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DANE COUNTY

County face mask order may have an end date

Public Health Madison & Dane County "strongly recommends," however, that schools continue to require masks

By Karyn Saemann

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Dane County's COVID-19 face mask order is being extended through late November and then is expected to sunset.

In a Nov. 1 release, Public Health Madison & Dane County said the current order, set to expire Friday, Nov. 5, will be extended through Nov. 27. It requires those age 2 and older to wear a face mask in a public enclosed space when other beyond their household are present.

After Nov. 27, "Public Health Madison & Dane County does not plan to replace it with any other mask requirements," the release said.

"This decision comes as a result of decreasing case rates, increasing vaccination rates and the expansion of eligibility for booster doses which will only help strengthen our collective immunity," Public Health Madison & Dane County Director Janel Heinrich said. "It is no coincidence that transmission is dropping; it reflects the result of intentional, effective public health interventions and another incredible effort by the people of Dane County."

However, "Public Health strongly recommends that schools continue to require masks among students, teachers, and staff based on evidence that masking is an effective tool in school settings. One study showed that schools without mask requirements were 3.5 times more likely to have COVID outbreaks than schools with mask requirements," the release continued.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are in the process of approving Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children 5-11 years old, it noted.

"Our main goal with masking guidelines continues to be protecting those most vulnerable to the virus, including

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PUMPKIN HUNT



Karyn Saemann

Families and Deerfield business owners celebrated Halloween on Oct. 27 with a Great Pumpkin Hunt downtown. Above, children show off costumes. Right: Rich Nelson of REMAX Property Shop hands out candy. More photos, page A6.



CAMBRIDGE

Village changes course on roundabout

By Karyn Saemann

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Two weeks after backing a stoplight over a future roundabout at the intersection of U.S. Highway 12-18 and State Highway 134, the Cambridge Village Board now says it will reconsider that stance.

The village board, on Oct. 26, sent the question back to its Plan Commission. The commission next meets at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 8, at the Amundson Community Center.

The commission has already backed a stoplight at the intersection, after a local developer last month shared plans to relocate the Cambridge Kwik Trip to a 5.8-acre site there.

In an unofficial poll, Plan Commission members said on Oct. 11 that they would prefer a

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CAMBRIDGE

Town, village still apart on Blue Jay Way

By Karyn Saemann

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More than two years after its last joint meeting, the village of Cambridge and town of Oakland gathered on Oct. 27 but stopped short of finding consensus on a long-term plan to reconstruct Blue Jay Way.

The town and village did vote 9-1, with village board member Carla Galler dissenting, to create a 4-member task force to come up with a short-term fix for the road that runs in front of Cambridge High School. The task force was also

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CAMBRIDGE

Revised \$5.9 million cost eyed for station

By Karyn Saemann

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About \$5.9 million is a good target for a revised plan to expand the Cambridge fire and EMS station, members of the Cambridge Community Fire and EMS Commission said on Oct. 28.

Devin Flanigan, a consultant with design-build firm Keller, Inc., of Kaukauna, told the commission that due to rising construction costs, the same project that went to area referendums in April at a total cost of \$6.5 million, would likely now cost \$6.9 to \$7.1 million.

So, starting from that new higher base, sending a revised project of about \$5.9 million back to voters in April 2022 referendums would still involve significant square footage and amenity reductions out of the original project, Flanigan said.

Commission members, who represent the villages of Cambridge and Rockdale and the towns of Oakland, Lake Mills and Christiana, said they were

agreeable to continuing to discuss the cuts and would share them at upcoming regular town and village board meetings.

Proposed revisions to the station plans to bring costs down have included reducing the number of apparatus bays, reducing office and other spaces, and reducing the number of sleeping rooms and bathrooms. Scaling back on or eliminating new furniture purchases, eliminating a planned solar installation on the building's roof, shrinking the size of the main vestibule, going with a metal rather than partial masonry exterior and paving the apron in front of the apparatus bay with asphalt rather than concrete are all other ideas.

"It really comes down to how much money do we want to spend?" Cambridge Village President Mark McNally said.

The commission next meets on Thursday, Nov. 18, at 6:30 p.m. at the Oakland Town Hall. It has

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DEERFIELD

Athletes will have mask choice outside of Dane County

By McKenna Massey

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Deerfield athletes will be allowed to have optional masking if the host team they are playing outside of the county has optional masking.

The Deerfield School Board approved this update to its COVID protocols for athletes at its Monday, Nov. 1 Committee of the Whole meeting.

This change comes immediately after Public Health Madison and Dane County released Emergency Order 4 that has a potential end date of Saturday, Nov. 27.

Superintendent Michelle Jensen recommended the proposal, and the board approved it unanimously.

While the board doesn't typically make actions during Committee of the Whole meetings, Jensen said this was an appropriate exception to be made while living in a pandemic.

"This is just a really unusual time," Jensen said.

The change came hours after Public Health Madison and Dane County announced it would extend a countywide mask mandate through Nov. 27 and then expected to allow it to sunset. The health department strongly recommended in a release,

though, that schools continue to require students to wear masks beyond Nov. 27, since younger children cannot be vaccinated yet.

During the discussion after the vote, board member Melissa Frame raised concerns about students and athletes shaming each other for their masking choices.

Frame asked the board how they would "keep [students] from getting at each other" for wearing masks or not.

Jensen agreed that that would be a "good conversation" for the district staff to have. Students should feel okay and be comfortable with their decision to either wear a mask or not wear a mask

during an athletic event outside of the county based on the host school's requirements, Jensen said.

Board member Katie Michel suggested emailing families explaining the approved recommendation and noting that students should not feel pressured or bullied regardless of their masking choices. "We can remind them that no matter what the situation may be to be kind," Michel said.

The board will continue discussing what happens if the county mask order does sunset after Nov. 27 at its next meeting on Monday, Nov. 15.