition for children starting at 11:00 am. Door prizes, a pedal tractor raffle, and concession stand round out the activity. Pictured above, Hudson Miller, son of Jess and Carina Miller, enjoys last year’s pedal tractor competition.

ATTORNEY

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Langhús is a downtown development project proposed by Jeff Grundahl. The project seeks the following approvals from the Village: rezone, general development plan, specific implementation plan, and certified survey map. The Mount Horeb Plan Commission addressed the project at meetings held on October 22, 2025 and November 19, 2025. The project was planned to be on the agenda for discussion and action this week, at the January 7, 2026 Village Board meeting.

Kleinmaier went on to say that the law “favors an official’s exercise of his/her public duties.”

“Indeed, a two-page guide published by the Wisconsin Ethics Commission ad-

ressing potential conflicts of interest for local public officials (the “Guide”) is informative here,” he wrote. “The Guide ... applies to both state and local public officials, and it notes that public policy favors the exercise of public duties by local public officials, stating: In a representative democracy, the representatives are drawn from society and, therefore, cannot and should not be without all personal and economic interest in the decisions and policies of government. Citizens who serve as state public officials retain their rights as citizens to interests of a personal or economic nature. Standards of ethical conduct for state public officials need to distinguish between those minor and inconsequential conflicts that are unavoidable in a free society, and

those conflicts which are substantial and material. State public officials may need to engage in employment, professional or business activities, other than official duties, in order to support themselves or their families and to maintain a continuity of professional or business activity, or may need to maintain investments.”

He added, “Stated differently, in my opinion, by participating in the discussion and vote on the Project as a Board member, you will not be acting in violation of:

Wis. Stat. § 19.59(1)(a), because you will not be using your public position and office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for yourself, your immediate family, or an organization with which you are associated;

Wis. Stat. § 19.59(1)(b), because you are not accepting anything of value;

Wis. Stat. § 19.59(1)(c)1., because you will not be taking any official action substantially affecting a matter in which you, a member of your family, or an organization with which you are associated has a substantial financial interest; and

Wis. Stat. § 19.59(1)(c)2., because you will not be using your public office or position to produce or assist in the production of a substantial benefit, direct or indirect, for yourself, a family member, or organization with which you are associated.”

The Mount Horeb Village Board was slated to consider the Langhús proposal at its Wednesday, January 7 meeting.

MARTIN

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knowledge, Shirley is often the first person Historical Society staff call when their archives cannot provide answers about a Mount Horeb business, individual, or event. After years serving as an active and engaged MHAHS Board member, Shirley continues to volun-

teer on collections and archival projects and is a member of the Society’s Collections Committee.

More than fifty family members and admiring friends attended Shirley’s October Legacy Volunteer Reception, which doubled as a surprise birthday party!

As part of the festivities, she was honored with perpetual naming rights to *The Road*

to *Tourism* section of the Society’s permanent exhibit, which includes an overview of the Cave’s history. The associated plaque dedicates this museum space to Shirley, “an eyewitness to and champion of Mount Horeb history.”

MHAHS was established in 1975 to preserve and share the history of southwestern Dane County. The

Society’s 50th anniversary campaign and celebration will continue through the end of May 2026. Plans are underway for the next and final Legacy Volunteer Reception honoring Society co-founder Brian Bigler.

For information about upcoming events and programs visit www.mthorebhistory.org or call 608-437-6486.

The Top Local Stories of 2025 (Part 2 of 2)

Farmers market provides food for Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is now able to offer fresh, locally-produced food to its clients thanks to a partnership with the Mount Horeb Farmers Market and \$5,000 in grant money distributed by the Dane County Board.

The market is one of several agencies receiving funds through the Tamara D. Grigsby Office of Equity and Inclusion’s 2025 Partners in Equity (PIE) Food Grant this year.

Ann Szalkowski, food coordinator for Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN), said the partnership was spearheaded by Rami Aburomia, owner of Atoms to Apples. Aburomia is a vendor at the Mount Horeb Farmers Market and is also the newest member of the market’s board of directors.

“When applying for the grant, the organization must choose a recipient,” said Szalkowski last week. “In our case, the Mount Horeb Farmers Market chose Neighbors Helping Neighbors as their recipient. We will be receiving food from various vendors over an 18-week period starting this week.”

The funding essentially replaces money that was previously available through the Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA), but the PIE funds have an added benefit: they allow the NHN Food Closet to select whatever items clients need or want each week, from fresh fruit and vegetables to maple syrup, meat and beyond.

“Food insecurity touches every corner of our community, and we must be bold and creative in how we respond,” said Dane County Executive Melissa Agard. “The PIE Food Grant program uplifts grassroots solutions and empowers local leaders to build a more just, sustainable, and accessible food system. These investments reflect our shared commitment to equity and

community well-being.”

The PIE Food program “encourages the development of projects that advance equity and access in local food systems across Dane County. Recipients were selected among proposals addressing increasing food access, strengthening regional agriculture, decreasing food waste, and enhancing community voice in local food system development.”

In total, \$41,345 was awarded to recipients of the 2025 PIE Food Grant. Recipients were selected based on proposals intended to address issues related to healthy food access, access to land for growing food, or issues related to food waste and recovery.

“The PIE Grants provided a unique perspective on challenges within our community’s food system and the collaborative efforts to address them. This invaluable experience brought me closer to my community and I’m grateful to be a part of this. These PIE Grants work to strengthen Dane County as a whole by tackling problems in a practical and meaningful way.” Radhika Gupta, member of the high school Youth Governance Program Dane County Food Council.

The 2025 grants fall in one of two categories – small grants (applicants requesting \$2,000 or less) and large grants (applicants requesting \$2,001 to \$4,000). The twelve 2025 grant recipients are the Allied Food Pantry ARC – Community Services Inc./ARC Out-patient Services, Horizon High School, Lakeview Community School, Marshall Public Schools, Mount Horeb Farmers Market, Native Food Network, Project Home, Inc., REAP Food Group, Sunshine Place, Sustain Dane Inc. and Waunakee Neighborhood Connection.

“We are so excited to be the recipients of the grant,” said Szalkowski

Citizens voice concerns about another apartment proposal downtown

Local residents spoke up to oppose a proposed apartment building on Main Street at a plan commission meeting last week.

Resident Linda Hodge said buildings in the downtown area should stay consistent with the current small-town feel of the village.

“If you’re going to build in Mount Horeb, honor Mount Horeb,” Hodge said.

The proposed development is on 214 East Main. The building would be four stories with around 66 residential units and includes enclosed parking as well as exterior parking in the alleyway. The development would also include retail spaces.

Olson’s Flowers owner Kristen Dresen said she’s worried about losing the “magic” of downtown Mount Horeb and just becoming another Madison suburb.

“What we have in our central business district is magic,” Dresen said, adding people love the current old and historic feel of downtown.

Plan commission member Destinee Udelhoven echoed residents’ concerns. She said having a four-story building downtown will bring “the end of downtown as we know it.”

“I think it’s going to completely change how downtown feels,” Udelhoven said.

Udelhoven said it’s “jarring” from a historical perspective and said a four-story building downtown is a “non-starter” for her, and she thinks even a three story building would harm the look of downtown.

Kristen Fish-Peterson, the village’s economic development consultant, said, “there are many reasons to support this development.”

Fish-Peterson said the development would stimulate commercial growth, create jobs, further economic activity and promote a higher tax revenue.

And plan commission member Sarah Best said she supports the idea of development, but wants the developers to consider resident opinions. Best recommended the developers hold a neighborhood meeting.

“While I support a development going into this space, I think the time and care and consideration is im-

portant”

Best said she wants some layout changes made to the original design. She said the apartment lobby and amenities should face Third Street or the back of the building instead of Main Street, as a way to improve the facade.

Village President Ryan Czyzewski said the developers have a good record and could come up with a plan that works according to the concerns of the residents and plan commission.

Czyzewski said there are still a lot of details that need to be worked out, and asked developers for a traffic study to see the impact on the area for safety purposes.

Developer Jeff Grundahl said he is open to considering different design materials and would like to hear village feedback on the project.

“It’s pretty simple,” Grundahl said. “The goal is to create a project that enhances downtown.”

The commission told the developers to talk with neighbors and come back with another concept presentation considering feedback from residents and the commission.

Fire destroys building in Mt. Vernon

On Thursday, June 26 around 6:50 p.m., the Fire Department of Mount Horeb was paged to the report of a structure fire of a multi-family residence in the 8600 block of Davis St. in Mt. Vernon, right next to Mount Vernon Tap.

According to Mount Horeb Fire and EMS Chief Jenny Minter, all occupants were evacuated upon arrival. Crews worked for more than five hours to extinguish the fire and the Red Cross was called to support two residents. A cat and a dog got out of the building and one cat was initially unaccounted for but later found. The building is considered a total loss. A rekindling of the blaze was reported the following morning and fire crews continued fighting it into the day, drawing water from Mount Vernon Creek to help extinguish the blaze. The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Madi-

son Area Fire Investigation Team (MAFIT). Minter thanked the following departments of their assistance on the call: Barneveld Fire Department, Barneveld EMS, Belleville Fire Department, Belleville EMS, Black Earth Fire Department, Brooklyn Fire Department, Cross Plains Fire Department, Dodgeville Fire Department, Fitchburg Fire Department, FitchRona EMS, Hollandale Fire Department, Middleton Fire Department, New Glarus Fire Department, Verona Fire Department, Waunakee Fire Department.

Halverson steps down from village board

Trustee Brett Halverson is stepping down from the Mount Horeb Village Board as he and his family move outside the district.

Halverson first won a seat on the board at the age of 36 back in 2022. He was known for his thoughtful and measured contributions to board debates during his tenure.

“Everyone in this position always says it was an honor to serve, but it really was,” said Halverson. “It was truly a privilege to represent the village and help guide its future with my capable colleagues; I never took it for granted and I enjoyed it immensely. Thanks to the residents of Mount Horeb for entrusting us to make decisions on your behalf. Mount Horeb is a wonderful place to live, and I will miss it a great deal.”

Halverson also worked as a policy aide for the Wisconsin State Assembly. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from UW-Madison in 2007, and a Masters in Public Affairs from the La Follette School at UW-Madison in 2014.

Village administrator Nic Owen said government leaders hope to fill Halverson’s seat as soon as possible.

“With all the significant projects we are working on we would like to fill the spot as soon as practical and are looking for candidates to fill the remainder of Brett’s term, which expires in April of 2026,” Owen said.

On Monday of this week, Owen announced that village president Ryan Czyzewski plans to recommend former village trustee Jason Fendrick to fill the remainder of Halverson’s term. Fendrick has stayed involved in village government since last serving as a trustee, being a member of the finance and personnel committee and public safety committee.

“Thank you to Brett Halverson for his service to the citizens of Mount Horeb,” said Fendrick. “I wish him well in his future endeavors. Also, thank you to Village President Czyzewski for offering me the opportunity to serve again.”

“I look forward to joining the village board, should they approve me, and participating in the decisions facing the village today. With the many projects currently before the Board, this is an exciting time to be a resident of Mount Horeb!” said Fendrick.

How high is too high for downtown buildings?

Mount Horeb residents were given the opportunity to speak before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding a proposed limit on the height of downtown buildings. The June 25 meeting of the HPC began with members of the public voicing their support or opposition to the proposed zoning code rewrite.

Prior to hearing from the public, Trustee Marc Schellpfeffer clarified that a final decision was not being made in this meeting confirming a zoning code change. Schellpfeffer said the public’s comments would be considered before the Historic Preservation Commission made its suggestion regarding potential zoning changes.

“It is an agenda item for those wanting to talk density and height,” Schellpfeffer said. “You’re more than welcome to voice your comments on that, but we won’t be deciding anything. Our hope tonight is to come to some sort of consensus to provide some direction for the plan commission.”

Of those in attendance, four members of the public wished to speak on the topic. Bryan Ladow, owner of 209 E Main Street, discussed the height standard set by the Mt. Horeb Opera Block, and its potential as an upper bounds to new or altered structures near his own building.

“Our building is roughly 28 to 30 feet,” Ladow said. “Back in February, we had a special planning commission meeting, and we talked about what was to be the height of the downtown business community. At that point, it was set at the roof of the opera house, and that was to be roughly 35-36 feet. That seemed to be a pretty solid mark as it is the tallest building on Main Street.”

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Ladow said the lack of sun exposure is already a concern for businesses on his street as a result of current building heights.

“We hardly get any sun on that side of the street; it’s dark. Raising anything else or leaving it open to raise anything else is just going to further darken the rest of those communities,” Ladow said. “In the winter-time, it’s a nightmare. We’re constantly spreading salt to keep that sidewalk clean.”

Steve Shulfer, Partner and CEO of Sketchworks Architecture, said he came before the board to talk about why height is not inherently negative when it comes to historic preservation

“Historically, village city centers were built around a five to 10 minute walk,” Shulfer said. “They were communities that often consisted of a higher density of people.”

Shulfer went on to say that as the Village has grown over the last 90 years, the walk has been lost.

“By allowing more height and density on that main street area, you preserve that history and that five-minute walk, you get people into that main street area and actually prevent sprawl,” Shulfer said.

Jeff Grundahl, founder and CEO of JG Development, said his purpose in presenting was that he believed it was important that the board hear from Village stakeholders and local developers regarding any proposed height limit on new downtown construction.

“While buildings themselves can be historic, they aren’t necessarily the only part of the history of downtown. I think it’s important to see that if you look at historic towns, they have been successfully done with varying-height buildings that are four-stories plus,” Grundahl said. “I think limiting new construction to three stories or less would also limit the future of what the success of downtown retail businesses might be here. I don’t think limiting density in a downtown environment would help any of those businesses.”

Dawn Hendrickson is the Vice President of the Galina Companies. She shared her thoughts on the value of on-site parking for tenants living and working in the downtown area.

“We’re all aware that parking is a precious commodity. On-site tenant parking is needed and expected by tenants. It’s just the nature of our business that it’s an amenity that they want, and they don’t want it to be inconvenient,” Hendrickson said. “We do not want nor can we rely on on-street parking. Driving to work, I

see everyone trying to find a parking space, and we want to help that situation, not make it worse. I feel that we should be allowed to have at least four stories for parking, which would be garage parking, and then three levels up.”

After hearing public comments regarding the potential zoning code change, the board discussed the matter further and ultimately voted to make an advisory recommendation for the plan commission that the change be permitted.

Neon Art Hive: David Gobeli invites people to explore their creative side at new local studio

Mount Horeb’s David Gobeli has vast creative experience, both personally and professionally, and he recently drew upon both of them to found an innovative new space that invites everyone in the community to get messy and try something new and creative.

Gobeli describes Neon Art Hive as “a community creativity studio that celebrates messiness, risk-taking, and the beauty of our differences.”

In a culture dominated by consumerism and influencer-driven “how-to” content, the Hive, located at 2585 State Road 92, Suite 3, offers a refreshing alternative where people can learn from one another, in person, through hands-on experience. The studio offers classes in painting, drawing, sewing, needlework, sculpture, printmaking, Do-It-Yourself skincare products and more, for both kids and adults.

The focus, Gobeli says, is simple: to provide a safe, welcoming space where people can set down their phones (and consequently their impotent outrage, anxiety and self-doubt) and try something new. The space offers daily free open studio in a professional space, as well as workshops and classes guided by Gobeli and others.

Gobeli has worked for years creating and selling skincare products, but along the way he found an array of other creative outlets. Pottery, embroidery, quilting, art and more: he has signed up for an entire constellation of classes over the past several years, challenging himself to try new things, to fail, and also to discover and hone new skills.

“The goal of Neon Art Hive is to be a community arts and crafts space for adults and kids,” he said. “The idea is to have a space where people can build their creative confidence, which is very broad.”

“I think it helps in more than creative artistic journeys,” he said. “I think it helps in life, too.”

For Gobeli, the seed of the idea goes back to the COVID pandemic, when Gobeli, like millions of others, set down his phone and sought out something better for his head and his heart.

“I was just tired of social media constantly eating at me,” he said. “I cut that out, and then had no idea what to do with my time.”

But taking up painting, or knitting, or any of numerous other pursuits, can be difficult. First, he tried learning purely online. Then, he set out to learn with – and from – others. There were people who were experts and people who were terrified. There were people thriving and people struggling. And they were all in it together. That was when everything opened up. That is where he found his place. Embracing both the journey and the destination. Part of that was accepting that learning something new will be a process.

Rather than the carefully curated and relentlessly monetized DIY content online, this was real life, and it was both messy and refreshing.

But taking the first step wasn’t easy. Gobeli had to work hard to summon the courage to venture into new creative realms, but he says it was worth it. He founded Neon Art Hive with the aspiration of making a safe and welcoming space where all people can come and get their hands dirty.

“I heard one teacher say, ‘Of course you’re bad at this. This is your first time doing it! That’s why you’re here.’”

But he knows, no matter how hard he works to make it welcoming, that it will likely be intimidating for some people. He hopes they will come, anyway, because he wants to see them flourish, grow, and gain creative confidence.

“I respectfully say, Get over it,” he says with an affable laugh. “It is very scary the first time. I had a panic attack before walking into my first painting class. I was in my car, hyperventilating, trying to hold it together. But then I went in. Then I went again. Then I couldn’t stop going.”

He’s not trying to give anyone a panic attack, but he does hope Neon Art Hive helps others break down similar walls and open up new parts of their creative lives.

“I just want everyone to have a place to come and explore unbridled creativity and play,” he says.

Part of playing is setting down social media and getting your hands dirty. Gobeli said he hopes to see people from all walks of life walk

through the door and give it a try.

“The idea is giving people a place to go,” he said, smiling again. “I mean, it’s not like it’s a 12-step program for social media or something, but...”

Housed in the same space as Neon Art Hive is Lab Magenta Formulary, a natural skincare company that aims to “empower indie beauty brands.” With over a decade of experience in the field, Gobeli brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to every project his team makes.

He said he has witnessed firsthand the evolution of the natural skincare market, from niche trends to mainstream movements, and Lab Magenta Formulary helps companies navigate both the opportunities and the challenges that run in tandem with that.

Find out more at neonarthive.com and labmagenta.com.

Citizens weigh in on downtown apartment building proposal

Residents again spoke against a proposed development on Main Street as developers presented updated plans to the plan commission Wednesday evening last week.

The proposal before the plan commission was a four-story apartment building with 66 units on 214-220 E. Main Street.

More than a dozen residents spoke about the apartment building at the meeting; all but two of them against it.

“We enjoy the unique historic atmosphere that downtown Mount Horeb has,” resident Jackie Sale said. “A monstrous apartment building on Main Street will change the entire character that we love.”

Sale said the building does not match the rest of downtown, and would “ruin” the area.

Michelle Kelly also expressed “strong opposition” to the development.

Kelly praised downtown Mount Horeb’s ability to attract visitors. She argued the village shouldn’t “throw it all away because one person wants to build a massive building.”

“There’s no reason this building has to go right in the middle of downtown,” Kelly said.

Hoff Mall owner Joe Galina, however, shared support for the idea. Galina said, in his downtown apartment building, vacant units are rented within weeks of becoming available.

“There’s no question there’s a high demand for apartments in downtown Mount Horeb,” Galina said.

Galina argued people like to live downtown, and Mount Horeb needs more housing, so he supported the development.

Architect Steve Shulfer told the plan commission the developer had adjusted some of the plans in response to resident and plan commission feedback.

Shulfer highlighted the fourth floor setback, which put the overall building at similar height to the current building on the site at around 40 feet, not counting the setback.

Shulfer said he analyzed other historic downtowns to compare layout, and many had up to three or four stories with a setback similar to his proposal.

Shulfer said they brought down the corner of the building to make it stand out less, and are adding awnings that match what’s currently on downtown storefronts. He is also considering other design modifications to match details of the downtown aesthetic.

Developers also said they plan to do a traffic analysis and consider ways to mitigate the impact on downtown.

Commission member Destinee Udelhoven said she is still concerned about traffic, and having an analysis does not feel like a solution. She strongly protested the entire project.

“Even with the setback, you cannot convince me the scale fits downtown,” Udelhoven said.

She added the adjustments do not help when her issue is with the overall plan.

Commissioners expressed concerns with the building not meeting parking requirements.

The apartment plans involve 66 units, with 83 bedrooms and 69 parking stalls, which commissioners agreed was not enough by village standards.

“I am quite concerned about the parking,” commissioner Sarah Best said.

She also criticized developers for not engaging with the public, or holding a public meeting.

“We have one shot with this and there’s no reason you can’t engage with the public and do this right,” Best said.

Developer Jeff Grundahl said he’s not against a public meeting, but residents should “keep the personal shots at home.”

Best encouraged developers to go back and consider feedback on parking and scale.

The commission did not make any decisions about the development at the meeting as they were just hearing a concept presentation on the development.

School District proposes \$36 mil-

lion budget

Mount Horeb Area School District will hold its Annual Meeting and Budget Hearing, at which it will set the coming year’s budget and tax rate, at the Mount Horeb Intermediate Center Cafeteria, 200 Hanneman Boulevard, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin 53572, at 6:00 p.m., on Monday, August 11, 2025. All members of the public are invited to attend the meetings.

The 2024-2025 General Operating Budget for the school district was \$36,297,413, an increase of \$12 million over the course of a decade.

The projected revenues for General Operations in the 2025-2026 budget are \$36,209,233.00. The projected expenditures for General Operations are \$36,409,233.00. Based on state support information provided to public school districts earlier this month, the tax levy next year is projected to be \$22,033,584.00, which projects to a mill (tax) rate of \$8.86 per \$1,000 of equalized value on local homes.

In other words, people would pay \$8.86 in taxes for every \$1,000 in equalized value that their home is worth.

The General Operations budget is projected to increase by .3 percent over last year. Final calculations will be determined following the annual meeting.

Village plan commission okays 89 apartments for former Karakahl site

The plan commission approved a rezoning request from JT Klein Properties for two residential buildings on Perimeter Road at its July meeting, with commissioners sharing mixed opinions on the density of the buildings.

Daniel Afable, a development designer with JT Klein, said the first building would have 49 units at market rate, and the second building would have 40 units, and be senior affordable housing.

Afable said the affordable housing building is financed through Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority tax credits for the next 30 years, and the developer hopes the building can stay affordable after that.

Commissioners said they were excited to see the updated plan and the proposal for the affordable housing option.

And city planner Ben Rohr said he “feels comfortable in relation to what they’re proposing” with the two buildings.

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“That was our starting point, and it was very well received,” said Julie Reardon, part owner of Makers Market Square. “It was like a dream.”

The building at 100 South 1st Street in downtown Mount Horeb has seen many iterations since it was built in 1992. The structure has been home to a bank, the Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce, Duluth Trading Co., Gemppler’s, and even laser therapy for dogs.

Its new identity is something totally different, however; an eclectic array of myriad things; offering arts, crafts, coffee and more.

“I would say it’s a collection of Wisconsin talent being showcased,” explained Reardon. “You can grab a cup of coffee and wander around. It has a kind of indoor art fair feel.”

“It’s a place you can stay for a while,” she said. “A place you can hang out.”

Reardon owns the building along with her brother, Tyler Marks, and his wife, Linda. They worked together for a year-and-a-half to dream up and implement the best use for the sprawling multi-level space. Today, it offers more than 70 vendors, plus a coffee shop, ample lounging space, and more. Beer, wine and cider are on the horizon.

“We figured out how to make it an enhanced artist space and coffee shop, we figured out how to do consignment and studio space,” she said. “Our focus is Wisconsin-only artists and local bakery items.”

Reardon said the owners wanted something to anchor the downtown, both attracting customers to them and dispersing them out into the downtown, where they can patronize other nearby businesses.

“We didn’t really want to disrupt or compete,” Reardon said. “We wanted to just enhance. We’re here to help, not compete.”

Outside the Makers Market, Julie and Tyler work together in commercial real estate, so they were confident they could collaborate effectively together on the Mount Horeb project. Much of the actual work leading up to their soft opening was done by family members. Parents, siblings, aunts and uncles all played a role.

“We put everyone to work,” laughed Reardon.

For Linda, the Makers Market came to fruition thanks to a combination of hard work and ample serendipity. As she walks through the building, she points to each element, from furniture to the ceiling and lighting to the windows and walls, telling the personal back story of each item that made its

way into the business.

Tyler Marks, whose “day job” is in commercial real estate, said this project, located in the community he calls home, is fundamentally unique for him.

“Well, this one is different,” he said. “It’s more rewarding. It’s community. It’s family. It’s jobs for high school kids, and some more experienced folks. To be in your mid-50s spending time doing something like this is very rewarding.”

“It’s been great to see people come back, people appreciating the space,” he added. “There has been a lot of local support for this.”

It’s a marked difference from what it was merely a year ago, when the space was still portioned off and leased out as a variety of offices.

“When we started doing this last fall, we did think we could use this as a gathering space,” said Tyler. “We were interested in expanding on what was already here. We asked ourselves what kind of big, open space it could be, and we thought of this kind of mall concept. It was hard to see back then, with all those cubicles. And we didn’t really have a timeline, but it all started coming together this spring.”

School district approves 9 percent tax levy hike

The Mount Horeb Area School District passed a \$22,033,584 tax levy at its August 11 annual meeting, a 9.64 percent increase from last year’s official levy of \$20,096,437.

Members of the public voted on the tax levy and board member salary resolutions.

The mill rate is projected to increase from \$8.24 to \$8.86 per \$1,000 of equalized property value. This means that a property with an equalized value of \$300,000 would have a projected increase of \$186.

Estimated equalized property values in the district total \$2.49 billion, a projected increase of two percent from last year. With general state aid projected to decrease, many districts under revenue limits will see an impact on the tax levy.

Treasurer Joel Craven explained the reason behind the levy increase.

“Because of declining enrollment, and as property values increase we’re actually seeing many districts, including Mount Horeb, with a shrinking amount of general state aid that has to be offset by the property tax levy in order to make up that difference.”

The general fund projects \$36.2 in revenues against \$36.4 million in expenditures. Local general fund

taxes provide \$17.6 million in revenue, up from \$15.9 million last year to offset gaps in funding. State aid is expected to fall by \$1.3 million to \$14.3 million. Federal sources and grants contribute \$1.2 million.

The district’s fund balance is just under \$8 million, or 22 percent of general fund expenditures.

Special education spending totals \$6.8, with state aid covering \$1.88 million. The shortfall forces reliance on local funds, the district said. The district’s enrollment for revenue limit purposes is projected to drop 4.56 percent from 2,173 students to 2,074 students, and revenue limits are set to be over \$13,000 per pupil.

Residents also approved board salaries at \$3,250 and mileage reimbursement at 70 cents per mile.

Citizen group’s meeting on downtown development issues draws a crowd

On Tuesday, August 19, the Old District No. 1 School House on N. Second Street was filled with people to hear presentations from a newly formed citizen group, Friends of Downtown Mt. Horeb. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed mixed-use 66-apartment complex at 214-220 E. Main, other apartment complexes approved and pending, and the present Village Central Business District (Ord. 17.43) and Planned Development District (Ord. 17.49) zoning codes.

Approximately 55 attendees, including standing room only, as well as an additional thirty people standing outside were welcomed by Michelle Kelley, the group’s lead communicator. Kelley stressed the group has no authority with decision making, yet hoped attendees by the end of the meeting would begin to understand the importance of citizen involvement in village matters while they are happening rather than after the fact. She said none of the members knew one another prior to attending Plan Commission (PC) meetings that included a concept presentation of the Main St. project on the agendas.

Kelley introduced the others involved in planning the meeting, Tammy Clary, Brian LaDow, Sharmon Moen and Jackie Sale. Enlarged photos of the Main St. concept plan were passed around, one showing a view from street level, heading west to the MHTC building, another from looking directly at the front of the building and a third from showing Sjolinds directly

across the street to emphasize the size difference between the two buildings as well as other buildings in that block of Main Street.

County resolution calls for Blue Mounds dog breeder to be shut down

A resolution introduced by members of the Dane County Board would, if approved, call on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to revoke Ridglan Farms’ commercial dog breeder license. The resolution, which was sponsored by Dane County Board supervisors David Boetcher and Dan Blazewicz, both of whom represent districts located near Madison and miles from the Blue Mounds facility in question, also asks that the dogs living at Ridglan Farms be confiscated and placed “in custodial care during [the] ongoing investigation.”

The county has no legal authority over the state agency that oversees Ridglan Farms, so the resolution is purely advisory and would have no direct statutory impact on the facility.

2025 RES-119, which was introduced in August and is currently in committee, states: “[B]ased on the findings of probable cause of criminal animal cruelty by the Dane County Circuit Court, the Dane County Board of Supervisors calls on DATCP to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the animals at Ridglan Farms by immediately revoking Ridglan Farms’ commercial dog breeder license and placing the dogs currently located at the facility in the custodial care of the State of Wisconsin while the ongoing investigations of animal cruelty allegations are conducted and completed.”

The resolution also states: “Ridglan Farms, a Wisconsin-based company founded in 1966 and located in Dane County, breeds beagles primarily for scientific research. The facility houses roughly 3,000 dogs and has been subject to scrutiny regarding animal welfare and compliance with state laws governing the treatment of animals.”

“Two animal advocate groups, Dane4Dogs and Alliance for Animals, petitioned the Dane County Circuit Court to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate allegations that Ridglan Farms, Inc. violated Wisconsin’s animal cruelty laws,” the resolution continued. “On January 9, 2025, the Dane County Circuit Court found prob-

able cause that Ridglan Farms committed criminal acts, including the mutilation of dogs’ vocal cords and cherry eye surgeries without anesthesia or veterinary supervision, in violation of Wisconsin Statutes § 951.02 and 19 § 951.14. Dane County Circuit Court Judge Rhonda Lanford ordered the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate allegations of criminal animal cruelty offenses and inhumane treatment in violation of Wisconsin’s animal cruelty laws.”

The draft resolution continues: “Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) also has been investigating charges of animal cruelty in violation of Wis. Stats. §951 at Ridglan Farms. Per Wis. Stats. §173.41(5), DATCP may, ‘by written notice, without prior notice or hearing, suspend a license issued under §173.41(5) if, upon inspection of the licensed premises, the department finds any condition that imminently threatens the health, safety, or welfare of any animal on the licensed premises or there is evidence that an act of animal cruelty in violation of Ch. 951 has been committed by the licensee or has occurred on the licensed premises.’”

“To date, DATCP has not taken action to revoke Ridglan Farms’ facility breeding license,” the resolution continues. “However, their inspection reports as late as September 2024 found deficiencies in the care of the animals’ welfare. On March 5, 2025, the DATCP Disciplinary Counsel for Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board petitioned the board to suspend Ridglan Farms’ staff veterinarian’s license. Concerned residents and animal advocates are now calling on the Dane County Board of Supervisors to act to safeguard the welfare of voiceless animals and the approximately 3,000 dogs at Ridglan Farms that are the subject of criminal animal cruelty allegations currently under investigation by both a special prosecutor and the

State of Wisconsin.”

Dane County Board supervisor Patrick Downing, who represents Blue Mounds, plans to put together a presentation on the matter for the Thursday, September 4 Executive Committee and County Board meetings.

The resolution is just the latest chapter in a saga that has unfolded over the course of many years, from a failed voter referendum that animal rights activists put on the ballot in the Village of Mount Horeb, which is not where Ridglan Farms is located, back in 2018, to a recent courtroom drama that is still far from over.

On January 9 of this year, Circuit Judge Rhonda Landford issued an order after listening to testimony from animal rights activists and attorneys at an all-day hearing on Oct. 23 of 2024. The October hearing was held without Ridglan or the District Attorney’s office being allowed to cross examine the six witnesses who testified, and Ridglan’s defense team was not permitted to give its side of the story during the proceedings on that day.

Wisconsin law allows citizens to petition a circuit court to appoint a special prosecutor if they believe local authorities won’t investigate or charge alleged criminality. It’s a rare occurrence, however, and last fall, Eric McLeod, an attorney for Ridglan Farms, called it an “unusual procedure” in which both sides are not given the opportunity to make their cases.

“It allows for a private party to go and ask a judge for a criminal complaint separately from the District Attorney,” McLeod said. “It’s entirely one-sided.”

“Essentially it’s a well-choreographed show they put on to try to convince this judge that a lot of bad stuff is happening, without giving us the opportunity to rebut or make objections,” he continued.

McLeod and Rick Van Domelen, a veterinarian at Ridglan Farms, said earlier this year that many of the claims made in court last

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year were hearsay or misinformation.

“Anyone watching that or reading about it should use a high degree of caution to make sure the information is correct,” said McLeod in October. He added that U.S. Department of Agriculture’s regulations for such facilities are extremely stringent and ensure that they are run “ethically and responsibly.”
“This is not some fly-by-night operation,” he said.

After Judge Landford’s decision to appoint a special prosecutor, Ridglan issued the following statement: “Ridglan Farms denies both the factual allegations and legal claims that have been asserted in this matter. These claims were brought by activists whose goal it is to end all lawful use of animals for important medical research. Unfortunately, Ridglan Farms was denied the right to participate in the hearing that gave rise to the Dane County judge’s decision allowing this matter to proceed.”

“Notably, in response to the claims raised by these activists, the Dane County District Attorney has declined to pursue any charges against Ridglan Farms,” Ridglan Farms continued. “Furthermore, Ridglan Farms is subject to extensive State and Federal regulations that govern its operations, and Ridglan Farms takes compliance with those regulations seriously.”

The petition that prompted Landford to move forward with a special prosecutor was brought by Madison-based Alliance for Animals, Dane4Dogs and animal rights attorney Wayne Hsiung, of San Francisco.

Later in the year, Ridglan Farms sued the activists who have led a long-running campaign against the Blue Mounds-based beagle breeder. Their complaint, filed in Dane County Circuit Court in the spring of 2025, alleges that activists have broken multiple laws in

their attempts to shut down the facility. Ridglan has been targeted by groups and individuals opposed to the use of animals in research and want to put Ridglan out of business, the business alleges.

Initially, groups, including defendants Dane4Dogs Ltd., and individuals including, Jamie Hagenow and Scott Gilbertson, both of Verona, and Rebakah Robinson, of Oakland, Calif., engaged in lawful protest. However, in recent years, the protests have become unlawful and have cost the company customers, they allege in their lawsuit.

Dane4Dogs’ stated mission is to end the breeding, sale, and use of dogs and cats for scientific research and shut down Ridglan Farms. Robinson is the current president of Dane4Dogs and is believed to also be known as Rebekah Klemm. Hagenow is also a co-founder of Dane4Dogs. Gilbertson responded to Dane4Dogs’ Facebook request to work for Ridglan. He worked for less than a month to provide an “inside perspective” of the facility.

Back in 2017, Wayne Hsiung and other animal activists unlawfully entered Ridglan’s facility and stole three beagles, documenting their illegal activity in a misleading video, which was posted on social media boasting that it was an “open rescue,” Ridglan alleged.

Hsiung and two others were charged by the Dane County District Attorney with burglary and theft. As Hsiung’s March 2024 trial date neared, Ridglan received death threats and approached the district attorney voicing concern for its employees and the business.

The district attorney dismissed the charges saying that Ridglan no longer wanted the case to go to trial.

After the DA declined to prosecute Ridglan for alleged animal mistreat-

ment, Hsiung, Gilbertson and others testified before Landford last fall in support of the petition to appoint a special prosecutor.

Lanford found probable cause that Ridglan has violated the state’s animal cruelty, contrary to the position of the Dane County Sheriff’s Office and in January appointed La Crosse District Attorney Tim Gruenke as special prosecutor.

Meanwhile, Dane4Dogs and the other defendants have filed complaints against Ridglan with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board (VEB) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In March, the VEB declined to suspend one of Ridglan’s veterinarians.

The USDA made an unannounced inspection at Ridglan in January and found that it operated in compliance with the federal Animal Welfare Act.

Dane4Dogs obtained Ridglan’s customer list and in February threatened to publish the customer list unless it dropped Ridglan as a dog supplier by March 1, the company alleges. After receiving Dane4Dogs’ letter, many customers contacted Ridglan and said they will quit doing business with Ridglan, causing the company a substantial loss of revenue. The letter amounted to extortion, Ridglan’s suit alleges, as the customers could only avoid public shaming by no longer buying Ridglan’s dogs. Ridglan’s suit seeks unspecified damages against the defendants “consistent with the allegations.”

That suit has been assigned to Circuit Judge Jacob Frost.

Mount Horeb village board looks at fire budget and more

The September 3 Village Board meeting included a variety of agenda items, ranging from a Proclamation, consideration of the 2026 Mount Horeb Area Fire District (MHAFFD) budget, a new Tax Increment District (TID) 6, the Lukken property concept plans A or B to Public Comments at MH government meetings. Board members Nate

Gauger and Tim White were absent.

Brett Halverson, a recently retired Trustee, received a Proclamation for his service as both a Trustee and Chair or member of various MH Committees. Halverson moved out of the Village, requiring his resignation. President Czyzewski read the Proclamation thanking him for his years of service.

Halverson said, “I am not long winded or verbose” but I want to thank those who voted for me in the elections. Local government service can make a difference in the direction of a Village and I “was honored and privileged to serve. Thank you.”

2026 Fire District budget increase

Chief Jenny Minter presented the 2026 Mount Horeb Area Fire Department (MHAFFD) budget for consideration before the District holds its annual meeting for budget approval from all eight communities it serves. The Annual meeting is on Wednesday, September 24, 7pm at the Public Safety building and is open to the public. Minter shared historical and current data from both the Fire and EMS services. Mount Horeb accounts for 68 percent of the call volume received, with 1420 year-to-date calls. Total calls have increased 80 percent from 2020 and continue to increase annually. In 2025 alone, EMS has answered 1500 calls throughout the District. MHAFFD is the largest District in Dane County, covering 144 miles.

The proposed 2026 district includes a \$63,000 increase equal to a 3.9 percent increase. Minter explained due to the generous service of the volunteers (approximately 70), the District is saving \$1,500,000 in expenses if additional employees were needed to cover for the work now completed by volunteers. In addition to those savings, through fundraisers the volunteers have donated over \$400,000 in the last five years.

The largest increases for 2026 include 9 percent health insurance premiums, \$10,000 for paramedic training, \$52,000 for additional daytime personnel coverage and \$230,000 for EMS personnel paid on premises. MHAFFD lagged in pay for volunteer vehicle drivers, EMT (emergency medical technician), AEMT (advanced) and Paramedics so the budget includes nominal increases for each position. Pay for drivers is proposed at \$10/hr, EMT, \$15/hr, AEMT, \$18/hr. and Paramedics \$20/hr. Minter said, “we want to value our current volunteers, retain the people we have by creating a competitive wage and create a (good) culture that they want to work for.” She is estimating the 2026

call volume will increase to 2350, which will increase the EMS estimated income to \$290,000.

The Village Board discussed several aspects of the budget with Minter, asking for confirmation of the estimated EMS call volume, if subsequent income is reliable, and if the Capital budget allocation was sufficient. Trustee Jason Fendrick questioned Administrator Nic Owen if the 3.9 percent increase will fit within the 2026 Village Budget which is now in the process of being built. Owen said Chief Minter had given Village staff a heads-up on the planned increase last month which helped them in building the budget.

Czyzewski called for a motion to approve the 2026 MHAFFD budget, saying “I trust the process.” Fendrick and Marc Schellfeffer motioned for approved and the vote was unanimous. Of the eight communities using the MHAFFD services, seven must approve the budget to put it into effect. Historically, the District has received at least seven votes approving it, with most years receiving a unanimous vote. For a detailed budget, if approved at the September 24 meeting, it is available to the public at <https://fdmh.org/budget>.

New Tax Increment District (TID)

Economic Development consultant Kristen Fish-Peterson presented an overview of TID 6. Included in it are two properties, the Karakahl Country Inn lot now owned by developer J.T. Klein and the vacant lot across the street, behind McDonald’s, owned by developer Brian Durtschi. J. T. Klein is proposing two apartment buildings, one market rate and the second affordable housing for seniors. No plan has been proposed for the second property at the time. Fish-Peterson noted a Public Hearing for TID6 was held in August at the Plan Commission meeting with no one speaking before the Commission, either in favor or against the proposed TID. Fendrick and Schellpfeffer motioned for approval, with unanimous approval.

Zoning Code Re-Write Draft online

During Committee reports, Owen mentioned the draft of Phase 1 of the zoning code re-write is now on the Village website and recommended it be reviewed by those interested in it.

State ethics commission says local candidates violated campaign rules

The Wisconsin Ethics Commission (WEC) ruled

that two candidates in this year’s Springdale Town Board Election violated campaign finance law when they distributed election signs and purchased ads without properly identifying who paid for them.

The commission ruled that both John Hensey and Joe Karls broke Wisconsin’s attribution rule during their campaigns. The WEC issued warnings, but no fines, to both candidates.

According to Wisconsin State Law, “every communication containing express advocacy, the cost of which is paid for by a committee or for which a committee assumes responsibility, shall identify its source by the words ‘Paid for by’ followed by the name of the committee making the payment or assuming responsibility for the communication.”

The rule exists to promote transparency regarding which people and organizations are funding political candidates.

In the April 1 election, incumbent town president John Rosenbaum earned close to 67 percent of the vote (780 votes) and defeated Karls, who earned 33 percent (387 votes). In the race for the seat being vacated by Wayne Hefty, Kelly Altschul won with nearly 69 percent of the vote (790) to defeat Hensey, who earned 31 percent (356).

Both Rosenbaum and Altschul ran on platforms that pledged to abide by Springdale’s current land use plan and keep the community rural. The challengers advocated for loosening restrictions and allowing for more development.

But prior to Election Day, the Wisconsin Ethics Commission received multiple complaints from citizens alleging that Hensey and Karls used promotional campaign materials that did not include attribution saying who paid for them.

The Wisconsin Ethics Commission reviewed the complaint against Hensey as well as his response to it in closed session at its meeting on May 13.

In his response, Hensey said any violation was unintentional and that he was initially unaware the attribution requirement applied. He said he “promptly modified all noncompliant materials to include the required attribution” and “updated a second ad published in the newspaper to include the required attribution,” according to the WEC.

“The complaint and response contain clear evidence that the Respondent did not properly identify the source of communications containing express advocacy that were either paid for by the Respondent, or for which the Respondent

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assumed responsibility,” stated the WEC’s subsequent ruling. “The Commission, having duly considered the complaint and response thereto, finds there is probable cause to believe a violation of the laws within its jurisdiction has occurred or is occurring.”

Pursuant to WIS. STAT. § 11.1400(1), violations of WIS. STAT. § 11.1303(2) (b) are punishable by a civil forfeiture of up to \$500 per violation.

At the same meeting, the WEC reviewed the complaint against Karls. However, “The Wisconsin Ethics Commission did not receive a written response in this matter.”

The commission cited the same rules in this decision and stated that “The complaint [against Karls] contains clear evidence that the Respondent did not properly identify the source of communications containing express advocacy that were either paid for by the Respondent, or for which the Respondent assumed responsibility.”

“The Commission, having duly considered the complaint, finds there is probable cause to believe a violation of the laws within its jurisdiction has occurred or is occurring,” the WEC ruled.

In both cases, the WEC voted to terminate the complaints and issue a written warning to the Respondents in lieu of any further enforcement action because of the Respondents’ lack of any prior offenses.

“The Commission hereby warns the Respondent[s] that if it finds probable cause of a similar violation by the Respondent in the future, it may seek civil penalties in accordance with WIS. STAT. § 11.1400(1),” wrote the commission.

The bipartisan Ethics Commission started operations on June 30, 2016, assuming responsibility for “administering campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics laws in Wisconsin from the former Government Accountability Board.” The mission of the Ethics Commission is “to enhance representative democracy by furthering Wisconsin’s tradition of clean and open government through the administration of Wisconsin’s campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics laws, and through the dissemination of information to the public. All members of the Ethics Commission and the Commission Administrator are state public officials holding state public office.”

The Wisconsin Ethics Commission has jurisdiction over campaign attribution rules pursuant to WIS. STAT. § 19.49(2)(a).

In a letter to the editor published in this newspaper following the April election, Karls and Hensey called their alleged violations “minor transgressions often seen during political campaigns.”

Local business and healthcare leaders host U.S. Senator

Local Upland Hills Health leaders joined U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin and area business owners for a roundtable discussion focused on “challenges and opportunities in providing affordable, accessible healthcare in rural Wisconsin.” The event took place Thursday, September 25 in Mount Horeb.

While it included a tour of the state-of-the-art clinic and in-depth discussions about a variety of healthcare issues - from insurance company practices to rural access, care for women and more - the primary theme was Baldwin’s desire to extend the Affordable Care Act tax credits that are set to expire at the end of this year. Supporters of extending them say that if they disappear, healthcare premiums will rise by thousands of dollars for millions of Americans, including many in Wisconsin.

Representing Upland Hills Health were Dr. Mark Thompson, brand new President and CEO; Dr. Sarah Fox, Vice President of Medical Services for Primary Care Clinics; and Jay Goninen, Board of Trustees Member.

“Upland Hills Health is proud to serve as a voice for rural healthcare,” said Thompson, UHH President and CEO. “Conversations like this ensure that the needs of patients and communities in southwest Wisconsin are included when decisions are made about the future of healthcare.”

Thompson said it is Upland Hills’ mission to provide rural access to quality healthcare.

“Protecting access to affordable, high-quality care is at the heart of what we do,” agreed Fox, UHH Vice President of Medical Services–Primary Care. “We value the chance to share how these issues affect our patients and their families.”

The roundtable allowed attendees to highlight how policy decisions impact rural health systems, small businesses, and self-employed individuals. Community business leaders who took part in the roundtable included Macy Buhler, owner of Yahara River Learning Center; Robyn Kitson, owner of Driftless Chocolates; Matt Raboin, owner of Brix Cider; and Rachel LaCasse-Ford, Presi-

dent and CEO of the Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce.

LaCasse-Ford said vibrant communities need to include “an entire ecosystem” to thrive, from non-profits and village government to the school district and local businesses. She said those small, local businesses are a community’s engine, but they often can’t afford to provide health insurance for their employees. She said if they can’t attract and retain good workers, they will shutter their doors and places like Mount Horeb will become “not as wonderful” in terms of quality of life or economic opportunity.

Raboin said the farm-to-table restaurant and cidery he and his wife run employs a workforce that depends on affordable insurance to stay healthy. He added that if premiums go up, many people in the community will have less disposable income to spend at local businesses.

“It’s going to hit our business in a lot of different ways,” Raboin stated.

“I think it will depress the whole economy,” he added.

Kitson, whose husband is the chocolatier at their downtown business, said she is worried that if the Affordable Care Act is dismantled, cancer survivors such as her husband will again be unable to purchase health insurance due to pre-existing conditions.

Mount Horeb leans heavily to the left, and Baldwin racked up 70 percent of the Mount Horeb vote in the last election. But she said Democrats who want to extend the Affordable Care Act’s current tax credits will need some conservatives to cross party lines if they want to extend the tax credits.

“There’s hope here,” said Baldwin. “I have a couple Republican colleagues who want to extend these tax credits.”

Democrats, who have 47 seats, would need to earn 60 votes to advance their agenda with what would be an essentially filibuster-proof bill at that level of support.

County board delays vote on Blue Mounds dog breeder resolution

The vote on a resolution introduced by members of

the Dane County Board that would, if approved, call on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to revoke Ridgland Farms’ commercial dog breeder license, has been postponed until at least October.

The resolution also asks that the dogs living at Ridgland Farms be confiscated and placed “in custodial care during [the] ongoing investigation.”

The resolution was referred to executive committee by the county board on August 15.

At the board’s September 4 meeting, Supervisors Ritt and Rose, co-sponsors of 2025 RES-119, with Supervisors Boetcher and Blaziewicz, spoke and requested a postponement of action on the item until October 23 in order to work on “additional refinements and amendments” to the resolution.

Supervisor Downing, who represents the Blue Mounds district where Ridgland Farms is located, spoke in support of the postponement, as well. Downing, who represents much of rural Mount Horeb, also provided some of his thoughts on the issue.

“This Resolution is based on a ‘probable cause’ determination made after a court hearing at which Ridgland Farms was not allowed to participate,” said Downing. “Ridgland asserts that they exceed the Animal Welfare Act standards of the United States Department of Agriculture.”

“Our District Attorney Ismael Ozanne did not prosecute Ridgland for animal mistreatment,” Downing continued. “He did file a complaint against the 2017 Ridgland Farm intruders. He later dismissed that upon Ridgland’s request, its reason being concern for the welfare of their employees and business. Meanwhile, Ridgland has now filed suit against several activists alleging they’ve caused financial damage to its business.”

“A Special Prosecutor, Tim Gruenke, District Attorney of LaCrosse County, has been appointed and is working on the mistreatment case,” Downing continued. “While this legal process is proceeding, I believe we should allow it to function. If there is a valid reason to restrict Ridgland operations, it will happen.”

“Here’s what the local folks have had to say,”

Downing concluded. “In the November 6, 2018 General Election Mount Horeb included, as a binding referendum, a question to declare by ordinance that an operation such as Ridgland is a public nuisance, offending public morals and decency. After vigorous campaigning by all sides of the issue, 59 percent of the Village electorate rejected it. It appears to me that when people are fully informed about the situation, they support animal medical research.”

Despite the board’s postponement on September 4, the County Board Chair Patrick Miles indicated that those who still wished to give testimony on the agenda item that night instead of waiting until the October 23 meeting of the Executive Committee – when it will next appear – were welcome to do so.

Those who spoke in support of the resolution included Amy van Aartsen, Scarlet Strakova, Steffen Seitz, Lawrence Cuneaz, Ryan Blum, Jennifer Jones, and Dawn Eberhardt.

Those who spoke in opposition to the resolution included Becky Rokitowski and Eric McLeod (representing Ridgland Farms).

The resolution asks that the dogs living at Ridgland Farms be confiscated and placed “in custodial care during [the] ongoing investigation.”

But the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has released a statement saying it “is committed to enforcing laws under its jurisdiction and will take appropriate action to address noncompliance in accordance with our statutory authority.”

“In response to Dane County Board Resolution 119, which urges DATCP to take custody of dogs housed at Ridgland Farms, it’s important to clarify that DATCP does not have the legal authority to seize animals,” said DATCP. “Decisions related to animal welfare violations fall under local jurisdiction. If Dane County officials believe conditions at the facility violate Chapter 951 of Wisconsin law, which governs crimes against animals, they have

the authority necessary to act.”

2025 RES-119 states: “[B]ased on the findings of probable cause of criminal animal cruelty by the Dane County Circuit Court, the Dane County Board of Supervisors calls on DATCP to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the animals at Ridgland Farms by immediately revoking Ridgland Farms’ commercial dog breeder license and placing the dogs currently located at the facility in the custodial care of the State of Wisconsin while the ongoing investigations of animal cruelty allegations are conducted and completed.”

The resolution also states: “Ridgland Farms, a Wisconsin-based company founded in 1966 and located in Dane County, breeds beagles primarily for scientific research. The facility houses roughly 3,000 dogs and has been subject to scrutiny regarding animal welfare and compliance with state laws governing the treatment of animals.”

“Two animal advocate groups, Dane4Dogs and Alliance for Animals, petitioned the Dane County Circuit Court to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate allegations that Ridgland Farms, Inc. violated Wisconsin’s animal cruelty laws,” the resolution continued. “On January 9, 2025, the Dane County Circuit Court found probable cause that Ridgland Farms committed criminal acts, including the mutilation of dogs’ vocal cords and cherry eye surgeries without anesthesia or veterinary supervision, in violation of Wisconsin Statutes § 951.02 and 19 § 951.14. Dane County Circuit Court Judge Rhonda Lanford ordered the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate allegations of criminal animal cruelty offenses and inhumane treatment in violation of Wisconsin’s animal cruelty laws.”

The draft resolution continues: “Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) also has been investigating charges of animal cruelty in violation of Wis. Stats. §951 at Ridgland

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Farms. Per Wis. Stats. §173.41(5), DATCP may, ‘by written notice, without prior notice or hearing, suspend a license issued under §173.41(5) if, upon inspection of the licensed premises, the department finds any condition that imminently threatens the health, safety, or welfare of any animal on the licensed premises or there is evidence that an act of animal cruelty in violation of Ch. 951 has been committed by the licensee or has occurred on the licensed premises.’”

“To date, DATCP has not taken action to revoke Ridglan Farms’ facility breeding license,” the resolution continues. “However, their inspection reports as late as September 2024 found deficiencies in the care of the animals’ welfare. On March 5, 2025, the DATCP Disciplinary Counsel for Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board petitioned the board to suspend Ridglan Farms’ staff veterinarian’s license. Concerned residents and animal advocates are now calling on the Dane County Board of Supervisors to act to safeguard the welfare of voiceless animals and the approximately 3,000 dogs at Ridglan Farms that are the subject of criminal animal cruelty allegations currently under investigation by both a special prosecutor and the State of Wisconsin.”

The resolution is just the latest chapter in a saga that has unfolded over the course of many years, from a failed voter referendum that animal rights activists put on the ballot in the Village of Mount Horeb, which is not where Ridglan Farms is located, back in 2018, to a recent courtroom drama that is still far from over.

On January 9 of this year, Circuit Judge Rhonda Landford issued an order to launch an investigation after listening to testimony from animal rights activists and attorneys at an all-

day hearing on Oct. 23 of 2024. The October hearing was held without Ridglan or the District Attorney’s office being allowed to cross examine the six witnesses who testified, and Ridglan’s defense team was not permitted to give its side of the story during the proceedings on that day.

Agard aims to close \$31 million budget gap

Dane County Executive Melissa Agard introduced her 2026 Executive Budget on October 1, a plan that she said closes a \$31 million structural deficit “while maintaining high-quality services for residents without any layoffs.”

“When I took office, I was briefed on the daunting budget challenges ahead: a \$31 million structural deficit driven by rising costs and flat or declining revenues,” said Agard. “Dane County residents elected me to make hard decisions, and this budget makes them. However, we are still preserving vital services, protecting jobs, and investing in our future.”

The 2026 budget totals \$903.6 million, a 3 percent decrease from last year. It includes an operating budget of \$825.1 million and a capital budget of \$78.5 million, down 30 percent from 2025. The budget lowers Dane County’s property tax rate to \$2.48 per \$1,000 of equalized value, while the average Madison homeowner will see a levy increase of \$15.23 - the lowest percentage increase since 2019.

Between 2019 and 2025, the total County budget (operating and capital) has gone from \$630 million in 2019 to \$926 million in 2025, a 47.02 percent increase. “Simply put, Dane County was on an unsustainable trajectory which requires a measured and pragmatic response,” Agard stated. “This budget puts us on a more responsible financial path forward.”

“Even in a tight year, we

are keeping our promise to invest in what makes Dane County strong - housing, public safety, parks, and infrastructure,” Agard said. “This budget is about making the tough choices today so that tomorrow we are stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for the growth ahead.”

Agard’s budget will now be reviewed by the Dane County Board of Supervisors, with final adoption expected later this fall. To close the \$31 million gap, the proposed budget combines cost reductions with “targeted” revenue increases: Departmental Savings: At the direction of the County Executive, department heads identified 4 percent GPR base reductions to their budgets earlier this year, resulting in nearly \$14 million in savings; Personnel and Other Savings: Debt service reductions and additional savings from a hiring freeze, voluntary unpaid leave, and an early retirement incentive program. No layoffs of county employees; instead, eliminated over 50 vacant positions and a temporary 1 percent wage reduction is implemented in 2026; Revenue Generation: Additional revenue was pursued by multiple departments including a \$4.2 million increase in revenue for Badger Prairie operations.

“These actions aren’t easy, but they are necessary to restore fiscal balance. We closed this gap without a single layoff because keeping our workforce intact means keeping services intact,” Agard said. Agard touted what she called “significant investments” across Dane County:

Housing & Homeless Services: More than \$2.4 million for shelter services, including support for the new men’s shelter, the Salvation Army, and the YWCA; plus \$10 million for the Affordable Housing Fund.

Public Safety & Justice Reform: Launch of Dane County’s first community court, expansion of the As-

essment, Treatment, Transition and Aftercare (ATTA) program to keep youth closer to home, and continued support for the Community Justice Council’s system reform efforts.

Public Health & Social Services: Over \$65 million in health and social service programs reaching more than 65,000 residents; new opioid settlement investments, including a county-wide coordinator and funding for UW Hospital’s Compass program.

Parks & Conservation: \$10 million for the Dane County Conservation Fund and new park investments, continuing to grow and preserve one of the state’s premier parks systems. \$340,000 allocated for the next phase of the North Mendota Trail, extending the trail from the North Mendota Wildlife Area through Holy Wisdom property and private lands into Madison, with funding to prepare construction documents once the corridor is secured. Infrastructure & Transportation: \$16.3 million for road and bridge improvements across the county; investments in rural EMS capacity; continued upgrades at the Alliant Energy Center and Dane County Regional Airport.

As use (and complaints) rise, police department explains electric scooter rules

Mount Horeb Police Chief Doug Vierck recently released a statement on the growing number of electric scooters being used in the community, particularly by young riders, which have spurred some complaints from citizens.

“In 2025 we saw an increase in complaints regarding electric scooters,” wrote Vierck. “This was not unique to Mount Horeb. I have heard from chiefs all over Dane County that the problem is widespread. I believe this to be a result of rapid changes in technology and trends in marketing.”

“However, this does not mean that every complaint has been about something that is not allowed,” Vierck continued. “But due to the nature of the issues, the frustrations are understandable. I caution everyone to remember that these are children and under the law and in society, there are different responses when we are trying to educate and/or hold children accountable. We are hoping with a combination of education and conversations between children and parents, we can reduce the problems and all stay safe and healthy.”

“The Mount Horeb Po-

lice Department has taken steps to address the issues based on the complaints and a study of the problems in comparison to the laws,” he continued. “We brought the issue to the Public Safety Committee and received feedback and suggestions from them, we met with the school and released a video regarding educational materials and best safety practices (released to parents as well as played on the scoreboard at a home football game), and we stopped out with as many kids as we could see who were on scooters and educated them about safety, the rules, and best practices. While we may not have eliminated the problems completely, we have noticed a drastic reduction in complaints and observed violations.”

“As a reminder, electric scooters are allowed on sidewalks other than downtown, but they must yield to pedestrians,” Vierck explained. “There is no age limit on who can and cannot use electric scooters, the only age limit is on certain electric bicycles. Scooters must ride as close to the curb as possible, not in the middle of the road. All pedestrian, bicycle, and scooter traffic should stop at all intersections and make sure it is safe to cross before entering the roadway. While it is not required, the Mount Horeb Police Department highly recommends wearing a helmet. Remember the great advice from Officer Rosemeyer, ‘Keep it Smart, and Keep it Moving.’”

“Thank you to those that brought issues to our attention,” the chief concluded. “We value the relationships we have with the community members, the school district, and the local businesses. We will continue to monitor the common issues and take appropriate action.”

Chamber director steps down

The Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors announces that President/CEO Rachel LaCasse-Ford will be stepping down from her role effective October 31, 2025.

During her five years of service, LaCasse-Ford has played a pivotal role in strengthening the Chamber’s mission to advocate for local businesses, drive tourism, and enhance community collaboration. Under her leadership, the Chamber expanded its professional development programs, strengthened partnerships with the Village and School District, grew its signature events, and elevated Mount Horeb’s visibility as a destination for visitors and entrepreneurs.

“Rachel’s leadership has

left an indelible mark on our business community,” said Joel Geissbuhler, Chair of the Board chair. “She has helped position Mount Horeb as a vibrant and connected community with a chamber organization that is respected throughout the region. We are deeply grateful for her dedication and vision.”

“I am incredibly proud of the work we’ve accomplished together in Mount Horeb,” said LaCasse-Ford. “This community is special — its businesses, leaders, and residents care deeply about one another and about the future of this place. It has been an honor to serve here, and I am confident the Chamber will continue to thrive.”

Geissbuhler said all Chamber programs, events, and member services will continue without interruption during the transition.

“Right now, the Board has begun the process of forming a hiring committee and outlining next steps for the search,” he said. “Our goal is to move thoughtfully while ensuring the right fit for the organization and community. We’ll be appointing interim leadership in the meantime to maintain full continuity of operations and support for our members.”

Blue Mounds woman pleads not guilty by insanity in death of her mother

A Blue Mounds woman pleaded Not Guilty by Insanity Tuesday, Oct. 14 in connection with fatally stabbing her mother last spring but coupled it with a guilty plea to committing the act.

Sierra Schoonover, 31, admitted that she intended to cause the death of mother, Heather Schoonover, but at the time wasn’t able to understand her actions or conform them to the law due to her mental illness.

Assistant District Attorney Will Davis didn’t contest Schoonover’s NGI plea.

Dane County Circuit Judge Ellen Berz found Schoonover her guilty of First-Degree Intentional Homicide and set an Oct. 23 hearing to consider the NGI plea.

According to the criminal complaint:

Schoonover stabbed her mother inside her mother’s home on Blue Mountain Trail on April 14 and fled the scene before Dane County Sheriff’s deputies arrived.

A neighbor had witnessed a fight between the two women outside the home and called 911. Deputies entered the home and found Heather Schoonover dead

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Mount Horeb finds its mojo, blows out Oshkosh West Vikings shine after falling to Stevens Point

by ROB REISCHEL
Sports Editor

It took a 120-mile, two hour trip for Todd Nesheim to find his Mount Horeb boys basketball team. Now that he has, Nesheim is giddy about what awaits.

The Vikings, who have been looking for a branch of consistency to hold onto this season, played arguably their best game of the year and routed Oshkosh West, 68-42, at the Sentry Classic in Stevens Point on Dec. 29.

Mount Horeb snapped a three-game losing streak and improved to 5-3.

“This is the team I expect to see the rest of the way,” Nesheim said. “We had good balance, we had some run outs, and played excellent defense for the entire game.”

Mount Horeb also led a 17-point lead slip away and fell to Stevens Point, 72-67, at the Sentry Classic on Dec. 28.

Here’s a recap of the Vikings’ two-day trip to Stevens Point.

- Mount Horeb 68, Os-

hosh West 42 — Senior guard Josh Manchester poured in a game-high 33 points and powered the Vikings to an important win.

Senior center Hayden Anderson added 10 points and junior wing Alex Chapman had eight.

“We really focused on things we can do late in the game to help us win those games during our walk through ... and in our time-outs,” Nesheim said. “The main one is running some offense to get high percentage shots. We weren’t

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Ethan Morrisard and Mount Horeb’s boys basketball team split a pair of games last week at the Sentry Classic in Stevens Point. Photo courtesy of Mary Langenfeld

Mount Horeb’s best of 2025

Vikings enjoyed a memorable 12 months



Conference championships. State tournament appearances — and titles. And memories to last the rest of their lives.

Mount Horeb athletics had it all in the past year. And that meant one highlight after another.

We looked at No. 5-122 the last two weeks, and this week we’ll reveal No. 1-4.

1. Girls XC team wins a state title

Next man up.

It’s a favorite slogan of football teams everywhere, where players drop like flies and others are called upon pick up the slack.

At the WIAA Division 2 state cross country meet on Nov. 1, it was next girl up for Mount Horeb’s star-studded squad.

Vikings’ standout fresh-



Mia Caygill (right) and Willa Vigliotta (above) helped power Mount Horeb’s girls cross country team to a WIAA Division 2 state title. File photos

man Isla Odgers collapsed with roughly 1,000 meters left in the 5,000-meter race. One thing that made Mount Horeb so special, though, was its depth — and that was on full display once again.

The rest of the Vikings picked up the slack and Mount Horeb rolled to the state title. The Vikings fin-

ished 90 points to defeat runner-up McFarland, which had 112.

Monroe (128), Kettle Moraine Lutheran (138) and Green Bay Notre Dame (173) rounded out the top five.

It was Mount Horeb’s fifth state championship and its first since 1995.

“What’s really special



about this race is that it shows the way these girls cover for each other and figure it out even when things aren’t going the way we hoped,” Mount Horeb coach Dave Chancellor said. “I’m always amazed by our high schoolers.

“Being able to show up day after day and manage the stress and emotions that come along with competing at a high level isn’t an easy

thing for anyone, but these teenagers do it exceptionally well. It’s not easy.”

The race featured 151 total runners — 112 from the 16 teams that qualified for state and 39 others that qualified as individuals. When calculating team point totals, the individual qualifiers were removed from the equation.

Mount Horeb junior Willa Vigliotta was fourth among

all runners with a time of 18 minutes, 30.9 seconds. Vigliotta had the fastest time, though, among runners from the state qualifying teams.

Sophomore Mia Caygill was fourth among the runners from state qualifying teams (18:59.2), junior Julia Straka was 17th (20:05.4), junior Maeve True was 21st (20:17.5) and sophomore

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Emily Wittenwyler was 47th (21:00.1).

Senior Lily Wahl also had a solid race and was 64th (21:32.3), but only the top five finishers from each team have their scores count.

“Being able to win after losing one of our top runners really shows the depth our team has,” Vigliotta said. “Losing Isla meant that Emily had to fill the spot as our fifth runner. She did a great job and I’m really proud of how she raced and the work she put in this season.”

Caygill agreed.

“Winning without one of our strongest runners really shows the depth our team has,” Caygill said. “I’m extremely honored to be a part of such a strong and dedicated team.”

There was a lot to be proud of up and down the lineup.

Vigliotta had arguably the best race of her sensational career. She was third among runners from state qualifying teams after one mile (5:50.0), moved to second at the two-mile mark (12:04.4) and closed with a bang to finish first.

“Going into the race I had the goal to podium (top six) as an individual and win the race as a team,” Vigliotta said. “To do so my strategy was to stay calm during the first mile and not get out too quick and to stick with Mia and Isla.

“In the second mile I stayed relaxed and tried to catch some of the girls ahead of me. In the third mile I maintained my speed and place and then I really just gave it all I had left at the end.”

Chancellor was blown away with Vigliotta’s performance.

“This was the best cross country race Willa has ever run,” Chancellor said. “She’s put together a really solid block of training over the last several weeks and developed some finesse as a racer. And I think we’re just starting to see what she’s capable of when she’s healthy and in a place where she can make moves in the final stretches of a race.”

Caygill had a remarkable race, as well.

Caygill, who was rounding back into form after an injury during track season last spring, executed her race plan to perfection.

“My plan was to run the first mile conservatively and give it all I had left in the second and third mile,” she said. “I was a little nervous seeing my first mile split (5:53.7), as it was faster than I’d planned to go.

“However, I think I still had enough to give the rest of the race and was happy with how I performed. Making it on the podium individually was a big goal of mine.”

Caygill’s time was nearly a full minute faster than her mark from a year ago (19:54.5).

“This was a big race for Mia,” Chancellor said. “To finish nearly a full minute ahead of where she was at last year at state is a big step. I was really happy with the way she paced the race and put herself in a position to get on the podium.”

Straka got off to a fast start, fell back a bit in the second mile, then closed with a bang.

“Julia is really the leader of this group of girls,” Chancellor said. “She got out fast, but struggled a bit in the middle of the race and I’m sure it was hard for her when she saw Isla go down. I’m so impressed with the way she regrouped in the final mile and put the hammer down to gain back some critical spots for her team.”

True had a tremendous race of her own, and finished 26 seconds faster than her time at state last season.

“Maeve is often at her best when she’s able to key off of Julia in races and that was her game plan,” Chancellor said. “Sometimes I don’t think Maeve gets enough credit for what she does for this team. Over the last three years, her ability to get it done at sectionals and state have been crucial to what we’ve been able to accomplish and Saturday was no exception.”

And Wittenwyler came up huge after Odgers went down.

At the two mile mark, Wittenwyler was in 66th place among the runners from qualifying teams. Over the final mile, though, Wittenwyler picked up 19 spots, helping the Vikings pull away from McFarland.

“Emily’s race was one of the big stories of the meet for us,” Chancellor said. “Emily has never been one of our scoring five in a meet where we’ve fielded a full team. But this is a team and Emily really rose to the occasion in this race. Really an incredible performance.”

While Wahl’s finish didn’t count in the Vikings’ team standings, she put together a gritty, gutty race. Wahl was sick the entire week before state and she even spent some time in the ER. Somehow, though, she finished 17 seconds faster than her 2024 time at state.

“I was so proud of the race that Lily had for us,” Chancellor said. “If we hadn’t had Emily in the race,

Lily’s score still would have been enough to help us get the team win.”

While the Vikings were thrilled to capture a state title, it’s remarkable to think where they could have finished had Odgers completed the race.

Through two miles, Odgers was in fifth place among runners from qualifying teams. Mount Horeb also had just 47 points as a team, well ahead of runner-up McFarland (128) at that point.

“Racing is hard and when you’re running at the level Isla is, sometimes you go just a little too far over the edge,” Chancellor said. “I’ve certainly done it. That one is on me though. If I had prepared her a little better, I think we could have gotten her through it.

“She went down fighting and I’m really proud of her and what she accomplished this season. Isla makes us so much stronger as a team and I’m excited for what she’ll be able to accomplish in the coming years.”

The Vikings figure to have a terrific shot at a repeat in 2026, as six of their top seven runners will be back.

For now, though, Mount Horeb will savor its first title in 20 years — one where the ‘next girl up’ mentality helped bring home a championship.

“What stands out to me the most about this season is the incredible relationships we built and strengthened,” Caygill said. “Those deep friendships inspired us to race for one another and to truly support each other through the highs and lows.”

Vigliotta agreed.

“I was really happy with everything our team was able to accomplish this season and I think we really deserved it,” Vigliotta said. “We all worked really hard all season and pushed each other to achieve our goals.

“I think what stands out to me the most is all of the dedication and effort me and my teammates put into our training and health throughout the season. It shows a lot about us as a team to be able to work this hard together in order to achieve something we all really wanted.”

2. Manchester hits 2,000 career points

The third time was the charm.

Mount Horeb senior guard Josh Manchester needed just two points in the Vikings’ Badger Small Conference clash with Reedsburg on Dec. 5 to eclipse 2,000 for his career, a mark he was sure to hit sooner than later in the game.

The Vikings’ star missed his first two field goal attempts, one a contested shot



Mount Horeb’s Josh Manchester (left) became just the 69th player in state history to reach 2,000 career points. Photo courtesy of Mary Langenfeld

in a crowd of defenders in the lane and the other on a putback attempt.

He didn’t miss the third time.

Manchester drove from the left corner along the baseline, and with 2 minutes, 55 seconds gone in the game, made a right-handed reverse lay-up, etching his name in Wisconsin boys basketball history as the 69th player in the state to reach the milestone.

Mount Horeb went on to a convincing 68-35 win over the Beavers and improved to 3-0 on the young season.

“I just wanted to get it done,” Manchester said. “I didn’t want it to be the focus. I wanted to win first, then worry about all this (congratulatory) stuff after.

“I’m glad I got it out of the way — later (in the game) than I wanted, but I got it out of the way.”

After Manchester’s 2,000th point, officials stopped the game for Vikings head coach Todd Nesheim to address the crowd and recognize the accomplishment.

Manchester then made his way to the bench and hugged his dad, Vikings assistant coach Paul Manchester.

“He’s been in this gym since he was 5. He’s spent so many hours in here shooting, so it kind of came flooding back, all the nights we had in here, how much work we put in,” Paul Manchester said. “Me — not me, I just stood there rebounding — but he’s worked so hard for it.

“Proud dad, so happy for him. And his teammates have been so good, and this coaching staff and community have been so great to him. It was a lot of good emotions tonight. It was fun.”

Nesheim, Mount Horeb’s longtime coach, echoed those sentiments in his remarks to the crowd.

“Josh has been a consistent force for our program,”

Nesheim said. “What stands out most is not just the points, but the way he earns them — through effort, discipline, leadership, and an incredible competitive spirit.

“He makes his teammates better, he elevates our program, and he plays the game the right way. This milestone is a tribute to his dedication, to the teammates who’ve battled with him, and to the coaches and family who have supported him every step of the way.”

After reaching 2,000 points, Manchester dished out assists for the Vikings next two baskets, one made by fellow senior Hayden Anderson in the paint and the other a pass to junior Alex Chapman for a fast-break lay-up.

“We love that he can go see the floor, and there’s more to his game than just shooting the ball,” Paul Manchester said. “That was fitting that the next two baskets were assists.”

The blowout was on.

Manchester scored inside to make it 8-2, drained a 3-pointer to make it 11-5 and then missed a 3-pointer, only to have Anderson collect the rebound and feed Manchester for a lay-up that made it 13-5.

With 6:06 left in the half, Manchester broke away for a fastbreak dunk that pushed the Vikings’ lead to 24-10. And with 8 seconds left in the half, Manchester converted his own steal into another fastbreak basket, giving the Vikings a 39-15 halftime lead.

Manchester had 25 points at the break, meaning he had 2,023 for his career — already 65th in state history, just ahead of Racine Horlick’s Marquise Milton (2019), who scored 2,021.

“Two thousand points is something that doesn’t come around often,” said Mount Horeb senior guard Kam Nesheim, Todd’s son and one of Manchester’s best friends “Being in the top 70 in the state is an insane

accomplishment — and he could be top-10 by the end of his career. So it’s really special for him.”

Because of their friendship, the moment was special for Kam, too.

“Me and Josh have been close since day one,” Kam Nesheim said. “He’s worked his butt off, so he deserves this. Home opener, good crowd, so it’s nice for everyone to come out and celebrate this unbelievable milestone.”

Reedsburg never got close in the second half, scoring only 20 points over the final 18 minutes.

Manchester, meantime, remained hot.

He scored the first basket of the half to make it 41-15, later drained a step back 3-pointer from the right corner for another highlight-reel play and finished with 10 points in the half to give him 35 on the night.

His night was done with a little over 10 minutes left.

“The first three games now he’s played until about the 12-minute mark in the second half,” Todd Nesheim said. “Part of me is like, ‘Well, he’s chasing bigger goals -- he has a chance to be top-five all-time in the state.’ But you’re up 30, so where is that line?”

When the game ended, the Vikings spent time reflecting.

“I remember coaching (Manchester) in third grade. He was always the best player in the gym. In fourth and fifth grade, teams knew about Josh Manchester,” Todd Nesheim said. “I remember Columbus (playing a) box-and-one against him in seventh grade. He’s always been the best player in the gym.”

That made it easy for Todd Nesheim to come up with the right words to say to the crowd when the game was stopped.

“I was ready,” he said. “Those were heartfelt words. “I’ve watched him play

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4. Wrestlers make state tournament

Eli Leonard accomplished a rare feat for the Mount Horeb/Barneveld prep wrestling program in late February.

The Vikings’ 175-pound junior earned a place on the podium for the third consecutive season with a top-six finish at the 82nd annual WIAA individual state wrestling championships at the Kohl Center.

But Leonard’s dream of earning his first individual state championship and the seventh in the history of the program came up one point shy in an exciting state championship match.

Leonard fell to Kaukauna junior Liam Crook, 8-7, in a thrilling state finals match.

Meanwhile, sophomore Eli Maier made his first appearance on the podium with a third-place finish at 165 pounds.

In the girls state tournament, sophomore Amelia Soltis won a match at 165 pounds in her debut to cap a successful weekend for the Vikings.

“I’m super proud of them. They gave everything they had,” Mount Horeb/Barneveld coach Tim Sarbacker said of the trio. “We’re trying to win high level matches, and we just need to get better at match strategy. I’ve got to be a better coach. We all must do a

little bit more to get those wins.”

Oh, so close

Leonard — who will wrestle at the University of Wisconsin — brought a perfect 48-0 record into his state final match with Crook, a defending Division 1 state champion.

The two elite wrestlers are familiar foes.

Crook earned a 15-3 major decision over Leonard in the 165-pound state semifinals in 2024. But Leonard gave Crook all he could handle this time.

Crook registered a take-down in each of the first two periods to grab a 7-1 lead heading into the final 2 minutes. But Leonard rallied with a pair of takedowns of his own to draw within 8-7.

Crook, though, held on to repeat as a state champion.

“We just needed to get that first score, and we have him,” Sarbacker said. “Those matches are really, tight. We just came up a little short. We’ll get ‘em next time.”

After Leonard (48-1) finished one win shy of a perfect season, he said there is ample motivation for him to make the final step to the top of the podium in 2026.

“Last year he got me in the semis. He’s a good wrestler in space,” Leonard said of Crook (51-1). “He had good inside, outside shots, so I knew I had to close the gap and get some control ties on him. But I couldn’t quite get it.”

While it was Leonard’s

third straight trip to state, it was a whole different challenge competing on center stage in a state championship match at a sold-out Kohl Center.

“It’s kind hard to gauge where you’re at if you’ve never been (in the state finals),” said Leonard, who has a combined 95-4 record while wrestling for Mount Horeb. “Getting there, I realize I deserve to be there.

“Matter of fact, I deserved to win, as well. Not to take away anything from (Crook). I’m good enough to win there. I can take that away from the tournament. I was looking for that perfect season. I was having a good season, not to say that I didn’t have a good tournament. I did some good things in that match, but not enough.”

Maier gets revenge

It was one-and-done for Maier in 2024 when he lost his preliminary match at state and didn’t earn a consolation round match. Maier came out looking for some payback, though, and found it on opening night with a pair of victories.

The third-seeded Maier pinned 14th-seeded Cyrus Butler of Whitefish Bay in 1:41 at 165 pounds. Maier then recorded a 12-0 major decision over 11th-seeded Rayhan Lopez of Fort Atkinson in the quarterfinals.

Maier’s bid for a state title ended, though, when second-seeded Sullivan Ramos of Kenosha Indian Trail prevailed 9-5 in the semifinals.

“That hurt, but it just helped to know there is another level I can get to,” Maier said. “I just have to keep climbing.”

Sarbacker said he knew Maier would be locked in for his final match.

“We don’t lay down. We come back and regroup and look at what we did the night before,” Sarbacker said. “He wrestled a good match in the semifinals. He woke up, bounced up and got back out there and really put together a heck of a match against a tough kid. I’m really, proud of him for how he came back.”

Maier (47-2) pulled out a 6-5 victory over fifth-seeded Burlington’s Kade Boyd to secure third place. Maier escaped a bid for a late take-down by Boyd to end his season with a hard-fought victory.

Maier said his third-place victory was a huge confidence booster.

“I had to put everything out there and see what could happen,” Maier said. “We knew it was going to be a good one. It felt really good to win a close match, too. It’s going to help a lot for next year.”

Soltis notches win

Soltis didn’t waste any time getting down to business in her state tournament debut.

She pinned Waunakee’s Ellie Lenzendorf in 1:23 at 165 pounds in the preliminary round.

“I wrestled her a couple of times. I knew how she wrestled, and she knew how I wrestled,” Soltis said of Lenzendorf. “I just had to try something else. I had to wrestle the way I knew how.”

However, Soltis lost her quarterfinal match to Nicolet’s Victoria Jewel by a technical fall, 17-2, in 4:35.

Soltis (38-5) then ended her stay at state when Delavan-Darien’s Natalia Jesberger rallied for a 19-12 decision in the quarterfinals.

“I was on top and in con-



From top, Eli Leonard, Eli Maier and Amelia Soltis all qualified for the state wrestling tournament. File photos

trol most of the match,” Soltis said. “But I held onto her too long in the second period and got a stall call. Then I was up in the last 30 seconds of the match and the ref called me for a stall on a hold, so I had to go. I had to move, so I attempted a throw I should not have

done. “But at least I learned from it. I would have given anything to be in this position last year. So, as much as I could be upset because I didn’t perform the way I wanted to, I still would have given absolutely anything to be here.”

TOWN OF PERRY

TOWN BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, January 13, 2026, 7:30 PM

Perry Town Hall, 10084 County Highway A

Teleconference - 425-585-6272 access - 394-722-206 #

1. Call to order. Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Announcements.

3. Comments by Town residents – non-agenda items.

4. Land Use:

a. William Erickson, 1076 STH 78 – CSM to combine existing parcels.

b. John Willborn, Jr., 10833 CTH A – zoning changes – 3 ac. to RR-2; 5 ac. to FP-1; 0.7 ac. to HAM-R; site plan for residence, driveway.

c. Dane Co. zoning updates – selected parcels.

5. Roads, Equipment, Facilities –

a. Recycling Center operations.

b. Sale of Western Star truck update.

c. Assistant Patrolman position update.

d. TDS internet and telephone service agreement.

6. Blanchardville Fire and Ambulance Service - 2026 contract.

7. New Glarus EMS – service discussion.

8. Treasurer’s Report.

9. Peoples Community Bank loan due 1/24/26, renewal terms.

10. Friends of the Parks of Perry report.

11. Parks and Open Space Committee report.

12. Dane Co. Towns Association and Wisconsin Towns Association discussions.

13. Community meeting with elected representatives update.

14. Town Hall Renovations committee report.

15. Minutes of Previous Meetings – December 16, 2025.

16. Pay Bills due.

17. Closed Session. Dane Co. Circuit Court case 15CV0065 DSG; Hauge Historic District Park easement negotiations: convene a closed session under WI § 19.85(1)(g) to confer with legal counsel concerning strategy and WI §19.85(1)(b) and (c) personnel.

18. Adjournment.

Action might be taken on any agenda item shown above. Public comment might be invited on any agenda item presented.

Mary L. Price, Town Clerk

www.perry-wi.gov

Posted: January 8, 2026 – Town Hall,

Town Garage, Daleyville Sign Post, Town website.

Publish: 1/8/26

WNAXLP

TOWN OF SPRINGDALE

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

2026 TRID Road Improvement Project

Town Hall Road Bridge Replacement Project

Dane County, Wisconsin

Sealed bids for the contract will be received by Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc via Quest online bid website. Bids will be received until 10:00 AM local time, Friday, January 23, 2025 at which time all bids will be declared closed.

Immediately after closing of the bids, they will opened via Quest and available on the Quest website for viewing.

THIS IS A TRID PROJECT

The proposed work consists of earthwork, base aggregate dense, asphaltic surface, guard rail, remove structure remove debris, excavation for structures, backfill structure type A, Concrete masonry bridges, bar steel reinforcement structures, heavy riprap, piling hp 10x42, traffic control, permanent signing, finishing items, erosion control, and any incidental items necessary to complete the work.

Bids shall be prepared according to the bidder’s documents prepared by Jewell Associates Engineers, Inc.

The Plans and Specifications may also be obtained at the website of Quest Construction Data Network located at www.quest-cdn.com upon a nonrefundable payment of \$50.00 for each set. If not a previous member of QuestCDN, you will need to create an account to access the plans and specifications.

The Town of Springdale reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive informalities in any bid and to accept any bid which the Town of Springdale may determine to be in its best interest.

By order of the Town of Springdale

Mr. John Rosenbaum, Chairperson

2379 Town Hall Road

Mt. Horeb, WI 53572

Publish: 1/8/26, 1/15/26

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VILLAGE OF MOUNT HOREB

PUBLIC HEARING

JANUARY 28, 2026

The Plan Commission of the Village of Mount Horeb will hold a public hearing on the above date at 7:00pm in the Board Room of the Municipal Building, 138 E Main Street, Mount Horeb, WI.

The purpose of the hearing is to consider an application from Brookstone South LLC, for the creation of Cottages at Brookstone Hills, a Pocket Neighborhood as phase 2 of the Brookstone Hills subdivision. The application includes a zoning change from A-1 Agriculture to R-3 Multi-Family Residential then to PD-1 Planning Development District to enable the proposed 21 single-family residential for sale buildings as a condo-style development on a common lot described as parcel 0606-141-4177-1

The Village Board, by its Plan Commission will hear all persons concerning all matters and/or objections written or oral at that time.

Publish: 1/8/26, 1/15/26

WNAXLP

BOYS BB

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really grinding out offense and therefore bailing the (opposing) defense out.”

The Vikings did that with aplomb in an impressive win. Not only was Mount Horeb more patient on offense, it grabbed 69% of the rebounds against the Division 1 Wildcats (4-6).

The Vikings started strong and grabbed a 15-9 lead midway through the first half. Mount Horeb’s offense was precise, and its defense did a good job slowing senior guard

Malakai Herlihy and center Joey Ware — a UW-Whitewater football recruit.

“Oshkosh looks to play a high on-ball offense from the wings with (Herlihy) and (Ware),” Nesheim said. “We were looking to hedge this action hard and force them to reverse the

ball.”

By halftime, Mount Horeb had pushed its lead to 32-23. Manchester had 18 first half points and went 9-of-10 from the free throw line.

“Josh was the offensive fire,” Nesheim said of Manchester. “He made a living at the free throw line ... and I think we frustrated them a bit defensively. It was definitely something we were looking to continue in the second half.

“We continued the message of being willing to grind out some longer offensive possessions to make them play defense. We expected them to make a run and let’s handle it this time around.”

That run never came. Instead, the Vikings opened the second half on a 21-6 burst, surged to a 53-29 lead and blew the game open.

Chapman did some damage in the post during that

stretch, while Manchester drilled a 3-pointer. Anderson and junior guard Nick Ibinger also scored as Mount Horeb’s lead ballooned to 24.

The Vikings eventually pushed that lead to as many as 28 and never gave the Wildcats a ray of hope.

“This is the segment where we had some breakdowns in the last two games,” Nesheim said of the final nine minutes. “Happily, we didn’t allow that this time around.

“Our kids ran beautiful offense, killing the clock while being aggressive and continuing to score. Very proud of this effort and for the kids to show signs of growth and take to the coaching they received at walk through.”

• **Stevens Point 72, Mount Horeb 67** — The Vikings built a 38-27 halftime lead, but couldn’t hold it as the Pointers rallied for a win on Dec. 28.

“We need to show more toughness down the stretch,” Nesheim said. “Right now, we aren’t willing to grind out long possessions offensively, and make those other teams play defense for more than one to two passes.

“On the defensive end, our opponents were willing to do that until we made a mistake. We’ve had a lot of positives in both of these losses to really good teams, but felt that both games were very winnable if we had been better offensively.”

The Division 1 Pointers (6-1) entered the game red hot with a recent win over previously undefeated Verona and a 32-point drubbing of Fort Atkinson of the Badger Small Conference.

The Vikings started fast, though, as Alex Chapman had seven early points and Mount Horeb took a 14-12 lead. By halftime,

Josh Manchester had nine of his team-high 20 points, while the Vikings also got key contributions from Cal Odgers (six points) and Kam Nesheim (three points) and surged to an 11-point lead at the break.

“I thought we were really good on the defensive end of the floor and made it tough for them to get the shots they have been getting in their previous victories,” Todd Nesheim said. “In addition, they missed several threes.

“At halftime, we felt like we were the better team and in control. We challenged our guys to be better on the defensive end of the floor, especially on the boards. We were hoping to see a killer instinct coming out of halftime on both ends of the floor.”

It appeared that’s exactly what would happen, too, as Mount Horeb pushed its lead to as many as 17 early in the second half. Stevens

Point answered with a 7-0 run, though, and whittled that deficit away.

The Pointers eventually caught — and passed — the Vikings in a game Mount Horeb felt should have never slipped away.

“Similar to the Slinger game, our last nine minutes weren’t very good,” Todd Nesheim said. “Stevens Point showed patience on offense and ran long possessions to get the shot they wanted. On the other hand, we tried to get shots early in the possession sometimes without a pass. They took a lead with a few minutes to go and spread the floor, forcing us to foul.”

• **On deck:** Mount Horeb was at Portage Tuesday, then travels to Edgewood Friday at 7:15 p.m. The Vikings then host Monroe Monday at 7:15 p.m.

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NOON WEDNESDAY
the week prior to publication.
For rates and deadline information for multiple paper insertion, please call 608-767-3655 or email: classifieds@fingerpub.com

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- Hospice Triage/Visit RN
- Clinic CMA or LPN
- Clinic Registration Specialist (Spring Green)

- Clinic Triage RN
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2025
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and had been stabbed multiple times.

A short while later, Mount Horeb police and deputies found that Schoonover had crashed a vehicle on Blue Rock Road near SH 78. She was apprehended after a brief chase on foot, naked and frothy at the mouth. She had a history of anxiety and depression but had stopped taken her medication.

Schoonover told a deputy that she had stabbed her mother. She also said that she believed that she was in a simulation or a Matrix, and that part of the situation was real.

In court on Tuesday, Berz asked Schoonover’s attorney, Andrea Schoenherr, who was retained in early August, if her client was ready to enter the guilty pleas since homicide cases typically take much longer to reach that stage. Schoenherr confirmed that she enough time to work with Schoonover and her client understood was she was doing today.

A NGI plea is a legal defense in which the defendant admits to committing a crime but asks the court not to hold them criminally responsible for it.

Schoonover plead NGI at her initial court appearance and was subsequently found competent to stand trial.

Berz said the Oct. 23 hearing will be “very short.”

If Schoonover succeeds in her NGI plea, she can be ordered to undergo treatment in a secure mental health facility instead of being sentenced to prison.

If she doesn’t succeed in that plea, she faces maximum penalties of life in prison without parole.

Schoonover remains in custody in the Dane County Jail. She appeared in court Tuesday in a jail uniform and was wearing handcuffs secured to a waist belt.

Local school officer honored at Capitol for active shooter response and beyond

Mount Horeb Police Officer and current Mount Horeb School District Resource Officer Steve Rosemeyer where he was honored during an Assembly Floor Session as the First Responder Award winner.

Each legislative session, First Responders from around Wisconsin are selected to be honored by their Assembly Representative as the District First Responder Award winner during an Assembly Floor Session.

Rosemeyer was joined by his wife Lindsay, and daughters Aviana and Lucy as well his colleagues from the Mount Horeb Police Department, and Mount Horeb Area School District, including Superintendent Dr. Steve Salerno, Director of School Services Brian Johnson, High School Principal Cody Lundquist and Middle School Principal Paul Christiansen.

Rosemeyer was selected by State Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville) for his actions during the active shooter incident at Mount Horeb Middle School on May 1 of 2024. Novak said

Rosemeyer’s actions that day saved countless lives of students and staff at the school.

“Officer Rosemeyer is a true hero,” said Novak. “His actions last May, undoubtedly saved the lives of countless students and staff members. His actions under extreme pressure and danger illustrated his composure, leadership, and dedication to school safety. It was my privilege to host him and his family at the Capitol to honor him for his bravery and dedication to school safety.”

Rosemeyer’s nomination included praise from both Mount Horeb Police Lieutenant Joshua Jarvis and MHASD Superintendent Dr. Steve Salerno.

Jarvis said Rosemeyer, who was previously a teacher, has 13 years of experience in law enforcement and has been school resource officer for the past five.

“On May 1, 2024, Officer Rosemeyer responded with exceptional bravery, composure, and professionalism during an active shooter incident at Mount Horeb Middle School,” Jarvis wrote. “Acting decisively. He engaged the threat and played a critical role in neutralizing the situation – undoubtedly saving the lives of countless students and staff members. His courageous actions on that day reflect the highest standards of heroism and service that define the law enforcement profession.”

Jarvis said that following the incident, Rosemeyer continued to “demonstrate steadfast leadership and commitment to school safety,” working to make “meaningful improvements” to the district’s emergency

response protocols.

In addition, Rosemeyer has been active in many community events, including Shop with a Cop, Cops and Bobbers, the Bike Rodeo, and various school dances and athletic events.

Salerno called Rosemeyer “an essential and respected member of our educational community.”

“Drawing from his background in both education and law enforcement, Officer Rosemeyer has built strong, trusting relationships with students, staff, and families across our district,” Salerno wrote. “His ability to connect with young people while ensuring a safe, supportive school environment is a rare and invaluable quality.”

Salerno went on to say that while Rosemeyer’s actions on May 1 “demonstrated his character during an unimaginable crisis, it is the way Officer Rosemeyer shows up for our students every single day that truly defines him.”

“He leads with humility, compassion, and professionalism – whether mentoring students, supporting staff, or collaborating on long-term safety initiatives,” added Salerno. “His commitment to continuous improvement and community engagement has had a lasting impact not only on our schools but far beyond.”

Rosemeyer joins the late Al Michek of Highland, Ron Weigel of Shullsburg, and Chief Chad Kanable of Avoca, who were honored with the First Responder Awards for the 51st Assembly District.

Marathon meet-

ing on proposed development

No votes have yet been cast for or against a proposed mixed-use development downtown, but a public hearing held by the Mount Horeb Planning Commission last week gave people on both sides another chance to have their say, and it was a lengthy one. Most public comments were against the proposal. The meeting also gave the developer another opportunity to explain their vision, and the village another chance to lay out the review process for such applications.

Village President Ryan Czyzewski opened the October 22 Planning Commission Public Hearing for a zoning change request for 214-220 E. Main Street by reading the process for the evening. Public comments would begin after staff and the applicant, the development and team, presented their comments about the rezoning request to change zoning of the three lots from Central Business (CB) to Planned Development (PD) for the Langhús on Main mixed-use development.

Nic Owen, village administrator, addressing the 200 people in the audience said, “I think one great thing about Mount Horeb is that we never have a shortage of engaged, passionate citizens about the project.” He told the commission members “you certainly have a big job facing you tonight” including decisions entailing both tangible and intangible things. The tangible things, “such as parking, the height of the building, and traffic, these are things we can deal with,” “[the] intangible things, such as what does the building look like, does it change the feel of downtown, those things are a little

bit harder to describe and gage. I think that is probably the hardest job. The other things we can work out, such as traffic calming ways, traffic rerouting.”

Ben Rohr, village planner with VandeWalle & Associates, presented an overview of the differences between zoning requirements in a CB district and for a PD within a CB district. Essentially, a PD provides flexibility from existing zoning standards if flexibilities are granted through the approval process.

The approval process includes two steps:

1) A zoning request as a General Development Plan (GDP) includes a public hearing before the Plan Commission, a recommendation from the Commission (for or against) to the Village Board, with the final approval or denial of the GDP from the Village Board. If the GDP garners approval, a zoning map amendment establishes the new zoning standards for the property with any flexibilities granted identified. If the GDP is denied, the proposed project ends. If approved, the process then moves to step two.

2) Site Plan/Design Review (SIP) first is presented to the Plan Commission to establish detailed site plan characteristics, such as architecture, lighting, color pallet, signage, landscaping, and site design. The Commission reviews the various aspects of the design and may require adjustments to which the developer can go along with or request an alternative to its suggestion. Once both sides agree on design changes, the Commission recommends approval (or not) to the Village Board. The ultimate decision on the SIP is made by the Village Board.

Editor’s note: The commission later voted in favor of the proposal and sent it to the village board for consideration.

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