

Jackson seeks villagers' ideas

Residents invited to planning session on Saturday

By STEVE SCHUSTER
For the Daily News

The village of Jackson invites all residents to a visioning/strategic planning session this Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Jackson Community Center.

The discussion will be facilitated by Paul Roback, University of Wisconsin-Washington County's community associate professor.

"(We plan to) talk about the future direction for the village of Jackson. It's a very open process to allow the participants to discuss and dialogue about what they envision for the future in the village of Jackson," Roback said.

The last planning/listening session was held in 2000, and the current session was scheduled long before last month's recall election, according to Village Administrator John Walther. He hopes to maintain "Jackson's small-town atmosphere."

"We want to move forward as a village and we are looking to those who are in position of governing to move that process along," Walther said.

Following the debate over dismantling the Jackson Police Department to instead contract with the Washington County Sheriff's Department, two Village Board incumbents, including a trustee and the village president, lost their seats in last month's recall election.

The new village trustee, Brian J. Emmrich, and the newly elected village president, Wendy A. Kannenberg, plan to attend Saturday's session and both highly encourage residents to attend.

"I want to see more people involved in village government, having their opinions respected. The public is welcome to join us. My feeling: The more people, the more ideas, the better our vision will be," Kannenberg said.

Kannenberg just began her ninth year of teaching fifth grade at Jackson Elementary School and has been teaching for nearly 17 years.

She is hopeful that the community will once again rally together through village activities, and cited an example of how Jackson's police dog, Falko, really united the village, before retiring about two years ago.

"I would also like to see the community put its time, energy and efforts toward helping the entire community, not just one particular interest," Kannenberg said.

Jackson's newly elected trustee, Brian Emmrich, also values community opinions and welcomes residents input regarding new business development.

"I want to make this community grow with input from the community," he said.

Emmrich said he would like to see more businesses in Jackson near the intersection of highways 60 and 45, and cites the example of how one "big box retail store" in Grafton created a huge influx of new business development.

With the input of village residents, Emmrich hopes the community will determine "what they feel would be in Jackson's best interest," whether it is the development of a "big box retail" store, a fast-food restaurant or a family-owned restaurant.

Emmrich said he and Kannenberg support open government.

"There are a lot of smart people here with good ideas, it's just a matter of listening to them," Emmrich said.

He also supports keeping the Jackson Police Department intact.

"I am totally supportive of keeping core services together, and being fiscally responsible in doing so," he said.

In addition to listening to community voices at the meeting, the village also hopes to send out surveys to residents along with next month's water bill, according to Kannenberg and Emmrich.

"I want to focus on what the village values as important – fire/police protection or having some type of commercial code dress up our Main Street. I want to know what people value. We want to (see) our monies spent on what Jackson residents value most," Kannenberg said.