

Back in class?

Milton school officials plan to send district parents a survey to gauge interest in going back to in-person instruction later this school year. **Page 3A**

Rock County virus data

	New	Trend*	Total
Cases	9	-14	14,309
Deaths	0	-1	151
Total			
Hosp.	11 (Feb. 19)	+1 (from Feb. 12)	
Monday's positivity rate: 8%			

*The trend column shows how many more or fewer cases and deaths were reported the same day in the previous week.

Rise of fall sports

Janesville's high school volleyball coaches are gearing up for a spring season brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. **Page 1B**



The Gazette

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Rock Haven pay hikes, incentives proposed

Some board members say nursing home assessment should come before raises

By Frank Schultz

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JANESVILLE

The Rock County Board is scheduled to vote Thursday night on proposed pay hikes and signing bonuses for its staff at

the troubled Rock Haven nursing home.

The move comes in the wake of controversy over Rock Haven's decision to lay off staff members who declined to get COVID-19 vaccinations. Rock Haven already has suffered staff shortages, but the vaccine controversy made things worse, said board member Doug Wilde, who proposed the pay hikes and other changes.

Wilde spoke Monday night to the board Staff Committee, where six of nine committee members pushed through a change that at least would delay the pay hikes.

The resolution also calls for hiring a

consultant to investigate the work environment, climate and culture at Rock Haven, "including potential violations of the personnel ordinance and the human resources section of the administrative policy and procedure manual related to interactions between management and staff."

Board member Russ Podzilni proposed holding off on the pay hikes and other proposed measures until the investigation is complete.

Turn to **HAVEN** on Page 6A

IF YOU GO

The Rock County Board meets at 6 p.m. Thursday via teleconference. Residents may view the meeting on the Rock County Public Meetings YouTube channel.

Public comments on agenda items must be submitted by noon Thursday using this link: www.co.rock.wi.us/public-comment-request.

The board will allow live public comments totaling no more than 40 minutes during the meeting.



Associated Press

From left, President Joe Biden, first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Harris' husband Doug Emhoff stand outside the White House on Monday during a ceremony to honor the 500,000 Americans who have died from COVID-19.

500,000

US tries to cope with magnitude of half a million COVID-19 deaths

By Adam Geller

Associated Press

For weeks after Cindy Pollock began planting tiny flags across her yard—one for each of the more than 1,800 Idahoans killed by COVID-19—the toll was mostly a number. Until two women she had never met rang her doorbell in tears, seeking a place to mourn the husband and father they had just lost.

Then Pollock knew her tribute, however heartfelt,

would never begin to convey the grief of a pandemic that has now claimed 500,000 lives in the U.S. and counting.

"I just wanted to hug them," she said. "Because that was all I could do."

After a year that has darkened doorways across the U.S., the pandemic surpassed a milestone Monday that once seemed unimaginable, a stark confirmation of the virus's reach into all corners of the country and

Turn to **MAGNITUDE** on Page 7A

'This nation will smile again,' Biden says as White House marks milestone

By Jonathan Lemire and Josh Boak

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

With sunset remarks and a national moment of silence, President Joe Biden on Monday confronted head-on the country's once-unimaginable loss—half a million Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic—as he tried to strike a balance between mourning and hope.

Addressing the "grim, heartbreaking milestone"

directly and publicly, Biden stepped to a lectern in the White House Cross Hall, unhooked his face mask and delivered an emotion-filled eulogy for 500,071 Americans he said he felt he knew.

"We often hear people described as ordinary Americans. There's no such thing," he said Monday evening. "There's nothing ordinary about them. The people we lost were extraordinary."

"Just like that," he added, "so many of them took their

Turn to **SMILE** on Page 7A

Council puts up stop sign on road utility

Vote that had been planned for next month will not be held

By Ashley McCallum

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JANESVILLE

The Janesville City Council will not vote on a proposed transportation utility next month as anticipated, but some council members hope to bring the utility to a vote later on.

The council voted 5-1-1 on Monday to pause action on a proposed transportation utility until after a new council is seated in April. Jim Farrell voted against and Doug Marklein, who is running for reelection, abstained.

The vote will not halt all work on the proposed creation of a transportation utility, but it will prevent the council from taking official action.

Paul Benson said he wants members of the council who will return in April to continue working with city staff and the public on refining the proposed utility and garnering public feedback.

Council members are specifically interested in talking further with the business community, which would bear the most obvious financial impact if a utility goes into effect.

Forward Janesville, the city's chamber of commerce, issued a memo last week asking the council to delay a decision so the business community could have input.

Nine representatives of the business community wrote to the council prior to Monday's meeting opposing the utility and expressing the desire to have more input, Sue Conley, council president, said.

Few opportunities have been allowed so far for public comment on the topic. Previous study sessions did not include time for taking public comments.

A timeline from city staff had the council taking a vote on the utility March 22 for a 2022 implementation.

Council members largely thought Monday night that there are too many remaining questions and not enough public input to make a decision by then.

Another significant factor was that, come April, at least three and potentially four city council seats would be occupied by new

Turn to **UTILITY** on Page 6A



Benson

OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES, 6A

•Merlin G. Christianson
•Thomas Hill
•Dennis J. Indgjer
•Walter C. Kopp

•Christian Montano
•Walter J. Pakes
•Frederick C. "Rick" Santillo

•Devon J. Schlegel
•Jennifer D. Schulz
•Bonnie L. (Loveland) Schumacher

TODAY'S WEATHER

High 41 | Low 33
Intervals of clouds and sunshine
More on 7A

Classified 6B-8B Lotteries 6A Puzzles 8B
Comics 5B Nation/World 6B State 2A
Legals 4B Opinion 5A TV/Advice 8A

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