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LOCAL/STATE

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PSSSST!

Compiled by The Capital Times staff

U.S. Sen. **Russ Feingold** will hold listening sessions Jan. 10 with residents in Dodge and Jefferson counties.

The sessions are planned at 9:30 a.m. at the auditorium at Beaver Dam High School, 5000 Gould St., Beaver Dam, and at 12:45 p.m. in the auditorium of Jefferson High School, 700 W. Milwaukee St., Jefferson.

Feingold

Feingold says he would like to get constituent views on agricultural, federal deficit, campaign finance and other issues.

The senator has pledged to hold listening sessions in each of the state's 72 counties each year of his term.

• • •

Head to the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus to see some art with a bite.

A collection of artwork by a coalition of Madison artists — known as Arbite — is on display at the Porter Butts, Class of 1925 and Theater Galleries on the second floor of the Memorial Union.

The works are by Madison artists **Nestor Zarragoitia, Patrick Wachtl, Tim O'Neill, Andy Mayhall, Andrea Joki, Keill Hoppmann, Debra Gattschalk, RA Carpenter** and **Theresa Abel.**

The exhibit includes a host of mixed media works, paintings, sculptures and photographs. One display is a roll of fax paper hanging from the ceiling, filled with doodles. Another is called "Counting Sins," that incorporates an electronic credit card reader and a severed (fake) hand above a calculator keypad.

"These members of Arbite have a unique sensibility, in that they work independently conceptually but unite as a cohesive core to secure control of exhibition venues," reads a brochure about the exhibit.

The art will remain on display until Jan. 21.

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The 1996 Hilldale Holiday Tree Walk event raised $5,560 for charities this season, more than double the amount raised last year.

Stores in the Hilldale Mall sponsored decorated trees during the annual event. Shoppers in turn purchased ornaments and trees.

This year, they also voted with dollars for their favorite trees.

Drawing the most votes were those of Oriental Specialties, KwikPrint and Morgan's Shoes, with the funds collected going to Partners in Foster Care, Transitional Housing and the Dane County Humane Society.

"We at Hilldale are overwhelmed by our customers' generosity toward the charitable organizations involved," says **Jill Carlson,** marketing director for the mall.

"For example, by selling ornaments, Pucci's Gallery raised $1,500 for Very Special Arts of Wisconsin," she said.

Do an item you'd like to see in PSSSST? Call **Kathy Foster** *at 252-6427 or e-mail her at kfoster@captimes.madison.com.*

PET ELIGIBLES

I'm **Justice.** I'm a 2-year-old domestic longhair male cat who has been altered. I was brought here because my previous owners had allergies. I'm black and white and looking for a new home for the new year. I'm No. 6174 and available for adoption at the Dane County Humane Society, 2250 Pennsylvania Ave.

The shelter also offers low-cost spay and neuter services to eligible families. For shelter hours or more information, call 246-3340.

DUNAGIN'S PEOPLE

"I've got to learn to be more vocal of all the critical I know!"

GOP deal with Sen. George falls apart

By Matt Pommer
The Capital Times

When the crunch came, Sen. Gary George of Milwaukee decided he was a Democrat.

Republican leaders said Friday their efforts to form a coalition with George for the 1997 legislative session apparently had collapsed.

George

Assistant Minority Leader Brian Rude, R-Coon Valley, said Republicans had required as a part of any coalition that George would have to leave the Democratic caucus. He refused to meet that requirement, Rude said.

Minority Leader Michael Ellis, R-Neenah, had negotiated with George since the November elections. Those talks were initiated by George. Rude said Ellis told his colleagues Friday the possibility of a deal had disappeared.

"Mike said there was no deal with Gary George," Rude said.

Efforts to reach Ellis and George Friday night were unsuccessful.

Both houses of the Legislature will be sworn in at 2 p.m. Monday. A resolution awaiting Senate action would re-elect Fred Risser, D-Madison, as president of the Senate and Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, as president pro tem of the Senate.

Ellis and Senate Majority Leader Charles Chvala, D-Madison, had talked Friday about what will occur Monday when the Legislature convenes.

Chvala was asked the impact of the apparent collapse of the coalition talks.

"It's a good thing for the institution. Democrats were elected the majority. Democrats will function as the majority," he said, adding, "We will continue to work with Gary George."

Democrats regained the majority status on June 4 when Racine voters ousted Republican George Petak and replaced him with Democrat Kim Plache. The recall was the first for a Wisconsin legislator. The November elections reaffirmed the 17-16 margin for Democrats.

George has been livid since Chvala refused to reappoint him as Senate chair of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee. George said he deserved the post, citing tradition and his seniority.

Some Democrats have said privately they were upset because George wasn't a team player.

Chvala declined to say what role George would play in the upcoming Legislature. Chvala said he would make his committee appointments late next week.

Senate rules give the power of committee appointments to the majority leader. By law, the majority party is the one with the most members.

One option for George was to abandon the party and become an independent, leaving the Senate without a majority party.

From the outset, George has made it clear he considers himself, like his father, a Democrat. In interviews in November, he said the Democratic Party was his home.

Chvala

Ellis reportedly had offered George the opportunity to be president of the Senate under any coalition deal. George told reporters his goal was to regain the leadership role on the Joint Finance Committee.

The inauguration will also put Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, in the history books. He will be starting his 41st year in the Legislature, making him the longest serving legislator in the state's history.

Lake access splits neighborhood

Ald. Holtzman draws criticism

By Pat Schneider
The Capital Times

Neil Robinson recalls that as a boy he and other children in the Lake Mendota Beach neighborhood tramped the grassy courts leading to the lake to play on their neighbors' piers.

Bad behavior meant a child could lose his pier privileges, he said. Mostly, however, access to Lake Mendota was shared by everyone in the west-side neighborhood.

Robinson and his wife, Tanya Cunningham, say they have honored that spirit of neighborliness as homeowners on Lake Mendota Drive.

The privacy and security of their property, and the old way of doing things, are now threatened, they say. The name of the threat is Ald. Steve Holtzman.

Holtzman, District 19, is trying to develop thin strips of city-owned land, like that abutting Robinson and Cunningham's property, leading to the lake. Invoking the spirit of renowned land planner John Nolen, he said that public access to the lake is precious and "we're not going to sacrifice 1 inch of it."

Robinson said, "Anything that encourages people to come down here is an injury to me."

A lawsuit seeking ownership of the lake courts was filed last fall by Robinson, Cunningham and a half-dozen other property owners in Dane County Circuit Court. The suit was dismissed, the ruling saying that landowners must first file a claim with the city before they can pursue court action.

So Robinson and Cunningham have now filed a legal claim alleging that the city has abandoned the unpaved rights-of-way at the foot of Laurel Crest, Upham, Epworth and Clifford streets and that title of the property should revert to the neighboring property owners.

The city has 120 days to respond to the current claim. City officials dispute that the lands are abandoned, saying they are maintained by the city.

Robinson and Cunningham say they have no choice but to lay claim to the 33-foot-wide city-owned courts to protect themselves.

"I don't expect people to be sympathetic, but I think it's very important that people understand why this came about," said Cunningham. "This is going on because of Steve Holtzman."

With a lawsuit over ownership looming, the city's precise plans for the lake courts are uncertain.

The City Council has not yet determined whether to honor or deny the claim, but City Attorney Bunice Gibson said this week that denial was likely. "I think denial is the only way. The claim is very substantial, both in terms of the property's value and in setting a precedent."

Holtzman says that parks were never proposed for the lake courts. In May, he apologized to residents of the Spring Harbor neighborhood for suggesting they be used as "mini-parks," without hearing neighborhood concerns first.

Holtzman says Robinson and Cunningham are undervaluing the property, at a value of $4,000 a frontage foot in a Realtor's book.

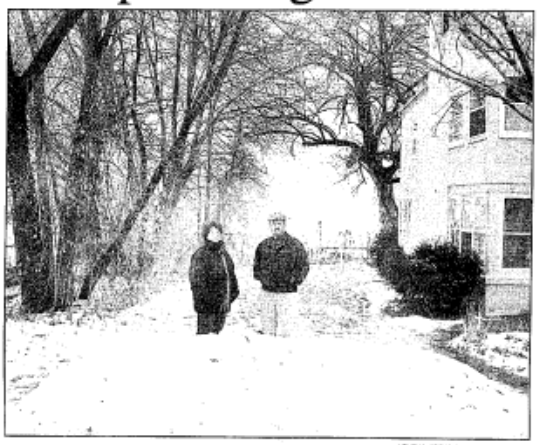
The couple says that the 33-foot strips are unsalable, and worth more to the city in added assessment on their tax bills.

The 33-foot-wide lake courts — which run as close as 6 inches to some of the houses — are too narrow for any practical public use, say Robinson and Cunningham.

Laurel Crest court, outside their kitchen window, meets a tree and bramble of bushes at the lake shore. There wouldn't be any reason for anyone to come down the court unless they have permission to use their pier, say Cunningham and Robinson. And those are the only people who up to now have used the court, they say.

Larger courts nearby that serve as the general public access points to the lake are eroded from traffic and strewn with litter, they say. "It's a warning of what will and won't happen in terms of environmental degradation and park maintenance," said Robinson.

See LAKE, Page 5A



HENRY A. ROB/CAPITAL TIMES

Tanya Cunningham and Neil Robinson stand on a city-owned right-of-way that runs from Lake Mendota Drive down to the lake. The land, which is now used in part as their driveway, runs within 6 inches of their home.

Sidewalk issue spurs new candidate in District 19

The Capital Times

Sidewalk disputes in the west-side's 19th aldermanic district have persuaded a second candidate to announce a challenge to incumbent Steve Holtzman in the spring elections.

"I listened to people and thought somebody has got to do something about this guy," said Carl Karcher, 6101 Old Middleton Rd. On Thursday, Karcher filed with the City Clerk's Office declaring his intention to run.

Karcher, 40, said his interest in running was sparked by Holtzman's handling of a proposal to improve Old Middleton Road. Plans to install gutters, sidewalks and bike paths materialized without adequate opportunity for residents to have their say, he said.

"People who live there like it there. They don't want anything done," said Karcher, a senior systems programmer with the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ken Ellestad, brother of 16th District alderman Mike Ellestad, also has filed to run in District 19, but as of Friday had not filed the voter signatures needed to make his candidacy official.

The deadline for filing candidacy papers is Tuesday.

Separate McCoy trials sought

Michael C. Baelow
Associated Press

Five of seven men accused of being involved in the largest-known theft of combat equipment from a U.S. military base asked Friday for separate trials.

The requests were among dozens of motions received by Magistrate Stephen Crocker during a preliminary pretrial hearing in U.S. District Court.

Crocker ordered the attorneys to submit written arguments by Jan. 13 on the requests for separate trials as well as requests to suppress evidence or statements obtained by electronic surveillance or during interviews.

U.S. Attorney Rita Kleup was ordered to submit written responses to those briefs by Jan. 24.

A Vietnam War-era Sheridan tank, 17 armored personnel carriers with missile launchers and more than 100 other combat vehicles worth $13 million were stolen from Fort McCoy, officials said. Two civilian employees requisitioned many of the vehicles, then falsified paperwork to move them off the base, selling them to museums and collectors, officials said.

Most of the vehicles have been returned to Fort McCoy.

The defendants, including a museum president and surplus dealers, face prison terms ranging from 15 to 125 years and fines of $500,000 to $2.75 million.

The seven men pleaded innocent to charges in October and are free on signature bonds.

Filing requests for separate trials were George Pretty, of Sturgis, Mich.; Leo Anthony Plata Jr., of Hanover; David Butler, of Fairfield Ia.; Dennis Lambert, of Black River Falls; and Grant Kruger, of Maplewood, Minn.

Crocker granted several defense motions for government disclosure of evidence, which includes some 300 taped conversations between the defendants and FBI undercover agents.

Pietz, the owner of Tony's Military Surplus, is the accused mastermind of the scheme. Kruger is president of the Military Vehicles and Arms Museum of Minnesota; Pretty is owner of Surplus Enterprises Co. and Butler is owner of Vintage Power Wagons Co.

The two not requesting separate trials are Fort McCoy employee Donald Crandall, of rural Sparta, and Loyd Pilgrim, of Amery.

Fort McCoy, a 60,000-acre training base, has 2,300 civilian employees. About 200 officers and enlisted soldiers are stationed there.

Senator pushes death penalty despite odds

GREEN BAY (AP) — Chances of Wisconsin adopting the death penalty appear slim, but state Sen. Alan Lasee says he will try again during the 1997-98 legislative session that begins next week.

Lasee, R-Rockland, said his newest proposal would allow judges to impose the death penalty for killing a victim younger than 16.

"To those of us who support capital punishment, justice is not served when someone who kills a child is allowed to sit in jail," he said.

Establishing the death penalty would require amending the Wisconsin Constitution. Legislators rejected attempts during sessions in 1991 and 1996.

Sen. Charles Chvala of Madison, Democratic majority leader in the Senate, said he would not consider the legislation unless Lasee can demonstrate there are enough senators in favor of it.

"The ball is in Alan Lasee's court," Chvala said. "He's going to have to show what dynamics have changed here."

Lasee said results of 1996 elections will make it less easy to get his proposition supported.

Democrats gained control of the Senate. Republicans control the Assembly.

"The window of opportunity is obviously smaller now than it was last session," Lasee said.

Clyde Trattmann of Green Bay favors the death penalty and wants legislators to submit a proposition to voters.

Amending the constitution requires approval by the Assembly and Senate in two successive sessions of the Legislature, then by voters in a referendum.

> 'The window of opportunity is obviously smaller now than it was last session.'
>
> **SEN. ALAN LASEE**

"As I talk to people, I can't find many who are against capital punishment," Trattmann said. "People are ready for the hard line."

Trattmann's brother, a sergeant with the Brown County Sheriff's Department, was a shooting victim in Green Bay 22 years ago.

Wisconsin should have a death penalty law that saves courts from being bogged down in appeals by the lawyers of the condemned, Trattmann said.

"People are fed up with legal shenanigans and procedures you have to go through if there is a death penalty," he said.

Jeff Agno-Agnayo, a death penalty opponent from Green Bay, said the penalty is expensive.

"All the legal maneuvers unique to capital cases cost the state a lot more in the long run than having a life sentence," Agno-Agnayo said.

If the Legislature wants to deal harshly with murderers, it should strengthen the law that sends murderers to prison for life, he said.

Under existing law, a judge can set a date for a murderer to apply for parole.

The Senate rejected a bill last March calling for an advisory referendum. It would have asked whether the death penalty should be enacted for first-degree intentional homicide.

In 1993, the Senate defeated Lasee's bill to apply the death penalty to repeat killers and child molesters who kill their victims.

The 1993 vote came six months after Republicans took control of the Senate temporarily. It marked the first time the Legislature had voted on the death penalty since 1869.

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