



White Block restoration underway

Work commences after a state grant spearheaded by Main Street Monroe, city, and local developers approved for project

MONROE — For many decades, walks around the square inevitably lead to discussions about the historic buildings and variety of styles that have largely been maintained.

One, the White Building, on the southwest corner of the square, which was completed in 1900, has oftentimes been skipped over. This was in large part due to a metal awning that was installed in the late 1970's. It transformed the building, blocking original storefronts and the Tudor Style design.

"That awning has definitely been on our radar for years," said Jordan Nordby, Executive Director, Main Street Monroe. "Specifically getting rid of it," he said with a laugh. "We're so fortunate that virtually every building downtown has been so well preserved. The White Building as it's been for the last few decades is a reminder of why historic preservation is so crucial."

For the first part of the 20th century, the property, officially listed as White, F.F., Block, became a great ornament to the downtown and an improvement to the city as a "world class building."

When new owners, brothers-in-law Scott Mosher and Kyle Keehn, both Monroe natives, acquired the building in late 2021, their plans included restoring the building. Originally, it was built with the idea that it could be an opera house or guards' armory. Mosher and Keehn sought to respect that while adapting it to today's needs.

A conversation with Main Street Monroe led to the discovery of the state's Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program. Renderings used as part of the application and project were provided free of



Restoration of Monroe's White Building, located on the southwest corner of the Square, continued on June 28. The renovation and rehab project is partially being funded by a state Community Development Investment Grant that was secured specifically for the project.

cost through Main Street Monroe.

The program, started in 2013, supports community development and redevelopment efforts, primarily in downtown areas. The matching grants

are awarded based on the ability of applicants to demonstrate the economic impact of the proposed project, including

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Plans made for MHS land vote

Informational meeting July 10, land vote at 6:30 p.m. on July 17

By Adam Krebs
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MONROE — At the June 26 Monroe Board of Education meeting, two important dates were selected in regards to the next steps of the \$88M high school project.

The board unanimously voted for a public informational meeting to be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, July 10 in the current Monroe High School Performing Arts Center. Later in the meeting, they picked a 6:30 p.m. time slot on Monday, July 17 for the special meeting of the electors vote on the B&S property. That meeting will take place in the MHS main gym, with spillover available in the PAC if needed.

Superintendent Rodney Figueroa said the district is planning on expanding its registration help to get district voters registered for the

meeting in a hope to speed up the process, including opening the doors at 4:30 p.m. At the March meeting, in which the 70-acre Donny property on County DR failed, about 1,500 voters showed up, a near 1,000% increase from the first B&S vote in Dec. 2022.

The B&S property in question, currently owned by Randy Bader and Kay Spidahl, is 70 acres and located on Monroe's far east side off of 31st Avenue. Preliminary planning would put a primary entrance on a 66-foot-wide easement from County KK about a half of a mile from the Wis. 11 intersection, with a secondary entrance on 31st Avenue between 10th and 11th streets.

Should the land vote at the meeting of the electors pass, the district would then have the authority to purchase the land. During recent negotiations, however, Bader and Spidahl proposed a straight land swap with the school district. The 70-acre site, plus the easement, would essentially be free. Plus, B&S

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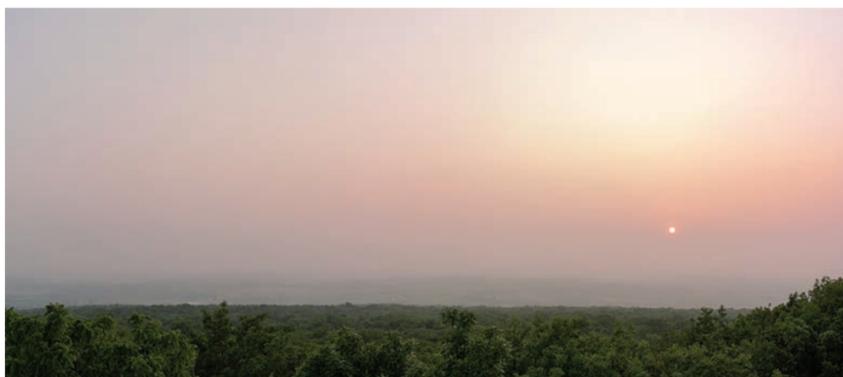
Unhealthy haze causing problems

Smoke from Canadian wildfires descend on Wis., Midwest

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MONROE — Canadian wildfires have cast a haze over much of the eastern and midwestern United States this summer. While wildfires are normal in parts of Canada in the spring and summer, this year's weather patterns have exacerbated the problem.

As of June 29, there were more than 503 active wildfires burning in Canada, up nearly 50 from just two weeks ago. Of those wildfires, 258 have been deemed



Smoke from Canadian wildfires has all but blotted out the sun at sunset in recent days, including here at Blue Mounds State Park.

out of control by the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center.

Across the country, from Minnesota to New York and even into the Carolinas, more than 100 million people are

affected. During an El Nino Oscillation event, warm ocean water develops in the central and eastern Pacific. Accompanied by high air pressure from the western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern side, an El Nino event can last up to four years. The change in air pressure and moisture in the air around the Pacific can shift the jet stream considerably. Instead of flowing west to east across Canada, the winds are flowing southwest, dipping into the Midwest, which has in turn brought smoke from the wildfires. The smoke even skipped across the Atlantic Ocean this week, reaching Europe.

While more of a smokey haze than a thick cloud of smoke, the sun and moon appear more orange and redder than normal, and visibility is limited to just a handful of miles at best. Effects are vast to humans and animals

that are outside and breathe in the fumes, as well. All of Wisconsin has spent the past week in a "very unhealthy" purple alert rating by authorities. People with respiratory and other illnesses often feel their symptoms worsen.

"With no end in sight to the Canadian wildfires and west to northwesterly winds expected to persist from south central Canada into the north central to northeast U.S., poor air quality conditions are likely to continue," the National Weather Service warned on June 29.

Authorities have advised for people to stay indoors if possible, and, if the need arises to go outside to either work, the store or other errands, to wear a KN-95 or N-95 mask, the same as was widely suggested during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Wisconsin

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Two arrested for fatal Albany drug overdose

By Gary Mays
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MONROE — A pair of Green County men have been charged with supplying the deadly opiate that apparently killed a drug user the men knew in Albany in early June.

Shannon J. Woollums, age 52 of Brodhead, and Matthew B. Riese, age 45 of Albany, are accused of providing opioids that led to the death of a 37-year-old earlier this

month, according to a criminal complaint filed in Green County Circuit Court.

The incident began, according to a press statement, on June 1, 2023, just before 3:55 p.m., with a 9-1-1 report of a medical emergency on 6th Street in Albany.

Deputies, Albany EMS and First Response and Green County EMS all were dispatched to the home. But despite attempting life-sav-

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Bike crashes highlight need for vigilance

13-year-old bicyclist hospitalized at UW Hospital with fractured skull, broken leg

By Gary Mays
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MONROE — A pair of recent bicycle accidents at nearly the same location downtown have police urging motorists and cyclists alike to be careful on the road this summer.

In the most serious incident, 13-year-old Ayden Eberle, was riding Tuesday along 16th Avenue near 9th Street and a downtown gas station when he entered an intersection not far from the

stoplight.

"Instead of stepping on the brake, the driver accelerated," likely because the driver had limited visibility due to nearby buildings, said Monroe Police Chief Fred Kelley.

The teen was hit on his bike, seriously injured, and taken by local EMS to SSM Monroe Health and later transferred to UW Hospital in Madison for treatment for a fractured skull and broken leg. No one was ticketed in the incident, according to

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MHS

From Page A1

would give \$100,000 toward construction of the easement. Then, once the new facility is built and the district moves in, B&S would take over the current high school land “as-is.”

At that point, B&S would be responsible for the future of approximately 40 acres of land and the potential demolition of the current structure, which has problems with water infiltration, a degrading roof and other issues. The total savings for the district for not having to pay for land and demolition of the leftover buildings would be about \$3.15 million in total, and the district would gain 30 acres of land. Should B&S either develop the old site for residential housing or commercial use, that would mean the potential for more tax money coming into the city, alleviating some of the burden from taxpayers, whose rates went up about 25% after the \$88 million referendum passed in November.

If the land vote fails, then the new school would be built on the current high school property. Given the current property’s limited space for expansion, the new school would have to be built over top of the current baseball and football fields. Once the new school is built, the old school, including the PAC and gymnasiums, would be torn down, and then the athletic fields would be built.

The construction timeline for the B&S property would have the new high school and all of its athletic facilities ready to use for the 2025-26 school year. Under the current location, which would cost about \$226,000 more in total to construct, the delay in building the athletic fields means MHS athletics could see a 2- to 3-year disruption.

During that time, MHS would not be able to host any on-site outdoor physical education or athletic practices and competitions. Football, baseball, and track-and-field would have to move all practices and competitions entirely to a new location in a separate town, as there are no facilities elsewhere in the city of

appropriate dimensions or size for high school use.

That would mean added transportation costs for daily busing to and from practice and games for all three sports, plus any rental fees the host facility or town would charge — and that’s not to mention the complications with scheduling around another high school’s schedule for facility availability. It would also mean the loss of revenue from ticket sales and concessions, which typically go directly to MHS clubs and specific athletic programs.

Cross country, which currently utilizes the track for practices and holds competitions at Twining Park would have to relocate for all practice. Tennis splits its team and competitions between the four courts at the high school and four courts at Recreation Park. Twining Park has two courts, and North East Park has three, though the growth of pickleball around the area could disrupt scheduling. The soccer teams have been practicing and playing at T.R. Holyoke Field on the high school campus for the past few years, but could theoretically return to Honey Creek Park, where the programs called home for nearly two decades.

Indoor activities, like volleyball, basketball and wrestling, as well as theater, could continue in the current facility until the new school is completed. Hockey, swimming and softball are already held off-site.

At the proposed B&S property, the athletic complex would contain two full-size baseball fields for varsity and junior varsity use, as well as two softball fields, eight tennis courts and a new football/soccer stadium with a track, plus two practice fields for football, soccer and track and field to utilize.

An informational packet was sent to every district household last week, and more information on the entirety of the project — from concept in 2017 to where things sit in current planning, are available on the school’s website at www.monroeschools.com.

There will be no other Board of Education meetings before the informational meeting and land vote.

Overdose

From Page A1

ing measures, those first responders were unable to revive the victim, who was pronounced dead at the scene by the Green County Coroner’s Office, police said.

Another victim was apparently saved by two doses of Narcan while police were on the scene. Narcan, administered through a nasal spray, can rapidly reverse the deadly effects of opiates.

“Deputy Jackson advised Victim 2 went limp while being held by Witness 1 and Witness 1 stated that he believed that she was not breathing,” said the criminal complaint about the incident. “Deputy Jackson advised that Victim 2’s eyes were dilated and her lips were turning blue. Deputy Jackson further advised that Victim 2’s arms showed indications of heavy intravenous drug use...”

After getting the Narcan, that victim, an adult female, was then transported by ambulance to an area hospital, where she was treated and later released.

As part of their follow up investigation, on Friday, June 23, 2023, Green County Sheriff’s Office officers executed a search warrant related to the Albany incident at a home in the 600 block of 14th Street in Brodhead. During the subsequent police search, two residents of the home were arrested, including Shannon Woollums, who transported to the Green County Jail.

He was tentatively charged with Delivery of Controlled Substances, 2nd Degree Recklessly Endangering Safety and 1st Degree Reckless Homicide by Delivery of Controlled

Substances.

Tywanna A. Woollums, age 49, of the same home, was charged with Possession of Marijuana and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and later released pending court.

Over the following weekend, a second suspect in the Albany incident — Riese — was located and taken into custody. Riese has been charged with Party to a Crime of Delivery of Controlled Substances, Party to a Crime of 2nd Degree Recklessly Endangering Safety and Party to a Crime of 1st Degree Reckless Homicide by Delivery of Controlled substances.

A Harley-Davidson motorcycle bearing an Illinois license plate and numerous Motorola cell phones were confiscated as evidence in the case — the motorcycle having been apparently used to transport the suspected fentanyl.

The incident remains under investigation.

Both Riese and Shannon Woollums appeared before Green County Circuit Court Branch 2 Judge Thomas Vale on June 27. Their next appearance is scheduled for July 7 in front of Branch 1 Judge Faun Marie Phillipson.

Both defendants had their cash bond set at \$50,000, and each signed the bonds on June 28. Neither is allowed to possess or consume any controlled substances without a valid prescription; no possession of any drug paraphernalia; no contact with the immediate family of Victim 1; no contact with Victim 2, her residence, or any immediate family members; not to leave the State of Wisconsin without permission from the court; or to have any contact with the co-defendant in the case.

Woollums has a lengthy court record, a mix of traffic violations,

delinquent tax warrants from the Dept. of Revenue, disorderly conduct, at least five convictions for driving under the influence, and more than a dozen civil suits, many of which are from his time with Stateline Paving. He has paid more than \$31,000 in civil suits since 2005, and his unpaid debts total another \$177,000. While he has fulfilled just shy of \$38,000 in delinquent taxes going back nearly 30 years, he still owes another \$162,000 total in filed or open cases.

Riese has a past criminal history that includes four convictions of driving under the influence, and in 2013 was found guilty of Hit-and-Run-Involving Great Bodily Harm, a Class E felony.

There have been at least three cases in Green and Lafayette Counties in the past year involving defendants charged with supplying fentanyl in overdose deaths of reported drug users.

In one such case, Tre Creamer, a Madison-based rap artist, is accused of supplying the heroin that killed a 46-year-old female who died of an apparent overdose in Argyle in 2022. He is scheduled for his next court appearance on July 12 in Lafayette County Circuit Court before Circuit Judge Faun Phillipson.

In Monroe, Levi Janssens, is awaiting trial for supplying the alleged fentanyl that killed a 32-year-old Monroe man in a local hotel room Aug 23, 2022. A Monroe native who was living in Verona at the time, Janssens faces reckless homicide charges, a class C Felony in Wisconsin, for his role in the incident.

Janssens is scheduled for a pre-trial conference on his case at 8:30 a.m. July 18 in Green County Circuit Court.

Budget

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In order to reach the \$4.4 billion in tax cuts, some items had to left off. The University of Wisconsin took a big hit, as did child care assistance.

“I’m disappointed and disheartened,” Democratic Minority Leader Melissa Agard added.

The \$99 million budget was scheduled for a Republican-controlled vote on June 29. Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers, a Democrat, could issue partial vetoes, as well as veto the entire budget. If he does, the Legislature would have to restart the process. Evers has threatened as such given a large cut aimed at UW’s funding for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), though he has not specified if he would veto the whole budget or even specified parts.

The Republican’s budget cut UW funding by \$32 million, the cost GOP leaders said goes toward DEI staff salaries and programming. UW asked for a \$435 million more dollars, also wanted to build a new engineering facility on campus, but that too was turned down in the Republican budget.

Republicans also rejected an increase in funds for the Office of School Safety, which school and law enforcement leaders, as well as Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul, advocated for.

Locally, the biggest hit to the budget came from a pandemic-era child care subsidy. Child Care Counts is a federal program that brought millions of dollars to the state, helping child care facilities across the state with their own budgeting to stay open. That in turn allowed thousands of families access to affordable daycare and child care services. Evers’s budget included a \$340 million investment to make the program permanent in the state.

To date, the Child Care Counts Stabilization Payment Program has distributed more than \$378 million to 4,345 child care providers, ensuring 22,000 child care professionals remain or become employed and enabling providers to continue to provide high-quality care to 113,000 kids, Gov. Evers’ office wrote in a June 29 press release. This funding is in addition to the \$230 million that was distributed through previous Child Care Count programs, which occurred between May 2020 and November 2021.

According to a survey of nearly 1,200 Wisconsin early care and education providers from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, more than 27% of providers reported that their program would have closed without the stabilization grants, and when the grants end, more than 60% of child care directors say they will have to raise tuition on families and another more than 33% say they will have to cut wages or will be unable to sustain wages/salary increases for their staff. According to Kids Forward, the median pay for child care workers in Wisconsin is \$12.66 an hour.

Additionally, 54% of Wisconsinites today live in a child care desert — where there are few to no high-quality options for child care in their neighborhood or community — and even if there is a nearby child care provider, it still might not be affordable for a working family. According to the

“Without (Child Care Counts), 25% of providers will close permanently and 60% of providers will be forced to raise tuition. I am incredibly disappointed that Republicans chose to end this program and make our child care crisis worse by instead choosing to fund a massive tax cut for millionaires.”

— Wisconsin Sen. Mark Spreitzer, 15th District

Annie E. Casey Foundation’s annual Kids Count report, the average yearly cost of center-based child care in Wisconsin is \$12,415.

“Wisconsin faces a child care crisis. Working families face impossible decisions about whether to pay tens of thousands of dollars per year or simply stop working altogether — if they can even find care,” said Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison). “The Child Care Counts program works to make child care sustainable and affordable and is one of the most important investments we could make in our workforce, our children, and our economy.”

Sen. Spreitzer said for the past six months, the top issue he’s seen come up time and time again in contacts with his constituents includes addressing the child care crisis and extending the Child Care Counts program.

“This program gives funding to child care providers to maintain competitive wages for their staff without raising prices for parents,” Sen. Spreitzer said. “Without it, 25% of providers will close permanently and 60% of providers will be forced to raise tuition. I am incredibly disappointed that Republicans chose to end this program and make our child care crisis worse by instead choosing to fund a massive tax cut for millionaires.”

Sen. Spreitzer didn’t end there, adding that the Republican budget ignored common-sense priorities supported by the majority of Wisconsinites that “don’t even cost money,” like universal background checks.

“They even neglected to include popular policies that bring in more money, such as expanding BadgerCare and legalizing marijuana,” Sen. Spreitzer said. “I wish that what was passed by Senate Republicans today was a budget for the people of Wisconsin, like the one that Governor Evers and legislative Democrats proposed. But it isn’t. It’s a broken budget based on broken priorities that are hurting our state. That is why I voted no. It is also why I will continue to fight for responsible middle-class tax relief while making investments in childcare, education, and our state’s future.”

On June 29, Gov. Evers’ made a last-ditch effort to save something from Child Care Counts. He submitted a formal request to the JFC to use remaining federal relief dollars to support Wisconsin’s early care and education (ECE) community through the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families’ (DCF) Child Care Counts payment program. The Child Care Counts Program has been a lifeline for local child care providers, Gov. Evers’ office said, and the program has helped make child care more affordable and accessible for working families while stabilizing the industry to

maintain jobs for the state’s workforce. The request, if approved, will help continue provider payments through January 2024, when the program is set to end due to legislative Republicans’ refusal to permanently fund the successful program in the 2023-25 biennial budget.

“Two weeks ago today, I urged Republicans on the Joint Committee on Finance to approve my budget’s foundational investment to support and continue Child Care Counts, and they carelessly rejected the investment — putting Wisconsin families, our workforce, and our economy at risk,” said Gov. Evers. “Without this program, Wisconsin faces a perilous state of child care that will not only impact our current workforce and economy but also our future generations. With our state’s longstanding workforce challenges, we simply cannot afford not to support our child care industry. I am again urging Republicans to urgently make the necessary investments in this critical program.”

A FLAT TAX FUTURE FOR WISCONSIN?

Republican Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu told the Associated Press the budget was “investing in our core priorities” and that “this is moving Wisconsin toward a flat tax.”

A flat tax is where there is a single tax rate applied to every taxpayer regardless of income. The opposite of a flat tax is a progressive tax, where the tax rate increases as a taxpayer’s income rises.

A progressive tax withholds the chance of an enlarging separation in the wealth class structure. Under a flat tax system, the top money earners are burdened even less at tax time than the lower earners.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed into law the country’s first progressive income tax, which replaced the previous 3% flat tax. In 1913, the top tax rate was a mere 7%, and under President Herbert Hoover in the 1920s went from 24 to 63%. Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), that again was raised to 79%, then 90% in 1944. The taxes set up funds that could benefit all Americans and, along with the resolve of the collective of the country during WWII, helped pull the country out of the Great Depression.

For 20 years the nation’s wealthiest were taxed at more than 90%, while the regular taxable rate was just 3% with a 91% surtax after that. The nation’s largest growth as an economy happened during that stretch.

From President Richard Nixon in 1965 to President Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980, the top rate began to drop and the surtax was gone. By the end of Reagan’s term, the top earners owed just 38.5% in the top bracket. The current rate is 37%.

Haze

From Page A1

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is recommending Wisconsinites to reduce their time outdoors due to ongoing air quality alerts resulting from Canadian wildfire smoke,” the DNR stated in a recent press release. “Health impacts are expected across most of Wisconsin today, where the air quality index is expected to range from the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” to the “unhealthy” level. People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should consider making outdoor activities shorter and less intense and reduce heavy exertion. Consider rescheduling or moving events indoors.”

Organizations have also been shuttering gatherings this past week. The Monroe public pool closed due to the poor air quality, while little league softball and baseball practices saw a spike in absences.

The wildfires in Canada — and even some across Wisconsin and the rest of the U.S. — are naturally occurring events. However, scientists for decades have said the global issue of rising temperatures is leading to climate change on a massive scale. Among the problems is rising temperatures in the oceans, stronger storms and deeper droughts across the Earth.

Wisconsin is once again experiencing some of the most dangerous air quality in the world as smoke from Canadian wildfires blankets our region, warned Clean Wisconsin, an environmental policy group, wrote in a press release June 27. The group pointed out that summer is the time of the year when Wisconsinites relish being outdoors, but instead people across the state are being warned to stay inside.

“We cannot accept this as our new normal in Wisconsin,” said Clean Wisconsin director, Cheryl and air program director Chelsea Chandler. “The public health threat that we’ve been enduring for weeks must be a wakeup call for policymakers. Fires in places like Canada and the western United States are both products and causes of climate change. There is action we can take right now to ensure that Wisconsin is

part of the climate solution.”

Chandler said that while recent federal action on climate change will have an impact, it’s not enough on its own and that more work needs to be done at the state level.

Those actions should include:

- Rapidly shutting down Wisconsin’s remaining coal power plants
- Drastically increasing funding for programs that help Wisconsinites save energy and money
- Investing in public transit and electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Supporting large-scale wind and solar development
- Removing barriers to rooftop and community solar
- Incentivizing farming practices that truly store carbon in the soil and restore soil health
- Ending investments in fossil fuel infrastructure like new methane gas plants and oil pipelines

“These ideas are not new; in fact, many other states are already taking action. For example, Wisconsin is last in the Midwest when it comes to wind energy production, far behind our neighbors.” Chandler said. “We’ve got to realize that Wisconsin is not an island. No community is safe from the impacts of climate change. The question is, what are we — and our state leaders — doing to help?”

To follow up to date air quality, go to AirNow.gov. To see a current map of wildfire smoke in North America and a two-day forecast, go to <https://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/>.

“This is a dynamic situation, and conditions may change rapidly over the next few days. It is important to pay close attention to the air quality in your area and take action, especially if you don’t feel well,” the DNR stated on June 27. “During this air quality advisory, the DNR and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recommend that everyone keep outdoor activities light and short. Watch for symptoms like coughing and shortness of breath as a sign to take a break or move indoors. Sensitive groups, which include people with heart or lung disease, older adults, children, those who are pregnant, and those who work outdoors — should consider moving all events inside.”