

The Vilas Neighborhood Association's purposes are enhancement of the neighborhood's residential character and attributes, and the promotion of camaraderie among the neighborhood's residents. (Article 2, Neighborhood Association by laws)

# VILAS Ink

<https://www.vilasneighborhood.com>

## President's Message *by Doug Carlson, VNA President*

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With the leaves gone from the trees and the kickoffs at Camp Randall behind us, I wanted to give thanks to the many neighbors who have contributed to the Vilas neighborhood over the past year. The block party, July 4 parade, back-to-school, Halloween, and holiday events would not happen without substantial efforts from dedicated volunteers. Tracking and responding to issues such as zoning changes, traffic/ped safety, the zoo and Vilas Park, and alcohol licensing ensures that we maintain our neighborhood quality while the city evolves. Lots of other activities, both formal and ad hoc, help make our neighborhood great. Thanks to all of you who help in these efforts!

Included in those thanks are Regan Botsford and Wendy Fearnside who are leaving the VNA Council after serving their 2022-2023 terms, with Regan serv-

ing as Secretary and Wendy co-chairing the Zoning Committee. We appreciate your contributions and look forward to your continued involvement in our neighborhood in various roles. In the same breath, welcome to Chris Conrad and Tommy Johnson who have stepped up and joined the VNA Council for 2024-2025 terms. We look forward to your contributions!

We encourage all neighbors to join us at the Vilas holiday party on Sunday, December 10 from noon to 2 p.m. at Garth's on Monroe Street. This will be a great opportunity to chat with neighbors known and yet unknown while having a snack and/or beverage. Kids are welcome and we'll have activities available.

As we move through the holiday season, we are thankful for all of the good times in 2023 and look forward to a great 2024! ♦

All issues of the *Vilas Ink* newsletter can be seen at <https://www.vilasneighborhood.com/vilasink>



*In September, fresh lines were painted in the Vilas Park parking lot near Randall and Drake Streets. Representatives of the Vilas and Greenbush neighborhood associations had told park and zoo leaders that clearer lines would help more visitors to park in the lot and fewer on the grass.*



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**Submission information for articles and advertising**

Vilas, Ink, with its circulation of 700 plus, is published quarterly for all residents of the Vilas Neighborhood. We welcome submissions, in particular letters, discussions of local issues, or services that might be of neighborhood interest. Deadline for the next issue is February 16, 2024. Please contact Bonnie Gruber for advertising availability. E-mail: bonniegruber@mac.com. Standard ad cost for 2023 is \$35 per issue or \$125 annually. The standard ad size is 2 1/4" x 3". We offer a double ad size when space permits at 3" x 4 1/2" at \$65 per issue or \$250 annually. (Ad size subject to change)

# Stay Safe This Winter With These Tips

*From Madison Gas and Electric Company (MGE)*

Safety has been and continues to be our top priority at MGE. We are committed to meeting our fundamental responsibility of providing safe, reliable energy to those we serve. Follow these tips to stay safe this winter.

## Natural Gas Safety

We add a distinctive, harmless chemical odor to the natural gas we deliver to you. This smelly (rotten egg or rotten cabbage), sulfur-based odor will help you detect gas leaks that might occur in your home, business or neighborhood. If you smell natural gas, evacuate the area immediately and call MGE's Emergency Response Line at (608) 252-1111.

### Other important gas safety tips:

- Do not touch anything that might create a spark (light switch, telephone, cell phone, garage opener, etc.)
- If your pilot light is out, read the manufacturer's instructions so you know what type of ignition is on the furnace or appliance. Be sure to check the instructions and follow them exactly as described. If you aren't sure what to do, call a qualified service technician.

## Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a clear, odorless gas produced by burning fuels like natural gas, propane, oil, wood, kerosene or charcoal. At high levels, CO can kill a person in minutes. Fetuses, infants, older adults and people with anemia or a history of heart or respiratory disease can be especially susceptible.

### Common CO causes:

- Fuel-burning appliances that are not vented properly or that are used incorrectly including gas

ranges/ovens, water heaters, furnaces, clothes dryers, etc.

- Gasoline-powered snow blowers, emergency generators, lawn mowers, etc.
- Idling cars.
- Charcoal or gas grills.

### Symptoms of CO poisoning:

- Low levels of CO poisoning may cause shortness of breath, nausea or headaches.
- Moderate levels can cause severe headaches, dizziness, confusion, nausea or fainting.
- Moderate levels of exposure over a long period of time can cause death.

Many of these symptoms are similar to those caused by the flu, food poisoning or other illnesses. If you think you have symptoms caused by CO poisoning, leave the house to get fresh air immediately and be sure to call 911 and seek medical attention.

### Steps to prevent CO poisoning:

- Have appliances and equipment that burn fuels such as natural gas, propane, oil or wood inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. This includes your furnace, water heater, range, oven, dryer, space heater and fireplace.
- Purchase and install CO alarms that are Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved. Do not use an alarm as a substitute for proper use and maintenance of your appliances and equipment.
- Make sure the exhaust vents, flues and chimneys in your home are working properly.
- Don't use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time.

- Don't use a charcoal grill indoors, even in a fireplace.
- Don't ignore symptoms, especially if more than one person has them. If you do nothing, you could lose consciousness and die.

### Keep Vents and Meters Clear of Ice and Snow

We want you to be safe when the snow piles up. That's why we recommend you keep the area around gas meter equipment clear of snow and ice. Be sure to carefully remove heavy snow and ice by hand to avoid damaging the meter. Blocked vents also can cause furnaces and water heaters to shut down, potentially leading to a buildup of carbon monoxide or a costly service call. Use a long screwdriver to clear snow and ice carefully from the end of the pipes.

Visit [mge.com](http://mge.com) for more information on gas and electric safety. ♦



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## 2024 Budget Bolsters County's Safety Net

*By Dane County Executive Joe Parisi*



This fall, I joined partners from across the Dane County community to introduce my 2024 budget proposal. It makes investments in the emergency food supply, mental health, services for the most vulnerable, and more to bolster our community's social safety net.

Millions in new support is included for local food pantries, as they continue to see an increase in service demands. Dane County's popular Farm to Foodbank program, which links local farmers and growers with the area's network of food pantries and is administered by Second Harvest Foodbank of South-Central Wisconsin, will continue in 2024.

The budget also includes funding for Badger Prairie Needs Network to expand a food storage warehouse and for Extended Hands Pantry to focus on providing ethnic and culturally appropriate foods.

These funds are in addition to a grant program that will expand the CARES mobile crisis program to communities outside of Madison. My 2024 budget also creates a new pilot team of crisis counselors directly embedded in Dane County's 911 Center to help work with those experiencing a behavioral health emergency. This new team will provide frontline behavioral health support to those in crisis, reducing the need for in-person responses by mobile crisis teams or law enforcement.

Anticipated funds from the national opiate settlement will be allocated to confront the ongoing scourge of opiate and fentanyl addiction in our community.

I'm also setting aside another \$1.5 million in county funds to support the City of Madison in constructing a purpose-built emergency overnight shelter for men experiencing homelessness. The funds bring Dane County's total investment in the facility to \$10.5 million.

In 2024, Dane County will build on past successes and invest in new opportunities to make a substantive difference for our residents. Learn more about the budget at [www.countyofdane.com](http://www.countyofdane.com). ♦

# Winter in Vilas Neighborhood

Fridays through Sundays through December 30, plus December 18-21 and 26-28, 5:30-8:30 p.m.: Zoo Lights at Henry Vilas Zoo. Tickets online only at <https://henryvilaszoo.doubleknot.com/event/day/2023-zoo-lights/31411>

**Saturday, December 2, 10 a.m. - p.m.:** Holiday Glow Open House, Monroe Street Library

**Sunday, December 3, 1-2:30 p.m.:** Nature hike, UW Arboretum Visitor Center.

**Wednesday, December 6, nightfall, through Friday, December 15, nightfall:** Hanukkah (Jewish holiday)

**Thursday, December 7, 5:30-6 p.m.** Virtual update tour of the new Bayview Community Center. Register in advance.



**Friday, December 8:** Last class day, Edgewood College

**Sunday, December 10, noon-2 p.m.:** Vilas Neighborhood holiday party, Garth's, 1726 Monroe St. Snacks and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided by the VNA with alcoholic drinks available for purchase.

**1-2:30 p.m.:** Nature hike, UW Arboretum Visitor Center.

**Wednesday, December 13:** Last day of UW-Madison classes before winter break.

**Saturday, December 16:** Commencement, Edgewood College

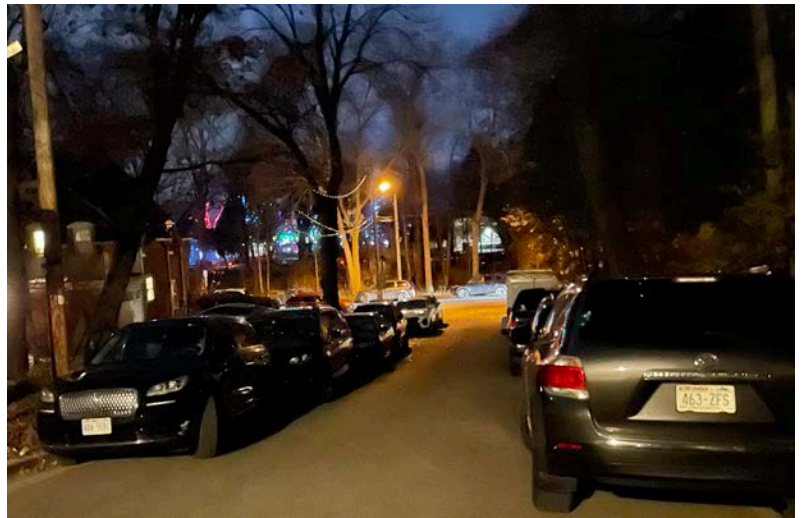
**Thursday, December 21, through Tuesday, January 2:** Winter break (no school), Madison Public Schools.

**Friday, December 22, - Monday, January 1:** Christmas holiday, Edgewood College

**Sunday-Monday, December 24-25:** Christmas Eve and Day, (Christian holiday).

**Monday, December 25 - Friday, January 5:** Edgewood High School winter break.

**Sunday-Monday, December 31 - January 1:** New Year's Eve and Day.



*Visitors to the Zoo Lights park their cars along Campbell and Drake streets, although the event web page notes that there is more parking space south of the zoo.*

**Tuesday, January 2 - Friday, January 12:** Winterim session, Edgewood College

**Saturday, January 6:** Epiphany (Christian observance).

**Monday, January 15:** Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (holiday)

**Tuesday, January 16:** Edgewood College classes resume.

**Tuesday, January 23:** UW-Madison classes resume.

**Friday, February 2:** Groundhog Day.

**Wednesday, February 14:** Valentine's Day.

Ash Wednesday (Christian observance).

**Monday, February 19:** Presidents' Day.

**Tuesday, February 20:** Spring primary election.

**Thursday, February 29:** Leap year day.

**Sunday, March 10:** Daylight Savings Time begins.

**Monday-Friday, March 11-15:** Edgewood College spring break

**Tuesday, March 19, 10:07 p.m.:** Equinox, spring begins.

**Tuesday evening, March 19, through Wednesday, March 20:** Naw Ruz (Baha'i and Persian new year).

**Monday, March 25, through Sunday March 31:** Madison public schools spring break.

Also see Arboretum events, <https://arboretum.wisc.edu/visit/events/> ♦



## What's happening at your Neighborhood library?

Monroe Street Library's Holiday Glow open house will take place Saturday, December 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. as part of Monroe Street's Glow festivities. Kids can make snowflake art with Annie, help us create a winter themed mural, and try our new scavenger hunt. Our library league will host a select sale of gently used books that will make great holiday gifts.

Enjoy treats and music all day, including Christopher Allen live on guitar and lute starting at 1:30 p.m..

Annie will be back on Saturday, December 16, from 10 a.m. to noon for Rock art. Because we all know that ART ROCKS!

Storytimes with Jennifer will take place Tuesdays, December 5, 12, and 19, at 10:30 a.m. If you are between ages 0 and 5, you will love this playtime with stories, games, and songs. Bring your adult! Siblings and childcare groups are always welcome.

Winter break crafternoons for school-age kids will take place from 1:30 - 3 p.m. the following days. Kids 7 and



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under, please bring an adult.

- Tuesday, December 26: Make New Year's Eve noise-makers with Every Voice Music and try them out to music (yes, for real, in the library)
- Wednesday, December 27: Weaving--Make your own land loom with Holly.
- Friday, December 29: Make superhero comics, flip books and doodle drawing with Holly.

The library will be closed December 24, 25, and 31 and January 1.

## January And Beyond

Saturday Art for kids from 10 - noon on these dates. Stay tuned for specifics.

- January 6 and 20
- February 3 and 17
- March 2 and 16
- April 6 and 20
- May 4

Tuesday storytimes and music at 10:30 a.m.:

- January 16 - February 27 Storytimes
- March 5-26 Growing Voices music class
- April 2 - May 21 Storytimes

All programs are free. No need to register.

You may need jigsaw puzzles to get through the Wisconsin winter. We have some good ones for swapping, and we welcome your donations of puzzles you've completed.

Monroe Street Library is open weekdays 10 - 6 (except closed Thursdays), and 9-5 Saturday. Call us at (608) 266-6390. ♦



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# The Story of Bear Mound Park

By Eileen Hornberger Thompson

You likely are familiar with the bear effigy mound on Bear Mound Park. But until 1999 Bear Mound Park was not an officially designated park. Rather, it was classified as a “traffic circle”. The events and collective effort leading up to this change reveal deep geographic and cultural ties between our community, the City of Madison, and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

On the eve of our 25th anniversary of Bear Mound Park, we are sharing some key events of this unique neighborhood endeavor.

In the spring of 1995. The City of Madison Forestry Department decided that three oaks in the circle needed to be taken down because they were showing signs of deterioration. One of these trees had always been referred to as a “marker tree” that presumably held cultural and spiritual significance to the Native American people. However, this status had not been formally verified.

At this point, a group of concerned neighbors rallied together. We gathered over 125 signatures to save the trees, sent multiple letters to the mayor’s office, and had many discussions with our former alder, Napoleon Smith.

Our “Tree-t Me to Life” preservation campaign led to a neighborhood meeting with key City of Madison officials on November 13, 1996, at Neighborhood house on Mills Street. The room was packed with Vilas neighbors who turned out to hear information provided by multiple experts about the oaks in the circle area.

Statements from the late Hugh Iltis, UW Professor of Botany, spoke how the old oak trees work together to protect each other during storms, and that this cluster of bur, white and black oaks was highly unique.

Don Wahler, UW Professor of Botany, further confirmed that the trees’ structural integrity was sound, and holes in the center may not indicate deterioration. Cedar Hill plant pathologist, Steve Basset, determined after inspection that the trees were disease-free.

Virginia Kline PhD., past Research Director of the UW Arboretum was extremely influential in the discussion. Her descriptions and evaluations of “aesthetically pleasing-gnarled and picturesque oaks” set the tone for the neighborhood Arbor committee’s suggested outcomes and alternatives for the City to consider

Professor James Scherz gave an excellent presentation about geographical Marker trees, how they were formed, and their importance to indigenous Americans. Prof. Scherz verified statements by Larry Johns, Oneida Nation, who assisted in documenting Dane County effigy mounds and geographical or spiritual marker trees, noting the tree was one of the last remaining marker trees in the county. This information definitely confirmed the park’s value to Native Americans. Professor Scherz shared additional discoveries about rock formations and their relationship to winter solstice and spring equinox.

Lastly, many neighbors may recall, Virginia Heimerl, who grew up next to the Vilas circle, told everyone stories about sledding over a large bump that was adjacent to the identified Marker tree. Inspired by this information, a neighbor located archeological records stored at the Wisconsin State Historical Society. These records documented the existence of a round or conical mound northeast of the Bear Effigy.

In July of 1997, a delegation from the Ho-Chunk Nation Office of Historic Preservation visited the site and used ground penetrating radar to confirm that a burial site was beneath the marker tree.



*The Capital Times published this photo of Larry Johns in front of the Bear Mound park marker tree. He said it was only the second such tree confirmed in Dane County..*

Ultimately, former Vilas Alder Napoleon Smith was able to convince the City of Madison Forestry Department and Parks Superintendent to suspend the tree removal plan until an adopt-a-park or long term option could be explored.

(Look for the next *Vilas Ink* with details of the drafted park plan.)



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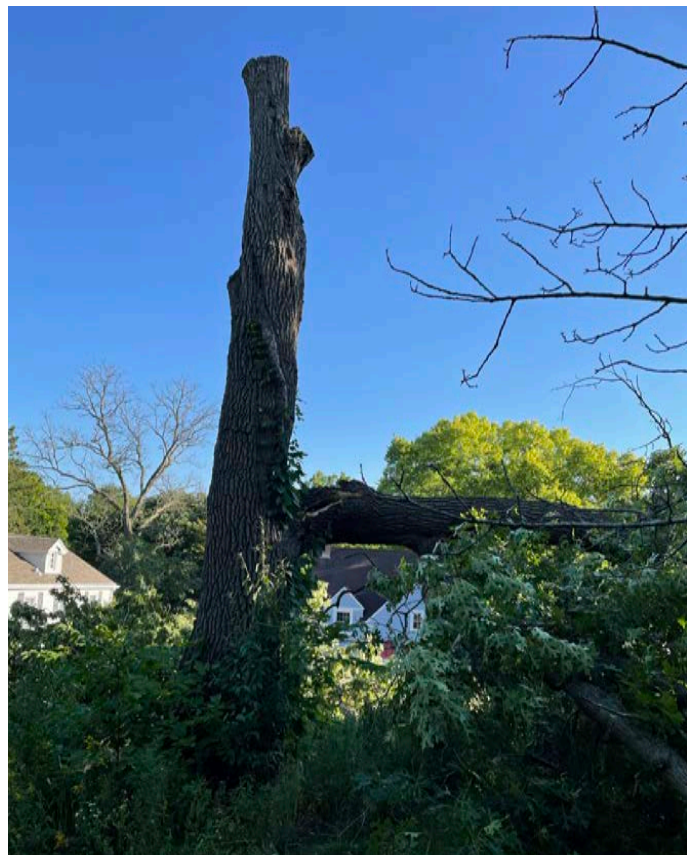
# Rain Garden Revamped

By Doug Carlson

The Vilas rain garden at the corner of Adams and Campbell streets was installed in 2015 on city-owned property and is maintained by our Vilas Neighborhood Association. The garden diverts a significant amount of rainwater from the streets while providing a haven for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.

After years of sediment infill plus a proliferation of unintended plants, the rain garden needed a significant revamp. With guidance and direction of UW landscape architecture student Bri Stevens, we initiated an ambitious project to remove sediment, improve rain absorption, and install plants that are better adapted to direct sunlight following the removal of several large trees.

Across three Saturdays this summer, a group of dedicated volunteers dug, hauled, raked, filled, and re-planted the garden to ensure its vitality for years to come. A huge thanks to Bri Stevens and several neighbors



Most of a large oak tree at the east end of Bear Mound Park fell over in September. Other parts of the tree had been lost previously.

for their help on this important project!

If you haven't seen the changes, please wander over and check it out. More importantly, we need volunteers to help maintain this valuable resource into the future. If you can help, please contact me at [vnapresident@gmail.com](mailto:vnapresident@gmail.com) and we'll add you to our list. ♦

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# Police Officer Offers Safety Suggestions for the Holidays

By Police Officer Jeff Hayes

Greetings, good people of the Vilas Neighborhood! I bring you salutations with mirth and glee as we approach this holiday season. I hope that as the year makes its perennial journey to a close you are able to reflect on fond memories, favorable fortunes, and exuberance for the promises of a new year.

We at Madison Police Department would like to thank you for all of the kind words, support, and smiles we have received along the way this year from you. Those seemingly small gestures mean a lot when we are dealing with difficult calls. I believe my colleagues would agree that we would not trade our careers for any other and in large part because of the great appreciation we feel from our friends in the community.

As 2023 winds down, or 2024 winds up depending on your view, I want

to remind everyone about some safe practices. 'Tis the season of Amazon deliveries of course. And, sadly, though we are far from the high seas, pirates still abound in these concrete waters. Porch Pirates they be, ugggghhh. If you are expecting a package please try your best to have a safe place such as a lockbox or similar device available if you cannot be home to retrieve your item. Help your neighbors too by collaborating on looking out for each other's incoming boxes and maybe create a package team (sorry I am not very creative with names) that picks up deliveries until the homeowner is back. This can be a fun holiday game and a great way to meet a neighbor or ten! Also, if you see someone who looks out of place and overly interested in Amazon or USPS trucks please do not hesitate to contact MPD. And finally, if you have a well-meaning relative, say a mother-in-law living in Phoenix who wants to

spoil her grandchildren (I might be speaking from experience), a friendly reminder might be in order to at least give parents a heads up so that unexpected deliveries are not made and lost.

No holiday season in Wisconsin would be complete without the expectation of snow and chilly weather. While yours truly is a glutton for a good blizzard and all things snow others might not be so enthralled by a visit from Jack Frost. And thus with the arrival of frozen toes and fingers we see a return of idling cars warming in advance of their drivers' planned outings. With the onset of running vehicles often unlocked and with keys in ignition our other pirate bandits, you know, the ones who take cars that are not theirs, commence their ways. Please do not assume that just because your vehicle has an autostart and the keys are not in it that your vehicle is safe. Thieves can and will take cars without keys. Your best defense, if you

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absolutely must warm your car, is to lock the vehicle while you are not in it. If you cannot lock the door then please be sure to always be watching the vehicle. Vehicle thefts can occur in seconds and often times the thieves are quite brazen. Often they are driving neighborhoods in another vehicle looking for easy targets. When one is found a passenger will leap from the vehicle, run to the car, and if the door is unlocked, will be happily making your commute for you. And, if you do need to warm your car, please do not leave valuables in it. Nothing adds insult to injury like a stolen auto with all your credit cards, phones, and personal documents.

With these wonderful nuggets of safety and security in mind I hope that you may rest easy and enjoy the sweet slumbers of winter. Dream of warmer days, picnics, and spring flowers if you are so inclined, or simply find a nice blanket, a friendly face to share it with, and enjoy one of the best seasons to live in Wisconsin. And if you see me cruising the neighborhood feel free to share a smile and a wave, I promise to return the gift. Blessings to you all and enjoy the holidays. ♦



Photographs by neighborhood resident Tom Turnquist are on display at Bloom Bake Shop on Monroe Street until December 6.

## New VNA Council Members Chosen

The our candidates for four open positions on the VNA Council were elected by unanimous consent at the November council meeting.

Returning for the 2024-2025 term are Doug Carlson and Rachel Bennett, who will continue to serve as president and treasurer, respectively.

New to the Council are Tommy Johnson, Oakland Avenue, who the council elected as secretary, and Chris Conrad, Adams Street.

Their biographies were previously distributed and will be posted on the VNA Website in the near future.

These four will join Council members Bonnie Gruber, Mike Rewey, Leon Mauer, and Lee Lazar who are entering the second year of their 2023-2024 terms. ♦

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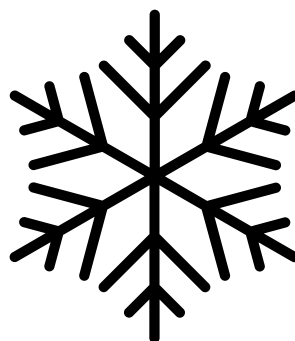
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Madison Metro's new bus route O now travels north and south on Randall Avenue, the Vilas Neighborhood's eastern boundary. From this corner near the zoo's north entrance, buses go north to the University of Wisconsin campus and south to St. Mary's Hospital, Goodman Pool, the Alliant Energy Center, the South Transfer Point, and several South Madison neighborhoods.

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# City Council Spreads a Bit of Joy and Happiness

By Ald. Tag Evers, 13th District

At our Common Council meeting on September 19, I'm pleased to report we changed our ordinance to allow pigs bred as companion animals to be kept as pets. In other words, Rudi the Pig, who lives with his family along the Southwest Bike Path bordering District 13, gets to stay and is not forced to leave.

Yes, I agree, there are more important matters for the Common Council to be addressing. But as the alder who crafted this simple change to the ordinance, I contend that in these challenging times, it's no small thing to spread a little bit of joy and happiness.

On to those other matters:

## Budget Season

We just wrapped up budget season, the time we policy-makers vote on the budget for the following year. I sit on the Finance Committee, which met to consider amendments to the Mayor's Capital and Operating Budgets. I put forth five amendments, all of which passed unanimously:

1. Add \$3.2 million in Tax Increment District-supported borrowing to account for construction bid estimates for structural improvements, parking ramp, and site and stormwater work in the Village on Park.
2. Add \$1.0 million in the Community Development Division's 2024 annual budget to fund the Community Facilities Loan Program, which assists local non-profit organizations upgrade existing, or expand into new, facilities.
3. An amendment to advance the Brittingham Beach House project forward one year with design occurring in 2025 and construction in 2026.
4. An amendment adding a mini park now referred to as the Wingra Triangle Park to the Parks Division's Horizon List.
5. Add \$73,000 in spending to support neighborhood centers in three program areas: Early Childhood, School-Age Youth, and Older Adults.



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From the Council floor, I added one more amendment, allocating \$10,000 for a pilot Drivers Education program for low-income high school students to be managed by the Community Development Division.

## Noise Ordinance Update

I'm working with staff to review our current noise ordinance. A loud outdoor party this fall with amplified sound surprised many Dudgeon-Monroe and Vilas residents, particularly when it was allowed to continue to 11 p.m. It seems clear to me there should be some sort of notification process by which the district alder is informed ahead of time, allowing the alder to then to notify nearby residents. Reasonable time restrictions, more like 10 p.m. on weekends, should also be considered moving forward.

In the future, if a loud party disturbs your peace, please call Madison Police Department's non-emergency number: (608) 255-2345.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me at [District13@cityofmadison.com](mailto:District13@cityofmadison.com). ♦



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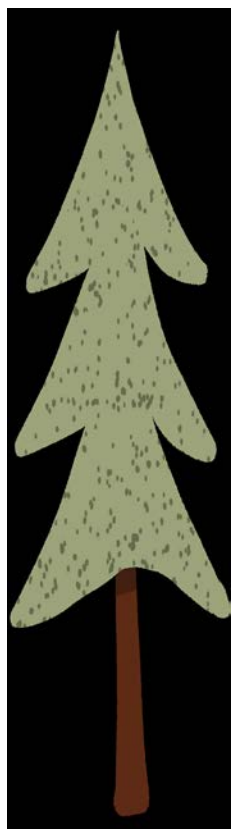
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**JOIN THE DISCUSSION**

The VNA sponsors an online listserv for our members:  
<https://groups.io/g/VilasNA>

You can ask to join the e-mail list by sending an e-mail to: [VilasNA+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:VilasNA+subscribe@groups.io). Please identify yourself by name and address to facilitate this process, since this listserv is primarily for those who live within the VNA boundaries.

✂ - - - - **-Renew & Join for 2024!** Annual Membership runs from January 1 - December 31 - - - - ✂

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**Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Children's name(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home e-mail address(es)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year moved into VNA area** \_\_\_\_\_

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