

Mark your calendar!

Next Membership Meeting

Wednesday, December 16 • 6:30 p.m.

Madison Downtown Public Library • 201 W. Mifflin St.

- Presentation and Vote on PD endorsed candidates for spring elections
- Burning Issues Discussion on Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)
- Educational Discussion on Public Financing of Local Elections
- Announcements

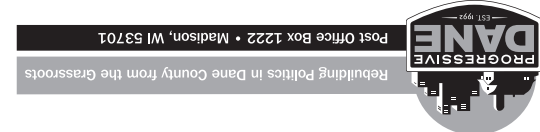
Chair: Jacque Pokorney, juju_jacque@yahoo.com

If you need an interpreter, materials in alternative formats, or other accommodations, please contact the PD office at 257-4985 one week in advance of the meeting.



VOLUNTEER NIGHT!
 Meet great people and help with labeling our newsletter and other easy tasks.
 Tuesday, January 19 • 5:30pm
 PD Office, 1202 Williamson Street
 (Social Justice Center—conference room)
 As always, refreshments are provided!

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Address _____

Phone (evening / day) _____ E-mail _____



- I support the principles and purpose of Progressive Dane. **Sign me up!**
 Please renew my membership in Progressive Dane.

Sustaining membership: \$ _____ / month (minimum \$5) \$ _____ / quarter (minimum \$9) \$ _____ / year (minimum \$12)

To pay by bank draft, please attach a voided check; or first month's check payable to Progressive Dane.

Annual single membership: \$50 Regular \$36 Basic \$12 Low Income
 \$250+ Benefactor \$100 Supporting \$75 Contributing

Annual household membership: \$100 Contributing \$75 Regular \$50 Basic
 More than two adults in the house? Sign them up for \$25 per person. Number of additional memberships _____

Mail to: Progressive Dane, P.O. Box 1222, Madison, WI 53701 • For more information: (608) 257-4985

You can also join Progressive Dane at www.prodane.org!



FORWARD!

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 12 • DECEMBER 2009

Rebuilding Politics in Dane County from the Grassroots

Last Month at the GMM

by Dace Zeps

AT PROGRESSIVE DANE'S GENERAL Membership meeting Robbie Webber talked about what the approval of the Regional Transit Authority meant, what happens next, and how one would go about informing the process. After appointments are made, the group will meet to determine what the priorities are, make presentations and hold hearings, and a create referendum to levy a sales tax. There are a few possible outcomes: improvements and additions to the current bus system, which includes expanded service to other communities; that plus bus rapid transit; and/or that plus rail service.

Discussion on the subject included speculation on the mix of transportation and who else is interested in the outcomes. Much information can be found online at gettingdanethere.com, rationaltransportation.org, madisonareampo.org, and as things progress on Robbie's Blog at frontporchcoffeetalk.blogspot.com.

After spending just a bit of time reviewing the outcome of the city and county budget processes, the rest of the time was spent fine tuning the 2009 Progressive Dane County Platform. As usual, edits were suggested to make wording a bit more succinct, and two statements regarding the processing of undocumented individuals were added to the platform from the floor. The new platform is available online at www.prodane.org.

Let's Review TIF

by Rick Richards

TAX INCREMENTAL FINANCING (TIF) HAS become more visible and of more concern to the Madison community because of the proposed Edgewater and other development projects. Here is a general review of what it is, how it might be used and a few concerns and issues. If you want more detail, a good place to begin is the City of Madison's TIF Policy at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/planning/TIF.html>.

For Tax Incremental Financing to be used, the city first must create a TIF District (TID).

Originally this involved:

- Determining an area of the city that is at least 50% "blighted" or zoned and suitable for industrial development
- Creating a TIF project plan, which essentially draws a boundary around the proposed TID, forecasts growth, and estimates project costs
- The Plan Commission holding

hearings for public comment on the proposed boundary and project plan

- Review and approval of the proposed TID by the concerned taxing authorities, which constitute a "Joint TIF Board": the city, county, school district, and vocational/technical school

Typically, the TID is drawn in such a way as to "capture TIF generators, potential public improvements or development opportunities". Realistically, the city is identifying an area of the city that will increase in value (which in turn will generate more tax money for the city) if public improvements and private developments take place. A "TIF generator" is a private development proposal that will significantly increase property values within the TID. Ideally, one or more TIF generators is identified within the proposed TID to insure the property values will increase more than they would have on their own. Note that the boundaries of a TIF District may be modified to incorporate adja-

please see "TIF Review", page 3

Public Financing of Local Elections - One Step Closer?

by Mary Anglim

IN AUGUST, PD SELECTED PUBLIC Financing of Local Elections as its primary issue for the coming months. In plain English, this means that we want to give serious candidates for city (and ultimately county and school district) offices the choice to campaign using public monies instead of private contributions. We think that public financing could attract viable candidates who are discouraged from running by the intense fund-raising that the current system requires. It could also reduce the influence of private money in local campaigns, encourage focus on the issues voters care about, and allow creative experiments in public funding of elections.

In October, we dedicated our annual assembly to exploring this topic. By the time you read this, PD members committed to this issue will have met twice. Please join us to learn more about campaign finance law in Wisconsin and how we citizens could improve it!

From a legal perspective, the first thing we need is state enabling legislation to permit municipalities to devise their own public financing systems. This statutory change has been proposed before, but fortunately Rep. Mark Pocan intends to reintroduce it during this session. Our first step will be taken when this happens.

please see "Public Financing", page 3



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<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/pages/Progressive-Dane/117607684897?ref=ts>



Forward! is the newsletter of Progressive Dane in Dane County, Wisconsin. Progressive Dane is affiliated with the Independent Progressive Politics Network.

Progressive Dane is a democratic, membership-run organization. The following committees and task forces meet in the main conference room at the Social Justice Center, 1202 Williamson Street, unless otherwise noted.

Steering Committee: coordinates major activities, oversees the progress of other committees, sets the agenda for general membership meetings. *Meetings open to all PD members.*

Co-chairs: Jacque Pokorney, juju_jacque@yahoo.com
TJ Mertz, tjmertz@sbcglobal.net

Next meeting: Monday, January 11, 7pm

Economic Issues Task Force

Contact: Rick Richards, szygy1@charter.net
Next meeting: Thursday, January 21, 5:30pm

Education Task Force

Contact: TJ Mertz, tjmertz@sbcglobal.net
Next meeting: Contact TJ

Elections Committee

Contact: Lukas Diaz, diaz_luke@yahoo.com
Next meeting: Wednesday, January 6, 8:00pm

General Membership Meeting

Contact: Staff, office@prodane.org
Next meeting: Wednesday, December 16, 6:30pm,
Madison Public Library, 201 W. Mifflin St

Housing Task Force

Contact: Jacque Pokorney, juju_jacque@yahoo.com
Next meeting: Contact Jacque

Newsletter Consortium

Articles are always accepted from PD members.
Contact: Dace Zeps, office@prodane.org

Outreach & Fundraising Committee

Contact: Dace Zeps, office@prodane.org
Next meeting: Monday, January 25, 6:30pm

Policy Committee

Contact: Brenda Konkel, brendakonkel@gmail.com
Next meeting: Sunday, January 10, 7pm

Transportation Task Force

Contact: Aaron Crandall,
aaron.crandall@yahoo.com
Next meeting: Contact Aaron

Production and Circulation Consortium:
Lynn Alten, Mary Anglim, Erik Breilid, Dave Carrig, John Dupuis, Jamie Annear-Feyrer, Tom Kozlovsky, Norm Littlejohn, Jacque Pokorney, Richard Russell, Ralph Shively, Dace Zeps

This month's contributors: Dace Zeps, Rick Richards, Mary Anglim, TJ Mertz

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Visit Progressive Dane on the web at www.prodane.org

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(608) 257-4985
office@prodane.org

Johnny Winston, Jr Not Seeking Re-Election

By TJ Mertz



Progressive Dane-endorsed Madison Board of Education member Johnny Winston Jr. has announced that he is not seeking

re-election in April 2010. He will be missed.

He was first elected in 2004 and re-elected in 2007. On the Board he served as President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Clerk as well as on many committees, including Long Range Planning, Partnerships, Finance, and Operations. Johnny currently co-chairs the Student Achievement and Performance Monitoring committee.

Johnny has been a strong voice for school finance reform at the state level and a valuable supporter of local school funding referenda.

Johnny is a friend and has been a friend of public education. He has stood up for things that matter, on many occasions when it wasn't popular.

At one point I did an analysis of Board and Committee votes over a ten month period. In that time there were a total of 10 votes that weren't unanimous. Johnny was on the losing side of seven of these votes; in my opinion, he was on the correct side of all these. Among the many ways he will be missed is as an occasional voice of dissent on

the Board.

His presence has been particularly important in calling attention to the needs of poor and minority students. Johnny has continually pushed for the district to back up their good intentions with specific policies and actions. With the recently passed Talented and Gifted and Strategic Plans, he was crucial in calling for specific language identifying particular groups of students who need attention, resources, and support in order to close opportunity and achievement gaps.

One person can make a difference, and I hope that after thinking about Johnny's contributions some will remember this lesson and seek public office.

In his announcement, Johnny promised to continue his contributions in making Madison a better and more equitable community through his work with "100 Black Men of Madison's Backpacks for Success event, Sable Flames, Inc. Scholarship Committee, and other community groups."

Johnny also thanked those who have supported him.

On behalf of myself, Progressive Dane, and many others who care about inequities in our schools, thanks for serving Johnny, and we look forward to continuing to work together.

Snow Ball 2009

Everyone Welcome! 🌲 Friday, December 11 🌲 5-8pm

Cardinal Café and Bar 🍷 418 East Wilson Street

Wheelchair Accessible ♿ On Many Bus Lines 🚌 Limited Parking

Cash Bar 🍹 Potlucky Snacks

Entertainment by Atlas Improv professionals —
and you! Test your wits and spontaneity by joining
in a skit, or cheer on your fellow PDers as they reveal
their inner showpersons.

KATHY SCHROEDER
AWARD
VOLUNTEERS OF
THE YEAR AWARDS

TIF Review

from page 1

cent areas that need improvement or contain a lucrative TIF generator.

The actual mechanisms that make TIFs such a powerful financial tool are these:

- The rate at which taxing authorities collect property taxes within the TIF district is frozen for the duration of the TIF District's existence (up to more than 20 years)

- Because development is taking place within the district (due to the TIF generator and other improvements enabled by city borrowing and spending), the property values are supposed to increase, presumably much faster than they might otherwise have

- The city places the increased portion of property tax collections (called an increment) into a special account to be used for assistance to developers, infrastructure improvements, etc.

- The city can borrow money near the beginning of the process with the expectation that the increment eventually will be used to repay any such loans. This pot of money (accrued and/or borrowed) can be leveraged in several creative ways to make the TIF initiatives successful financially

- Once any major developments are completed and enough increment is generated, the TID may be closed. If all went well, the increment has covered all spending and borrowing plus there is extra money in the increment that can be distributed to the taxing authorities that were patiently surviving on frozen levels of tax collection—sort of like a holiday savings account.

The use of TIFs as a redevelopment tool, while originally intended to target urban blight, has evolved over the years into a more broadly used redevelopment mechanism. This is partly because of its effectiveness and partly to offset shrinking state aids to cities.

Additionally, Progressive Dane alders have pushed for changes to the city's TIF policy to clarify the process by which projects are approved and to require enforceable agreements regarding job creation and community benefits. The resulting changes to the city's TIF policy (in March of 2009) unfortunately contained no language regarding community benefits and only weak job creation requirements.

The Edgewater project presents the city and community with several challenges regarding TIF:

Start 2010 With...

Beer Caucus

Friday, January 1 • 5:30

Brink Lounge

East Washington
between Blount & Livingston

...there's always so much to talk about

- The downtown TIF District must be expanded to include the Edgewater for it to become eligible for TIF financing. This requires approval of the Joint TIF Board (city, county, school district and vocational/technical school)

- The City Council must approve the Edgewater project for TIF financing. As a precursor to this, many city committees and commissions must approve various aspects of the project. An excellent summary of this process can be found at Brenda's Blog: <http://brendakonkel.blogspot.com/2009/12/breaking-down-how-council-decides-if.html>

- Normally, approval of TIF funding necessitates an amendment to the Capital Budget (to authorize that TIF borrowing described above). Any such amendment requires a super majority vote by the Common Council. During the just completed budget process, eight million dollars of borrowing was earmarked in the 2010 capital budget to support TIF for the Edgewater project, even though the project was neither finalized nor vetted. One reason for this "early" earmarking was to avoid the necessity for a super majority vote once the project was ready for approval. Ironically, the recent failure of the project to win approval from the Landmarks Commission may put the issue into the Council's lap, requiring a super majority to override the Commission's decision.

- While the original intent of TIF has been watered down in practice over the years, one still might wonder what is "blighted" about the Mansion Hill District and exactly how the Edgewater Project satisfies the required "but for" TIF test ("but for" the TIF funding it can't be built).

Finally, because there is a limit to the city's borrowing capacity, borrowing large

sums for current projects can negatively impact the ability to fund future projects. As there are a number of other potential TIF developments that might be of more value to the city and community, is this the best use of our resources?

Public Financing

from page 1

The next step is not legal but political. We need to build state-wide awareness and support for the enabling legislation—and for the issue of campaign finance itself—by making contact with like-minded citizens outside Madison. If you hate campaigning in the winter, chances are that much of this work can be done indoors. If you have friends or relatives in Wisconsin (or even if you don't), you can help to push the campaign forward.

Finally, with a green light from the state legislature, we must help to design a public campaign financing system that will work in Madison and will be supported by the voters. There's no doubt that many other interests will want a say in the final product—it's up to us to advocate for a fair system that allows candidates to make their cases and helps voters get a clear view of their choices.

PD's Public Financing of Local Elections working group meets monthly and has a place for you, whether you can do a little or a lot. Please check the PD website for information about the next meeting or contact the PD office to join the Public Financing list-serve.