



# PORTAGE COUNTY DEMOCRAT

## APRIL 2023 Newsletter

### Vote for Judge Janet Protasiewicz April 4<sup>th</sup>!



Judge Janet Protasiewicz visited Headquarters on March 26<sup>th</sup>. She spoke about her values and her pledge to uphold the Wisconsin State Constitution. She recognizes our need for fair legislative maps, our need to protect our natural resources, our need for equal rights for women, and our need to protect our voting rights. She will be our voice. No question about it. She has my vote! We all know how important this election is so let's finish this race with a big win for all of us by voting for Judge Janet!

**On April 10<sup>th</sup> the County Board Committee of the Whole will be meeting at 5pm in the Annex Building.** The controversial topic of the location of the new County Courthouse and Jail will be discussed and the public will be able to speak. Eric Olson is keeping us updated on this subject and his take on the latest information is included later in this newsletter. It is very important that the people of Portage County pay attention to how the County Board is spending our tax dollars. Seating is limited in the conference room so get there early!

**PCDP General Meeting is on April 11, at 6:30pm.** Our guest speaker is Rich Kleinman. He will be leading an authentic conversation on climate change with the objective of promoting a community conversation. We also hope to be celebrating the results of the election... because nobody likes salty beer 😊

**Rural Power Lab Updates:** The month of April has been designated communication/tech/media month. Our committee will be scheduling some training sessions about how to effectively use social media platforms. We will also be writing OpEd(s) or letters to the editor for our local newspapers. We are always looking for new members and would welcome anyone with media proficiency and experience writing letters to the editor to join us. **When the April election is over, we will begin in earnest to form committees for Finance, Fundraising/Events, Communications, and Membership within our local county party. You do not need to be a member of the Board to be a member of a committee.** We need your expertise. Please consider joining a committee. We need YOUR ideas! Contact Jan Way [janmway@gmail.com](mailto:janmway@gmail.com) or 715-572-5802, or Gary Hawley [garbh2008@yahoo.com](mailto:garbh2008@yahoo.com) or 715-321-0111.

**Trivia 53 “The Trivia Life for Me” the World’s Largest Trivia Contest is coming up,** April 14,15,16, 2023.

The contest starts on a Friday. We participate on Saturday night by answering phones from 6:00-10:00pm at the UWSP campus radio station, 90FM. Come join the fun and get to know some of your fellow Dems. To volunteer contact Jan Way at [janmway@gmail.com](mailto:janmway@gmail.com) or 715-572-5802. There is definitely food involved! 😊



**3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District Democratic Party of Wisconsin Official Call to Convention, April 30, 2023, 10:00am to 4:00pm Comfort Inn, N. 6295 Holiday Dr., Black River Falls, WI 54615.** Here's a great opportunity to rub elbows with candidates, get to know other Dems in the district, and to just plain enjoy some time with like-minded people. You can sign up online or print off the form. If you need information, contact Gary Hawley at [garybh2008@yahoo.com](mailto:garybh2008@yahoo.com) or 715-321-0111.

**Jack Allgaier sent a card to Dave Obey, our well-respected and long-serving Rep for the 7<sup>th</sup> CD, and a newspaper clipping when Congress named the Appropriations Subcommittee Room after him. Here is Dave's reply to Jack:**



Jack, this is a very belated response to the card you sent me containing the newspaper article in the Stevens Point newspaper by Frank Umhofer about Congress naming the Appropriations Subcommittee Room after me. I appreciated your comment about my good buddy Jerry Madison and your update on events in Portage County. Joan and I are now at Goodman House, an Assisted Living Facility in Alexandria, Virginia. We both have the ailments associated with being 84 years old. Please say hello to all my Portage County friends. I appreciate all of their friendship through the years. I remember fondly the

Sunday get-togethers we had at the Stevens Point parks—good food and good conversations.

Thanks.

David Obey

**We have been busy this past month!** Here are a couple pictures from Judge Janet's visit, and a couple from the County Chairs Association Meeting, including one from "Happy Hour" at HQ 😊



# County Executive Pavelski is Using Scare Tactics and Inflated Costs to Push Justice Center Project Ahead without a Thorough Review

Update by Eric Olson

The county needs to do something to address safety and operational issues with the courthouse and jail, but the leaders of the county are skewing the numbers and creating a false sense of financial urgency to advance this project ahead of thorough review. **On Monday March 20, County Executive Pavelski addressed the Stevens Point City Council and stated “Every day that we delay the decision of a courts or jail project is costing you and I \$26,000. That’s \$26,000 a day. We’re looking at a \$165 million to \$175 million project and looking at a 6% inflation rate this year, and 6% inflation rate on that kind of money is \$26,000 a day, or \$800,000 to \$850,000 a month. So timely decisions are very, very important.”**



This rhetoric can sound very much like pressure tactics used by salespeople to convince customers to sign on the bottom line before digging too far into what they are buying. These numbers- monthly or daily- need to stand up to scrutiny if people are going to use them to hasten an important and difficult to reverse decision. Unfortunately, the numbers do not stand for three reasons.

**First, the 6% inflation factor Pavelski cites is not solid.** Yes, we need to rely on past prices to get a sense of what the future holds, but price trends are not set in stone and those in the construction industry are seeing some material prices actually falling. Nobody really knows what the prices will be a year from now. They rose dramatically from 2020 to 2022 due to pandemic- related supply chain issues, many of which are now being resolved. In 2024 we could be in a recession; prices could continue to fall. This rate makes it seem super urgent, though, so, it serves an ulterior motive.

**Second, the \$26,000/day figure is a product of the TOTAL project cost. Proponents are using the value \$165-175 million; is that number reliable?** For example, if it were \$330 million, the cost to wait would double to \$52,000/day- would that mean we should act with even more urgency? Or should we instead try to unpack and understand where the \$330 million or \$165 million estimate is coming from? I don’t get a sense that anyone is trying to do that- the county is relying on consultants to provide these numbers and there’s no real penalty to them if they’re wrong, and having a bigger number only gives us a bigger “cost to wait” and further fuels urgency. It also makes it easier when all is settled to come in under budget. But you could just as well say that the project will cost \$330 million and make it really, really urgent to act now and also much easier to come in under budget. The price serves an ulterior motive.

The project advocates refuse to provide a cost breakdown between the jail and the courthouse, but it’s important to recognize that on a per square foot basis the former is more expensive than the latter. **The combined price we are being fed works out to \$906 per square foot.** Is this high for such a project? One way to find out is to see what other counties are paying for similar projects, and ideally what they are paying right now or budgeting for the near future. One would find it very hard to locate a recent or planned courthouse, jail, or combined facility that’s coming in anywhere close to \$900/sq ft. I have asked people I know in the construction industry for their response to \$900/sq ft. and they all respond with shock and incredulity. **Recent courthouse projects that I could find are coming in closer to \$500 sq/ft. The Wood County jail, currently under construction, is \$635/sq ft. This is consistent with Kewaunee County where**

**a smaller jail is coming in at \$640/sq ft. If our project was \$650/sq ft for the jail and \$500/sq ft for the courthouse, the estimate would be \$69 million for the jail and \$38 million for the courthouse, \$107 million total. The urgency related to the “cost to wait” would be 50% less. My point is that the cost to wait is a factor of the chosen inflation rate and the total project cost, but both of those being used to get \$26,000/day seem detached from reality. This effect will only be amplified when the cost to finance is added.**

**Finally, if people are going to talk about the cost to wait, then they also need to acknowledge and factor in a cost to act.** Had the county built 10 years ago, the price would have been less, but today in 2023 we'd be occupying a building that is now 10 years older and 10 years closer to its end of useful life. We can roughly estimate this effect by depreciating the asset: if it has a 50-year lifespan, then every year 2% is gone due to wear, tear and movement towards obsolescence. **This helps all of us understand why, in a stable inflationary environment, it actually has been easy to kick the can down the road: a 2% “cost to wait” inflation factor is balanced by a -2% “cost of depreciation” yielding an actual cost to wait that’s closer to zero.**

**Our county board in the past has made very expensive decisions based on inaccurate information used to advance a handful of supervisors’ interests. We have, for example, the stretch of County Highway HH near the Wisconsin River and its bridge which a previous chair thought could or would become U.S. Highway 10. Today it serves only a small fraction of the traffic it was designed and built for and Portage County taxpayers are collectively on the hook for its annual and long-term maintenance. The citizens of the county created the office of the Executive in the early 2000s to serve as a necessary check on such schemes. Unfortunately, the ulterior motives of the County Executive and the County Board Chair are skewing our government away from the interest of voters and taxpayers. Please plan to attend the County Board Committee of the Whole on Monday April 10 at 5pm in the Annex Building to share your concerns about the speed and direction that this is going. The public will be allowed to speak; come early if you wish to do so as there is limited seating in the conference room.**

### PORTAGE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY 2023 EXECUTIVE BOARD

<b>2023 Co-Chair</b> Jan Way	<b>Statutory Chair</b> Marion Trzebiatowski	<b>Membership Chair</b> TBD
<b>2023 Co-Chair</b> Gary Hawley	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> CD Rep</b> Rick Christofferson	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Lynn Wyman
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair</b> Ned Grossnickle	<b>At Large</b> Collin McNamara	<b>College Dems President</b> Morgan Lock
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair</b> Karyn Tank	<b>At Large</b> Trudy Pederson	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair</b> David Pederson	<b>At Large</b> Mary Vils	<b>HQ Phone:</b> 715-544-6323
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Vice Chair</b> Joan Garski	<b>At Large</b> Mary Zinda	<b>Website:</b> portagecountydems.org
<b>Secretary</b> Kathy Celer	<b>At Large</b> Barb Brewster	<b>Address:</b> 2220 Division Street
<b>Treasurer</b> Lynn Dominick	<b>At Large</b> Bev Mancl	Stevens Point, WI 54481

## Candidates for State-wide and Local Offices on the April 4<sup>th</sup> Ballot

OFFICE	CANDIDATES
<b>Justice of the Supreme Court</b> Vote for 1	Janet Protasiewicz Daniel Kelly
<b>Wisconsin Court of Appeals District 4</b>	Michael Fitzpatrick
<b>Circuit Court Branch 1</b>	Michael Zell
<b>Stevens Point School Board</b> Vote for 3	Gee Pope Christina Scott Ted Kowalski Miguel Campos Robert Larson Alex Sommers
IF YOU LIVE IN STEVENS POINT	
<b>City of Stevens Point:</b>	
Mayor:	Meleesa Johnson and Mike Wiza
District 1:	Marc Christianson and Gracia Day
District 3:	Ginger Keymer
District 5:	Allison Birr
District 6:	David Plaisance and Jason Behrendt
District 7:	Mary Kneebone and Tim Johnson
District 9:	Sam Lang and Keith Kedrowski
District 11:	Shaun Morrow
IF YOU LIVE IN PLOVER	
<b>Village of Plover</b>	
Village President:	Gary Wolf, Ross Ballard
Trustee Ward 1:	Ross Ballard
Trustee Ward 2:	Al Haga, Darcy Grabski, Sara Luchini, Tim Cisewski
Trustee Ward 3:	Steve Fritz

**NOTE:** Three state-wide ballot measures are certified to appear on the April 4<sup>th</sup> ballot. Two ballot questions, one is related to the conditions for the release of an accused person before conviction, the second is related to cash bail. The third measure is an advisory question asking voters whether able-bodied childless adults should have to apply for work before receiving welfare benefits. **We have been advised by the DPW to vote NO on all of the state-wide ballot measures, but during the only debate between Judge Protasiewicz and Judge Kelly, Judge Protasiewicz said she would vote YES for the second ballot measure regarding cash bail.** The two City of Stevens Point referendums for street reconstruction have already been budgeted for and will not raise your taxes. These streets badly need repair so I plan to vote YES!



Portage County Democratic Party  
2220 Division St.  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

[www.portagecountydems.org](http://www.portagecountydems.org)

Facebook: PortageCountyWIDems

Twitter: PortageCoWIDems@portagecountywidems



## PCDP General Meeting

April 11, 6:30pm at HQ

Guest Speaker: Rich Kleinman

Topic: "An Authentic Conversation on  
Climate Change to Promote a  
Community Conversation"

**EASTER April 9**

**Tax Day April 18**

**TRIVIA 53 "The Trivia Life for Me"**

**April 14, 15, 16**

**PCDP answering phones Sat. 6-10pm**

**EARTH DAY April 22**

**3<sup>rd</sup> CD Convention April 30**

**COFFEE on Thursdays at 10am at Headquarters**