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LOCAL

1D

●Tuesday, June 18, 1996

AROUND THE AREA

Midvale, Lincoln to specialize in '97

Midvale and Lincoln Elementary schools will become neighborhood specialty schools in the fall of 1997, thanks to a vote by the Madison School Board Monday night.

The board's 4-3 vote reaffirms a May committee decision to spend another year planning the specialty schools. Board members Nancy Mistele, Mary Jan Rosenak and Ray Allen voted against the plan, saying they thought the specialty schools should open this fall.

Mistele offered an amendment, which passed, that specified that the schools must begin their specialty programs, yet to be determined, by fall 1997.

In other business, the School Board approved a 5-year, \$11.3 million contract with Rite-Way, making the bus company the district's sole provider of regular education busing. Mistele, who joined Allen and Rosenak in voting against the contract, said it created a "monopoly." In the past, five companies shared the contract, but school officials said their combined bid would have cost \$12.6 million.

■ COLUMBIA COUNTY Dad changes plea in infant's killing

A Columbia County man accused of killing his 3-month-old daughter changed his plea Monday to innocent by reason of mental defect.

Luther Bowman, 32, is charged with first-degree reckless homicide in the April 29 suffocation death of Dorothy Bowman at a town of Courtland home.

Bowman, who is jailed on \$100,000 cash bond, changed his plea from innocent at a hearing in Columbia County Circuit Court at Portage. Circuit Judge Lewis Charles ordered psychiatric examinations for Bowman.

SNOOP

'All About Cars' to air on WTDY

Auto expert Matt Joseph and his radio partner, Lori Skelton, are debuting "All About Cars" on WTDY (1480 AM) July 27.

The show will run two hours every Saturday starting at 9 a.m. Joseph also will produce a 90-second feature, "Auto Briefs," which will run three times a day during the week starting July 1.

Joseph's "About Cars" was ousted from his time slot on Wisconsin Public Radio in late April after six years, unseated by the syndicated "Car Talk" with Click and Clack from Boston.

WTDY General Manager Bill Vancil is offering the first hour of the two-hour "All About Cars" free to all stations on WPR's Ideas Network — outside the Madison market.

"We feel that the rest of the Wisconsin should have the opportunity to continue to hear Matt's program as listeners in Madison will have," Vancil said.

■ **Visiting salesman:** Speaking of radio, former Midcontinent Media Madison manager Dave Graupner is expected back in town for a visit today from Texas.

■ **Torpedo run:** Nix to the rumor making the rounds Downtown that former Madison area state senator Peter Bear is being considered for the board of directors of Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Co.

Bear, who has been doing a lot of international travel to Europe and Latin America for the St. Paul, Minn.-based corporation these days, is being considered for a promotion that would expand his current job as manager of community public relations and state and local government affairs, his office confirmed.

The enigmatic Democrat ran unsuccessfully against Republican Steve Gunderson in the 3rd Congressional District two years ago.

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Senate committees go to Democrats

By Mike Flaherty
Legislative reporter

The reins of power in the Wisconsin Senate truly changed hands Monday when the Democrats took control of the Senate's committees and the extra staff that goes with them.

Sen. Brian Burke, a young Milwaukee Democrat, was appointed the co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Finance, the committee that oversees all state spending and taxing.

The Democrats also restructured the committee system in the Senate to better focus on issues such as campaign finance reform and utility deregulation — and they made newly elected Sen. Kim

Burke of Milwaukee gets key finance post

Plache, D-Racine, the co-chair of the highly visible Legislative Audit Committee, which investigates the operation of state-funded agencies.

Taking control of the Senate means each Republican senator will lose a staff member (except those on the Joint Finance Committee) and Democratic members will gain staff. That helps, observers say, because many staff people volunteer to help on campaigns.

But the committee appointments may only be temporary. The Democrats took control of the Senate two weeks ago in a special

election victory — and have until only the next November to exercise their power. In November nine Democrats and only seven Republicans face re-election, making it more difficult to retain their majority.

Further diminishing Senate Democrats' new power is the fact that the 1995-96 Legislature is over and members won't return until next year.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Chvala, D-Madison, said, however, the Democrats can still make a difference between now and January.

For example, Wisconsin is con-

sidering allowing electrical utilities to sell electricity freely outside of Wisconsin. A number of analysts say the increased demand for inexpensive Wisconsin-generated power will increase the price of electricity in the state.

"There is a tremendous potential for harm to homeowners, farmers and businesses," Chvala said. The special committee he formed to investigate deregulation will send a message to the state's Public Service Commission that the Legislature is watching its actions.

Notable by its absence in the list of committee chairmanships is

Sen. Gary George, D-Milwaukee. Formerly a co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Finance and one of the most powerful members of the Senate, George was not given the chairmanship of any committee.

In fact, George two weeks ago announced on Joint Finance Committee stationery that he was the committee's co-chairman. Chvala said George was never appointed to head the committee.

"Today is the first day I've announced any committee appointments," Chvala said, refusing further comment.

George did not return telephone calls.

■ Committee members listed/2D

Blown to pieces



State Journal photos/JOSEPH W. JACKSON III

Family friend Bill Deters watches a second storm brew Monday as he stands in the smashed remains of two outbuildings at the Zander dairy farm north of Prairie du Sac.

A big wind blitzes Prairie Du Sac farm

By Elizabeth Brixey
Regional reporter

PRAIRIE DU SAC — Shortly before 3 p.m. Monday, Barbara Zander sat at her kitchen table reading when she heard the wind pick up. She looked out the window and saw pieces of old fertilizer bins rolling across the fields.

She watched her picnic table lift off the front yard and sail over the top of her burgundy Town Car.

"I went straight to the basement. My ears went crazy from the pressure," she said, her short hair damp with rain and red blooms on her cheeks from excitement.

The funnels — or tornadoes or wind shears, depending on whom you talk to — blew one of the Zanders' barns to pieces, smashed a huge machinery shed and moved another barn about a foot off its foundation.

About 20 calves were in that second barn, but they seemed OK. A fence looked like it blocked a wave of debris from hitting them.

When Zander went back upstairs, a bunch of teen-agers who had been driving by when the storm hit were pounding on the door to be let in. She ran out to look for Ervin, her husband of 33 years, at their old farmhouse across the road and found him running toward her.

They began to look around their dairy farm north of Prairie du Sac, at Highway 78 and Keller Road: the imploded house windows, the shattered car window, broken trees and power lines, the lost barns and the shed, the bewildered but safe calves.

Although the National Weather Service in Sullivan would not confirm this, Corene Sklar and James Koepf of Sauk County Emergency Management said it looked like a tornado's work because the debris scattered in a circle.

As it happens, those bins that Zander saw blowing across the corn fields came from a debris pile at a nearby farm cooperative. It was stuff left over from a tornado two years ago.



Barbara Zander describes how she hurried to the basement after she saw huge pieces of farm debris hurtling toward her home north of Prairie du Sac Monday afternoon. The storm smashed a barn and a machinery shed and moved another barn off its foundation.

Schools cost estimate boosted \$30 million

Officials cite passage of building referendums

Associated Press

It will cost \$30 million more than originally expected for the state to keep its promise to fund two-thirds of local school costs, officials said Monday.

The latest estimate compiled by three state agencies was slightly higher than expected, said Rep. Ben Brancel, R-Endeavor, co-chairman of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee.

The committee will probably approve the additional spending

in a meeting in June or July, he said.

Most of the extra cost is due to the success over the past several months of local school referendums for building projects, Brancel said.

The state assumes two-thirds of the cost of debt service for new buildings, according to Robert Lang, director of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

State assistance for school districts was set last year in the 1995-97 state budget at slightly more than \$4 billion as part of a \$1.2 billion property tax relief program.

'I don't think it's startling, given that we're talking about \$4 billion, but \$30 million is a significant amount.'

Robert Lang
Legislative Fiscal Bureau director

The latest estimate puts the cost at \$4.035 billion — or \$30 million higher.

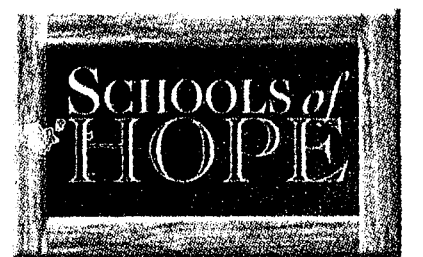
"I don't think it's startling, given that we're talking about \$4

billion, but \$30 million is a significant amount," Lang said.

Lang said the state treasury has more than enough to cover the estimated cost. The estimated balance in the state treasury at the end of the current biennium on June 30, 1997, will be about \$107 million, he said.

Brancel and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Chvala, D-Madison, said the state must fulfill its commitment to taxpayers to fund school costs at two-thirds and reduce property taxes.

The estimate was compiled by the fiscal bureau, the state Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Administration.



Panel targets grades of minorities

By Andy Hall

Wisconsin State Journal

A group of community leaders on Monday launched a long-term search for ways to begin closing the racial achievement gap in Madison schools.

Their goals: Find out what aids students' success, spread it throughout the Madison School District and be able to demonstrate improvement in low-achieving minority students' performance.

The panel plans to issue recommendations by September, but members cautioned that the work will take years.

"I'm committed to at least looking for four years to see how this is going," said Leslie Ann Howard, president of United Way of Dane County.

Howard and Enis Ragland, a Madison mayoral aide and president of the local chapter of 100 Black Men, are leading the Schools of Hope educational achievement panel, which also includes representatives of students, teachers, administrators, the school board, community activists, business, Madison Area Technical College, Centro Hispano and the Urban League of Greater Madison.

"If achievement doesn't go up, we will all have wasted our time," said Steve Morrison, executive director of the Madison Jewish Community Council.

The 15-member panel was established by a larger Schools of Hope leadership group in April after the Wisconsin State Journal reported that African Americans are falling further behind whites in Madison despite nearly a decade of efforts to boost their achievement levels. Achievement disparities between whites and other racial and ethnic minorities also will be studied by the newly formed panel.

"There are a lot of students who fall through the cracks early on. And no one bothers to pick them up," said Timeka Rumph, an East High School student. Her academic success was explored in Schools of Hope stories because it held clues to improving the grades of other African-American students.

But in attempting to improve the performance of students, Rumph and others argued, it will be important to strike a balance by supporting students without applying too much pressure. Otherwise, they said, the students will rebel.

Panel members cautioned that any gains will be gradual and tough to measure. Kathy Hubbard, director of funds distribution for United Way, and Barbara Marwell, a psychologist in the school district's research and evaluation unit, will begin developing a proposal for how academic performance should be measured. It is likely to include a mixture of indicators, such as grade point averages, standardized test scores, attendance figures, for a variety of grade levels.