

The Verona Press

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Verona Area School District

Athlete penalties could get stiffer

SETH JOVAAG
Unified Newspaper Group

Earlier this winter, when two star players for the Madison Memorial High School basketball team received one-game suspensions after they were arrested for theft, many scoffed at what seemed like a slap on the wrist.

The players returned to the court March 2 and led Memorial

to a 65-37 victory over Verona in the WIAA Division 1 regional semifinals.

"It didn't seem appropriate," Verona athletic director Mark Kryka said of the lenient punishment.

That led Verona officials to ask: If a local athlete had been busted for the same crime, what would their penalty be?

The answer, found in the

district's athletic code of conduct: a one-game suspension.

Spurred by that finding, five coaches and Kryka recently offered major revisions to the code for the first time in a decade. They've proposed stiffer penalties for things like theft, drinking, drug use or hosting parties where alcohol or drugs are present. They also increased the number of times athletes' grades will be checked

to determine if they are academically eligible to play sports.

The changes, presented last Monday to the Verona Area school board, would bring Verona more in line with other area schools, Kryka said.

For example, the current code suspends athletes for 20 percent of a season – be it football, basketball or other school-sponsored sports – if they are busted for

alcohol, drugs, possessing weapons or other felony crimes. Theft or hosting underage drinking parties carry a one-game suspension.

Under the new rules, they'd miss half the season for any of those violations, though in cases of theft, that's only if the crime tops \$100; a smaller theft would be a lesser violation subject to a suspension

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Town of Verona

Johnson bids town farewell after 29 years

MARK IGNATOWSKI
Unified Newspaper Group

A familiar face behind the counter at the Verona Town Hall will be leaving, this time for good, on Friday.

Rose M. Johnson, who has served in both elected and appointed positions as the town clerk, administrator and treasurer, is retiring after 29 years with the town.

Johnson first announced her intentions to leave about six months ago. She postponed her good-bye to keep continuity in the office while the town dealt with a staff absence and hired another administrator.

And while she'll be gone from the office, Johnson said she'll still have Verona on her mind.

"I'll keep you posted on how long it's gonna take to not go, 'Oh geez, we gotta get an agenda put together,'" Johnson said.

While old habits may take a while to fade, change is something Johnson is no stranger to. Since she moved to the town in 1970, she's seen changes within town government, land use, accounting and technology.

Johnson grew up "a block off the Square" in Madison, so coming to Verona was quite shock, she said. The rural environment of the town at the time was something she hadn't experience before.

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Photo courtesy Peruvian Presidential Palace

Brandon Possin, a 2001 Verona graduate, poses for a photo with Peruvian President Ollanta Humala in April. The two became friends when he was assigned to the Peruvian delegation at a summit in Honolulu in 2011. They went running together and talked over Starbucks coffee.

Diplomatic proclivity

VAHS grad Possin enjoys finding common ground

EVAN FINCH
Verona Press correspondent

When Brandon Possin graduated from Verona Area High School in 2001, he had no idea he would eventually work overseas in the U.S. Foreign Service.

But more than a decade later, the former editor-in-chief of the high school newspaper and student representative on the Verona Area School District's Site Council returned to his Alma mater and

displayed the polish and nuance of a born diplomat while talking about life abroad for local students.

"I prefer not to use the term Third World," Possin said in response to one question about how "Third World" residents view the United States. "I feel it is anachronistic. It is a negative term that doesn't fairly or accurately describe these countries' situations."

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County M plans on display, get a 1-year delay

JIM FEROLIE
Verona Press editor

Next week's presentation of the likely new intersection designs on County Highway M is no longer as urgent as it previously seemed.

While it's plenty meaningful – planners have chosen a roundabout at PD and a regular signalized intersection with turn lanes at Midtown as their "preferred alternatives" – the construction timeline has been moved back a full year, to 2015 and 2016.

That will push it back until the massive Verona Road project is done, though City of Madison project engineer Chris Petykowski said that has little to do with the reasoning behind the delay. The project, like most major road works in the area, gets 50 percent federal funding, but there wouldn't be enough available if it were done earlier.

"The project as envisioned now is fairly more expensive than we anticipated, just because of some of the accommodations we've added to the pedestrian and bike and the prices we've been seeing in some of the other state DOT-led projects," he said, noting that staff estimates put it well over \$20 million.

Planners have one more meeting, this week, before finalizing the designs they'll present next Thursday at the Verona Senior Center, but

If you go

What: Public information meeting for County M upgrades

When: 6-8 p.m. Thursday, May 24

Where: Verona Senior Center, 108 Paoli St.

Info: visit cityofmadison.com/engineering or call Jason DiPiazza at (800) 446-0679

MSA engineer Jason DiPiazza said they are mostly the same as what he presented to about 75 people at the senior center last December.

"The general concept hasn't changed, and the size of them hasn't grown or changed dramatically, by any means," he said. "(There will be) a few changes for existing access points."

That partly keeps the project in harmony with Madison's still fluid plans for Raymond Road, for someday when it develops in the area where the Marty farm and a few other residences are now. Whenever that is, Raymond Road will be diverted more cleanly, so it no longer has any connection to the intersection formerly known as "Five Points."

As Verona city planning director Bruce Sylvester explained to the Plan Commission last week, Madison is still choosing among a few

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