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GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE

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STREETWISE

Answering questions about the proposed Public Market



Old Fort Square in Green Bay will be turned into a public market. It is expected to cost around \$14 million, between acquisition and renovation costs. SAMANTHA MADAR/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Alexandria Bursiek Kloehn

Green Bay Press-Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY - Two weeks ago, On Broadway Inc. Executive Director Brian Johnson announced plans for a Green Bay Public Market in the current Old Fort Square building.

The Public Market is expected to cost around \$14 million, between acquisition and renovation costs.

The food-focused market would house roughly 20 vendors and include event space, a demo kitchen and seating for visitors.

"One of the things that we're looking at is a million visitors per year here in our public market," Johnson said during

See **PUBLIC MARKET**, Page 8A



A rendering of the proposed Green Bay Public Market, currently the Old Fort Square building at 211 N. Broadway in Green Bay, illustrating the second floor balcony. COURTESY OF ON BROADWAY INC.

COUNTRY VILLA ASSISTED LIVING

Families of 4 COVID-19 victims sue facility in Pulaski

Doug Schneider

Green Bay Press-Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

PULASKI - The estates of four people who died after contracting the coronavirus in a Brown County assisted-living facility in 2020 have sued the facility and its insurance carriers.

They say Country Villa Assisted Living in Pulaski failed to adequately protect them from the COVID-19 that killed them that spring.

Conditions at the facility were so dire in late April and early May 2020 that roughly 28 of 36 residents tested positive for COVID-19, a lawyer for the plaintiffs wrote in a complaint filed last week in Brown County Circuit Court. So did 18 of 27 staff members.

Randolph "Randy" Wichlacz, the former Pulaski Tri-County fire chief, died less than two weeks after testing positive for the virus, his family's attorney said.

The lawsuit seeks actual and punitive damages for Wichlacz's illness and death, but does not seek a specific dollar amount.

Wichlacz "required hospitalization and/or extensive treatment, suffered a loss of dignity, severe pain, suffering, mental anguish, (and) emotional distress," according to a 40-page summons and complaint filed by Katherine Metzger. She is a Milwaukee attorney representing Kimberly McGrath, Wichlacz's daughter and administrator of his estate.

Metzger also represents family members of three other former Country Villa Pulaski residents who died of COVID-19 in 2020: Marian Marks, her husband, Norbert Marks, and June Martineau. Each of the three has filed suit alleging negligence on the part of Country Villa Pulaski. They seek

See **COUNTRY VILLA**, Page 9A

Lack of support ends effort to disband Lambeau Field stadium district

Richard Ryman

Green Bay Press-Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY - Rep. David Steffen has ended his effort to dissolve the Green Bay/Brown County Professional Football Stadium District.

The Howard Republican on Monday said he reached an agreement with the district for improved oversight and financial transparency.

Steffen announced in November that he would introduce legislation to disband the district, which oversees the Green Bay Packers' use of Lambeau

Field. The Packers, the stadium district and the city of Green Bay are parties to the Lambeau Field lease.

Initially, Steffen did not make an issue of transparency, saying instead that the district outlived its usefulness and was supposed to be temporary, but it became a larger part of his argument as

it was clear he was not attracting support for the proposal.

"I am thankful for Stadium District Board Chair Chuck Lamine's leadership and willingness to address this fundamental element of my legislative

See **DISTRICT**, Page 3A

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The Republican faithful turns on Assembly Speaker Robin Vos

Molly Beck

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

MADISON – Robin Vos is facing calls to step off a tight rope he has been on for more than a year navigating a Republican base that wants much more scrutiny from him of the 2020 election and the reality of President Donald Trump's loss.

Republicans outside of the Wisconsin State Capitol are furious with the Assembly Speaker after he punished Rep. Timothy Ramthun, a member of Vos' caucus, over false claims about the 2020 election — a move that politically backfired and catapulted the Fond du Lac County lawmaker to a campaign for governor.

The discipline of Ramthun has infuriated elements of the party faithful who already believe the most powerful Republican in the state Capitol is refusing to do everything he can to litigate the last presidential election and see his actions thus far — the only taken by a Republican legislative leader — as inadequate at best and purposefully stifling at worst.

"He may have done some good things, but I think the damage he's done to the party since November 3 of 2020 is unforgivable," Terry Brand, chairman of the Langlade County Republican Party, said in an interview.

A spokeswoman for Vos did not respond to multiple requests for comment or an interview.

"Anywhere from discontent to furious are the emotions I've experienced with people from around the state, from around northern Wisconsin, and so forth."

Republicans in Langlade County passed a resolution on Jan. 27 saying Vos' "unprofessional, spiteful, unethical, and oppressive behavior and leadership style is incompatible with and no longer welcome in his position as leader of our State Assembly."

It was one of a handful resolutions calling for Vos' resignation passed by county parties since Vos took away Ramthun's only full-time staff member on Jan. 19 after Ramthun falsely claimed in materials his office produced that Vos signed a deal with an attorney for former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton to authorize absentee ballot drop boxes.

In Brand's view, the move to discipline Ramthun was another way to block Republican lawmakers from rooting out election fraud and reclaiming the state's 10 electoral votes from President Joe Biden's 2020 victory — a legally impossible task, according to the Legislature's attorneys.

That inaction, to Brand and other local Republicans, outweighs the years of conservative policies Vos has been effective at putting into state law and is allowing Republican distrust in elections to fester.

"So he can do 1,000 things right, OK? But until that gets fixed, then there's going to be lots of discouraged people out here," said Doug Rogalla, the chairman of



Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, has faced calls for his resignation from his own Republican caucus after he punished Rep. Timothy Ramthun, a member of Vos' caucus, over false claims about the 2020 election — a move that politically backfired and catapulted the Fond du Lac County lawmaker to a campaign for governor. COBURN DUKEHART/WISCONSIN CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

the Monroe County Republican Party, who is considering with his colleagues whether to formally denounce the speaker.

"And my job is to make sure they go out to vote."

Mark Belling: 'This is not going to end well'

Mark Belling, an influential conservative talk radio host in southeast Wisconsin, tore into Vos and Republican lawmakers on air and in print, accusing them of hoping the fury blows over while expecting to "drag along" Republican voters in an election year shaping up to be good for GOP candidates.

"I cannot stress to you the strength of this revolution in Republican grassroots circles in Wisconsin against the state power structure," Belling told listeners on Monday. "The voters and the party activists have become annoyances for the leaders of the party and as they say, this is not going to end well."

"They want the Republican Speaker out. This disconnect between the state Republican leadership and the elected Republican officials could not be greater. Virtually every member of the State Assembly is aligning him or herself with Vos and virtually all actual Republicans are furious with the selling out that is coming from Vos."

Belling said the election bills being debated now are bills "that should have been passed years ago when the Republicans controlled things" and that the Legislature "was asleep at the switch" when the state elections commission issued guidance on how to vote safely during the coronavirus pandemic and to accommodate an influx of absentee voting.

If Rogalla and other Monroe County Republicans draft a resolution criticizing Vos like Langlade County's Republicans, they would join local parties in Iowa, Sheboygan and Wood counties.

"By openly refusing to act upon the will of the people, and now, by attempting to prevent other members of the Republican caucus from heeding the voice of the people, he has cast himself as the champion of the 'Establishment,'" the Jan. 28 resolution passed by Iowa County Republicans said.

"This has made Speaker Vos politically toxic, creating a liability to the entire Republican ticket and has rendered him impotent to accomplish anything of significance with the long list of grassroots organizations he has alienated by his actions."

The resolution was signed by the party's executive committee of six members and called for Vos to step down as speaker "as he has, in effect, guaranteed that any number of incumbent Republican assemblymen will lose their seat."

Assembly member says Vos 'does not deserve to be a target'

Rep. Todd Novak, a Republican who has represented parts of Iowa County since 2015, said Vos is in an undesired position.

"I understand the frustration Iowa County Republicans feel. We are all frustrated with the direction our country is going. But Speaker Vos does not deserve to be the target of that frustration just because he doesn't believe in overturning the last presidential election," Novak told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in a statement.

Novak noted Vos leads a large caucus that operates cohesively despite the group's size.

"Speaker Vos leads a diverse and large assembly Republican caucus. We have all worked together to champion conservative, common sense policies," he said.

"Whether it's billions in tax cuts, fighting welfare fraud, improving our public schools, protecting unborn children or the dozens of other policies that

we have advanced, I believe we should all focus our efforts on fighting for the values we all believe in, not trying to pick fights with our own side."

The effect of the party resolutions has rippled throughout the state, and even pushed Republican candidate for governor Rebecca Kleefisch to distance herself from the Assembly leader who has endorsed her and once hired her to recruit candidates for his caucus.

Kevin Nicholson, also running in the GOP gubernatorial primary, is running a campaign almost entirely focused on Vos and the "political machine" Nicholson says has failed under Vos' watch.

Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke and other members of the GOP caucus did not return phone calls requesting interviews. A spokeswoman for the Republican Party of Wisconsin did not respond to a requests for interviews with state party leaders.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, the most prominent Republican in Wisconsin, also declined to weigh in on whether Vos should resign over the Legislature's handling of election issues as some local party officials have called for.

"That's state politics," Johnson told the Journal Sentinel at a café in the Town of Brookfield.

Vos has been in similar positions before. In one case, over not advancing legislation that would ban University of Wisconsin research that uses fetal cells — possibly putting the accreditation of a top-rated research university at risk.

And last summer Vos overwhelmingly survived an effort to force him out of his leadership position at the state GOP convention — a resolution proposed a day after Trump released a statement blasting Vos and other GOP legislative leaders for not conducting a new audit of the election.

The same day, Vos announced he was hiring former Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman to probe the election at a cost to taxpayers of \$676,000. But that effort, seen by some as an appeasement to Trump and those who wanted to oust Vos, has also been viewed as too slow by the party's base.

"All we want to do is audit the election," Billie Johnson, a Republican who lives in Dane County, said. "You could do an audit and show there was no fraud and everybody can just go away ... but it keeps going on and on and on. It's got legs."

Johnson said Vos' decision to discipline Ramthun poured gas on that fire.

"There's always calls into the legislator's office. And it's like now who do they call? You've insulted their district. So I think that's what got this going a bit," he said.

"I've been around politics for a long time. I've never seen the intensity I'm seeing now from people ... the intensity is something that's off the scale. All we want to know is was the election in Wisconsin fair or not. And we can't seem to find that answer."

Evan Casey of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel contributed to this report.

Public Market

Continued from Page 1A

a press conference. "A critical piece ... is that we are extending the stay when people come to Green Bay."

In addition to the market, On Broadway also announced plans for a 92-unit apartment building to be located behind Old Fort Square.

Following the announcement, Green Bay residents took to social media to offer feedback and ask questions, and the Green Bay Press-Gazette spoke with Johnson to find answers.

Here's what we know.

How will the project be financed?

Originally, On Broadway Inc. planned to request some of the city's American Rescue Plan Act COVID-19 relief allocations to put toward the cost of buying the Old Fort Square property. Johnson said Thursday that On Broadway Inc. will now pay for the acquisition with its own money and private financing.

Use of ARPA funding, he explained, may be something the organization pursues in the future.

For the remaining \$10 million to \$12 million in estimated renovation costs, the organization plans to use a combination of grant funding, private investment, capital campaign naming rights and, if needed, additional private financing.

Johnson said the nonprofit has applied for a grants and is working on a capital campaign to raise more money.

"At this point, we have not asked for any government funding," Johnson said. "This is purely a private development."

How will the market bring 1 million visitors?

During the press conference, Johnson estimated roughly 1 million visitors will come to the market annually.

Johnson said the estimate comes from data from other communities and the commercial real estate market for Green Bay. He also specified that the visitor number relates to anyone who visits the market — not just tourists.

Regardless, the market will need around 20,000 visitors a week to reach the 1 million estimation. In comparison, the Milwaukee Public Market had 2 million visitors in 2019, prior the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

For context, Milwaukee's population was nearly 600,000 people in 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, to Green Bay's roughly 105,000. In 2021, Green Bay's population grew to around 107,000 — still only a sixth of Milwaukee's population.

One million visitors is also greater than season attendance at Lambeau Field in a non-playoff year, when the stadium can expect to see roughly 624,000 attendees.

According to Johnson, events hosted by On Broadway, such as the Wednesday farmers market and the Fourth of July fireworks, already attract over 400,000 people to the district.

"At the end of the day, if you're talking about a million or 700,000, I don't know that it really matters," Johnson said. "The numbers still stack up that allow a facility like this to be successful."

What about parking?

If the market is expected to bring in 1 million visitors annually — where will they park?

To address parking, On Broadway is working with General Capital on an apartment complex with underground parking behind the market. The residential development also is expected to include additional ground-level parking. Johnson said he does not know if visitors will need to pay to park in the surface lot or in the underground ramp and said any cost will be determined by the developer.

"Parking has a cost," Johnson said. "You can't build parking facilities, you can't maintain parking facilities without a fund to maintain them."

Who are the tenants?

Four tenants who have committed publicly to the project are:

- One Barrell Brewing, a restaurant and brewery with locations in Door County and Madison, which plans to open a three-barrel brewery and restaurant in the public market.

- West Coast Seafood and Chowder, a seafood catering business that participated in the Broadway farmer's market this past summer, which will sell fresh seafood and hot dishes.

- Gather on Broadway, the owners of which plan to launch a new concept different from their current event venue business.

- The Voyageurs Bakehouse, which would open in the market under a new business separate from their current bread shops in Green Bay and Appleton.

Johnson said On Broadway has received an additional 20 to 30 vendor inquiries since the press conference.

"We're taking our time with addressing some of those other tenants because we want to be more holistic with how we fill out the market," Johnson said. "We want to make sure that we're filling gaps

with the right tenants, not just any tenant."

In response to public questions regarding the diversity of tenants, Johnson said the prospect list of tenants contains several minority-owned businesses.

"We've talked very openly about the fact that we do want to incorporate different cultural food products within this facility," Johnson said.

What's the timeline?

On Broadway Inc. expects to close its purchase of the Old Fort Square Property in April. Simultaneously, the nonprofit is vetting prospective tenants and working to launch its capital campaign.

As early as this summer, Johnson expects to have a more precise estimate of renovation costs and completed engineer drawings. The current budget estimates are based on industry standard data of similar projects and the size of the structure, he said.

The current tenants in the Old Fort Square building will need to move out prior to construction. Johnson said On Broadway Inc. plans to work with those tenants to find new spaces for those businesses within the Broadway district. There are 14 tenants in the building including NorthCoast Productions, Bay Lakes Commercial Real Estate and Imago Dei Barber Lounge.

If the project remains on schedule, construction will begin this fall and if there are no delays during construction, the market will open in summer 2023.

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