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## Republicans gear up for majority rule

BY JEFF HOLMQUIST  
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Wisconsin's political landscape suddenly shifted last week.

Before the Nov. 2 election, Democrats controlled the Wisconsin governor's seat and both the Senate and Assembly in the Legislature.

Following the election, Republicans are in the driver's seat. When the newly elected officials are sworn in come January, it will be a whole new ballgame in Madison.

It's a significant change not lost on those who now find themselves in the majority party.

John Murtha (R-Baldwin)

was returned to his post as state representative for District 29. For the past two years, Murtha has been a part of the minority in the Assembly.

Murtha said he was a bit surprised by the Republican gains across Wisconsin but thinks a message was sent to elected officials everywhere.

"I feel like voters have

stepped up and decided the direction they want to go," Murtha said. "We can't continue the course we're on."

Now that Republicans are in charge, Murtha said job creation and state spending cuts will be the top priority.

"We need to be more responsible with taxpayers' money," he said. "We'll take

charge and get things in order." Murtha cautioned, however, that change won't come quickly.

"It's not going to happen overnight," he said. "And it's not going to be easy or pretty. But we have to get our expenses more in line with our income."

State Sen. Sheila Harsdorf

(R-River Falls) was a minority party member during the past legislative session. In January, she will be part of the majority.

While she was pleased with the overall results of the election, Harsdorf admitted her mood isn't euphoric.

"We've got tremendous

See Politics, page A3



DEBBIE GRIFFIN PHOTO

The first step to construction of the University Falls apartment building was to raze two old homes on the property. Foster Trailer Court used to occupy most of the land on which construction has started on a new apartment building.

## Demolition makes way for housing, parking

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN  
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The Gerrard Corporation started work last Wednesday to clear the two-acre site it owns near West Cascade Avenue/State Street and to build the University Falls project.

Gerrard describes the development as a "campus-convenient" apartment complex with free, adjacent parking.

The La Crosse-based corporation bought the site, which used to be the Foster Trailer Court, last year, revealing plans for four phases of development.

The first phase underway now — a three-story, 12-unit, 42-bedroom building — should be finished and ready for move in by June 2011.

Paul Gerrard, on site for the demolition of the two old houses, said the leasing trailer adjacent to the project will be open 4-6 p.m. Tuesdays and 10 a.m. to noon Wednesdays so potential tenants can get information and/or sign a lease.

Those interested will find floor plans for a 1,075-square-foot two-bedroom, a 1,140-square-foot three-bedroom or a 1,409-square-foot four-bedroom unit.

Amenities in the apartments include full-size washer/dryer, built-in desks, wiring for high-speed Internet in each room, high-efficiency AC and forced-air furnace.

Gerrard said late last week that rent will range \$340-\$400 per bedroom.

The company's original

See Housing, page A3



## Young student savers get down to business

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN  
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Rocky Branch Principal Chuck Eaton said about the new School Sense program, "We're looking forward to helping the kids learn how to save."

Rocky Branch, he said, took advantage of a program Royal Credit Union offers that enables kids to establish a personal savings account while at the same time save money for two charitable causes. It held a ribbon-cutting kickoff ceremony last Thursday.

The objective of School Sense is to teach students the importance and fun of saving plus about the responsibilities and experience of working to help the community.

RCU offers a starter stipend of \$5 to anyone who starts a savings account, and it "employs" student tellers.

Eaton says about the student accounts, "They could open them with a penny."

And he says the 4th- and 5th-grade "employees" had to

See School, page A2



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The School Sense project began last week with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and will help students learn about saving money and about giving back to the community. Front row left to right: Heather Furlong, Nathan Fuller, Nevaeh Peterson, Veronica Jahnke, Olivia Szatkowski, Adrianna Jacobson, Leticia Schemmel and Magna Ressler. Middle row left to right: Veronica Wood, Elijah Froemming, Faith Mader, Andrew Smits, Sierra Keyes, Olivia Campbell, Jenna Folwell and Sebastian Kulow. Back row left to right: Mike Miller of the River Falls School District's school board, Sammy the Saving Fish (Royal Credit Union mascot), Cora Bibeau, Rocky Branch Elementary School Principal Chuck Eaton, Abby Bartch and RFSD Director of Finance and Facilities Chad Smurawa.

## Hey, it's showtime, River Falls

Come peruse local talent

BY PHIL PFUEHLER  
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More than 70 artists took up Carol McClelland's challenge, which proclaimed: "Show up. Show off. We dare you."

"It was meant to be a light-hearted kind of dare," laughed McClelland, the public library's events coordinator who's in charge of setting up the latest community art show: "From Around Here."

Community art shows in River Falls date back to the late 1990s.

"The idea behind them is to stimulate creativity," McClelland said. "While it's true that not everyone is a

vocational artist, there are plenty of people locally who have done some interesting things with their art. That kind of creativity is a community resource, and it's one worth putting on display."

McClelland said both artists and art show spectators have much to gain.

"Making art and being around art gets you thinking differently, more optimistically, and even makes you a better problem solver," she said. "In modern life we are overstimulated and reacting non-stop so that art forces us to slow down our way of thinking. It allows us to pause, to reflect and take in some original expressions and perspectives."

"Art has the same effect as  
See Community art, page A2



PHIL PFUEHLER PHOTO

One the eve of the all-community art show, 81-year-old Jeremy Stowall turned up to contribute two of his artistic creations. Stowall, a retired photographer, also exhibited at last year's community show. This time he dropped off a monoprnt titled "Pandemonium," and a clay sculpture called "Burnt Toaster." The library's Carol McClelland adds Stowall's name to the list of art contributors.

# Politics: Planning, much work lies ahead

from page A1

challenges as we look to the months ahead," she said. "We are going to have to work hard to turn our economy around and put people back to work."

Harsdorf noted that the past two state budgets were extremely challenging to put together.

"But this one we have coming up will top them all," she said. "There won't be stimulus dollars available to us like the last time."

Harsdorf was in Madison last Thursday to help Republicans map out their strategy for the upcoming session. In fact, Harsdorf was elected Republican caucus vice chairwoman at that gathering.

Gov-elect Scott Walker was on hand to speak with fellow Republican officials about his hopes for the coming year.

Through those meetings, Harsdorf believes the majority Republicans will focus on ways to help the private sector create more jobs.

"There were a couple of things done last year that went in the wrong direction," Harsdorf said. "We need to work on some things that will encourage investment and improve consumer confidence."

In District 28, Erik Severson (R-Star Prairie) soundly defeated incumbent Ann Hraychuck (D-Balsam Lake) to help his party gain control of the Assembly.

"I'm happy that all the hard work paid off," he said. "I realize it's going to take a lot of hard work and energy, but I'm looking forward to it."

Voters sent a message to all politicians with the election results, Severson said, mainly that people don't want "big government."

Another message was that legislators need to keep their word and accomplish what they say they are going to do, he added.

"We need to do exactly what we said we would do, or we're going to get voted out too," he said.

Severson headed to Madison for the first time Monday to cast his vote for Republican leadership in the Assembly.

After that, Severson said he expects the legislative agenda to begin to take shape.

"The first priority is going to be jobs and the economy," he predicted.

To have an impact on those issues, Severson said he envisions proposals to cut taxes for businesses so jobs are created.

Hraychuck said she was disappointed that her constituents failed to recognize the great progress legislators made during the past 20 months.

She noted that the state's deficit stood at \$6.6 billion back then, and now stands at \$2.5 billion.

"We cut government spending for the first time in a decade," she said. "And we had a lot of work yet to be done."

Hraychuck said she wishes her Republican counterparts good luck as they strive to right the state's economic ship.

"They certainly have a challenge ahead of them," she said. "I wish them all luck ... for the future of our state. I have no ill feelings against anyone."

As her life of public service winds down, Hraychuck said she plans to take some time off and spend some quality time with her husband.

She's already received a few job offers in Madison, but she's not sure she wants to leave the area.

"I'll keep my options open," she said. "Maybe I'll help my husband with his guide business."

As for a possible run for future public office, Hraychuck said that's not her plan at the present time.

"You never say never," she said.

One thing Hraychuck said she does not plan to do is to spend her time writing letters to the editor and talking badly about Severson.

"I will not be sniping at my successor," she pledged. "I think that's disrespectful and

not good for anyone."

Scott Walker, the Republican Milwaukee County executive, was elected Wisconsin's next governor.

Gov. Jim Doyle issued a statement on news.

"I congratulate Scott Walker on his election as Wisconsin's next governor," Doyle said. "I know how long and tough these campaigns have become and I admire Scott's hard work and perseverance. These are qualities that will serve the citizens of Wisconsin well over the next four years."

Doyle pledged to work closely with Walker to ensure an orderly transition.

"I have spoken to governor-elect Walker to let him know that my administration is prepared to begin this process," Doyle added.

J.B. Van Hollen (R) was re-elected as Wisconsin's attorney general, defeating challenger Scott Hassett (D).

"Once again, I appreciate the confidence of Wisconsin's citizens," Van Hollen said. "I have led the Wisconsin Department of Justice with integrity, mindful of its essential law enforcement mission. The results of this election ratify that course."

Van Hollen said he looks forward to strengthening the state's public safety partnerships during his new term.

Incumbent Secretary of State Doug LaFollette (D) was re-elected, but the race was extremely close against challenger David King (R).

Challenger Kurt Schuller (R) won the state treasurer's race over incumbent Dawn Marie Sass. Schuller has pledged to work to eliminate the treasurer's office in the future, noting that the office is not essential to the effective running of state government.

In the race for the U.S. Senate, Ron Johnson defeated longtime incumbent Russ Feingold.

"I am humbled and honored to be chosen by the people of Wisconsin to represent them in the United States Senate," Johnson said in a

statement. "Senator Russ Feingold has honorably represented the people of Wisconsin and I would like to thank him for his service to our state and nation."

Johnson said that America is at "a tipping point" and a strong message was sent to Washington by Wisconsin voters.

"Our national debt is nearing \$14 trillion, politicians of both political parties in Washington have engaged in a reckless spending spree and the people of Wisconsin are struggling," he said. "Washington is too powerful and it is taking us in the wrong direction. Today, Americans across the nation spoke with a loud voice and Washington needs to listen."

Johnson admitted that there is a lot of work to do in order to move the country in the right direction.

"In Congress, I will look for allies who are driven by ideas that best serve our country," he said. "I will ally with those that want to end the massive overspending and debt, and those who understand the need to ignite our economy, create jobs and put America back to work."

In the U.S. House races, Republican Sean Duffy pulled out a close victory over Democrat Julie Lassa in District 7. The winner replaces longtime Democrat Congressman David Obey who did not seek re-election.

In District 3, Democrat incumbent Ron Kind was in a dog fight before defeating Republican challenger Dan Kapanke.

"I want to thank the people of western Wisconsin for their confidence in me to continue to represent them in Washington," Kind said. "This is a critical time in our nation's history. And the choice made today, the choice to move this country forward, is the right one. I will do everything in my power to create good paying jobs and get western Wisconsin working."

# Housing: Several phases

from page A1

plan had been to start construction this spring. Gerrards said preliminary work took longer due to the challenges often associated with new development.

For example, the company had to remove more asbestos than it expected from the two old homes razed last week. Plus, the site sits nearby Lake George and the design underwent many revisions after various parties reviewed it.

The Gerrards also cite the economy as a challenge since that made it more difficult to secure financing for a major development.

## PLAN COMES TOGETHER

Gerrard said it was very important to say: "I want to voice my sincere gratitude, and I'm speaking for the entire Gerrard development team, for the city's vote of confidence in us in helping us bring this project to fruition."

He also commends the work of the Foster Community Foundation, headed by David and Judie Babcock, for its help, collaboration and cooperation.

Peter described the other, three development phases planned for the site:

■ Phase 2 will be another student housing structure like phase 1 that will break ground in 2011 and be ready for move in by June 2012. This phase will include a bicycle/pedestrian trail around most of the east side of Lake George that will eventually connect to downtown near EconoFoods.

■ Phase 3 is at least three-four years away and will be a mixed-use building that will probably include commercial and residential uses.

■ Phase 4, at least three years away, will be a community center developed on land owned by Foster Associates and located about where the old Foster home sits now.

The Babcocks formed a non-profit entity, the Foster Community Foundation, to

partner with the community and build the Gathering Place — a community center that would house the River Falls Food Pantry and possibly a seniors' center. It would also offer space that non-profit groups could use.

Peter said University Falls' parking will be on the building's north side (facing Lake George). He said that design highlights the building architecture, not cars.

He says the student residents and their parents can rest easy with the building's special security that includes video surveillance, always-locked perimeter doors and high-security locks. Peter said keys for the locks can't be duplicated.

"That way we control how many keys are made," he said.

Gerrard mentioned his corporation has other developments in the region including Hudson, Ellsworth and Baldwin. For example, he said the company has two phases of independent senior-living development in the Heritage Greens subdivision on Hanley Road.

Gerrard said the company will hire as many local subcontractors as possible, which may include concrete, excavation, plumbing and electric work.

He emphasizes that Gerrard Corporation "builds for keeps" in that the company doesn't build and sell its developments but manages the properties itself.

"This is a long-term investment for us," he said about University Falls. "We're excited that these apartments are coming. Students will enjoy the convenience of being close to campus and downtown; many amenities were designed with them in mind."

Learn more about the new development coming to River Falls at Gerrard's website: [www.gerrardcompanies.com](http://www.gerrardcompanies.com) (click on University Falls).