I ‘live blue’: Longtime board member thankful for support, opportunity

By Lauren Henning
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Wearing a McFarland letterman jacket and hat, Arlyn Halvorson closed out his 27 years of service on the school board Monday with long-term planning advice, something he has become known for during his tenure.

Halvorson attended McFarland schools, graduating in 1974 before returning in a janitorial role in the district’s School-to-Career Committee, meant to fight misconceptions on agriculture. Halvorson joined a larger committee, which went on to form the district’s mission statement.

In 1995, Halvorson was running for election. As a farmer with strong blue-collar roots, he said he often has a different way of approaching things, recalling his first election debate.

“They had some debates, and I went to the debate and everybody’s in a suit and tie,” Halvorson said. “I came in my sweatshirt, I work with my hands, and that’s what I did.”

Former board member Tom Allen, who served alongside Halvorson for 16 years, said Halvorson always looked far into the future when it came to school planning, with a skill he described as “definitive vision.”

“When I was 14, Arlyn started on the board,” Allen recalled. “What I remember about Arlyn, that I think is still true, is that Arlyn had a vision way beyond what could be, he would look out 30 years when we were looking at the next year.”

This “vision,” according to Allen, has helped shape the district into what it is today, including the acquisition of the Levy property as well as the second floor already being prepped when the district recently remodeled high school.

“That was a vision he had, in terms of how the district would grow, and what we should be doing,” Allen said.

Halvorson shared memories and advice in his comments as an outgoing school board member, reminding the board to always vote true and “do what’s best for the kids.” He also shared that a property by the Stop & Shop and Gun Club was up for sale again, and that the district should consider the property because “you’re going to need that in 10, maybe 15 years” for a new school.

After instilling his final wisdom to the board, Halvorson paused before pointing to the “M” on his jacket and thanking the community for its support.

“But to be honest with you, I live this blue, it’s what I am,” Halvorson paused, overcome with emotion. “Thank you.”

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COTTAGE GROVE

Dane County Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff will run for state assembly

By Madeline Westberg
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Dane County Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff, a Cottage Grove resident and Cottage Grove Village Board member, will run for state assembly this year, following state representative Gary Halvorsen’s announcement that he won’t seek re-election.

Halvorsen, a Sun Prairie resident who represents the 46th Assembly District, announced his decision statement.

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The housing task force was “focused on anticipating what future households in the area would need for housing. Housing conditions have been changing over the last few decades,” Ruth said.

The task force has been doing research about housing needs, resources locally, and developing recommendations for the village board and village committees about zoning or subdivision ordinances, comprehensive plan updates, or other policies to address these needs.

The task force will share its recommendations with the public during two open houses this week. Community members can visit the village hall, 221 E. Cottage Grove Road, on Thursday, April 21 from 6-8 p.m. or Saturday, April 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. There is no appointment or presentation at a specific time, drop-ins welcome.

Community members will also have the chance to leave comments about the task force’s recommendations, hear the task force’s research gathered over the last year, and ask questions of task force members and village staff.

This is the main opportunity for public input, Ruth said, and other communities have been engaging in similar conversations.

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COTTAGE GROVE

Open houses will be the evening of April 21 and the morning of April 23 at Village Hall

By Madeline Westberg
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The village of Cottage Grove’s housing task force will be engaging with the community during two open houses this week. The housing task force was created in late 2020, said Erin Ruth, the director of planning and development with the village.

The task force was created to evaluate the future of housing in the village, and address affordability.

The task force was “focusing on anticipating what future households in the area would need for housing. Housing conditions have been changing over the last few decades,” Ruth said. “Affordability is an issue. The cost of housing has been rising much faster than incomes over the last few decades.”

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