

Chunks of ice are pushed to the bank of the Mississippi River on Thursday off Riverside Park. Today's forecast calls for sunny skies and a high temperature of 45 degrees in La Crosse. Sunny skies and even warmer temperatures are expected for the weekend, according to the National Weather Service.

Project aims to add value to park

Board looks at La Crosse Center expansion impact

JOURDAN VIAN
La Crosse Tribune

While the design isn't yet set for the La Crosse Center expansion, city officials are looking forward to how the \$49 million proposal would impact Riverside Park, including plans for the space underneath the portion of

the building that would hang over the park.

La Crosse Center Board president Brent Smith and director Art Fahey spoke to the city's Board of Park Commissioners Thursday, talking about options for the space underneath the new ballroom — a portion of which is planned to suspend over Front Street and the city's most



Smith



Fahey

well-known park by the Mississippi River.

"It obviously will impact the park, no matter what concept is chosen," Smith said.

The concept, which is being developed by Gensler and ISG, is scheduled to go before the La Crosse Common Council next month for final approval. It was delayed last month

as city officials worked to develop an additional funding plan after the concept approved by the La Crosse Center Board came in at \$7.2 million more than the \$42 million in funding already set aside for the project.

"We've always talked about selling the river — it's a big selling point for us — so we want to take advantage of it," Fahey said.

To do that, the concept calls for the ballroom to hang 27 feet

Please see PARK, Page A3

DISCOVER
DIGITAL



■ For the latest in news and sports, or to comment on a story, go to our website.

AT LACROSSETRIBUNE.COM

CLASSIFIED	C3-4	LOTTERIES	A2	OBITUARIES
COMICS	C5	MARKETS	D3	PUZZLES
LIVE!	C1	OPINION	A4	SPORTS

\$2.00 • D • Volume 114, Issue 305 • A Lee Enterprises Newspaper • Copyright 2018

Follow us online: [facebook.com/lacrossetribune](https://www.facebook.com/lacrossetribune)



Treat Yourself to the Luxury of Simplicity

Open House

Sat. & Sun. 12:00-4:00pm

1631 SAND LAKE ROAD, ONALASKA WI

Resort Style Condo's for Lease • The 55+ Group Loves the Care-Free Lifestyle

Phase 2 Units Open for the First Time!



Traditional Trades

Building Neighborhoods for YOUR Lifestyle!

Call For a Tour 608-783-4785 or Visit www.traditionaltrades.net for more information

Long-term US mortgage rates fall for first time this year

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Long-term U.S. mortgage rates fell this week for the first time this year as the spring home buying season begins. The decline comes after nine straight weeks of increases that pushed borrowing costs higher.

Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday the average rate on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages slipped to 4.44 percent from 4.46 percent last week. The new average rate remains at a high level, however, raising concern that home sales could be dampened. The benchmark rate averaged 4.30 percent a year ago.

The average rate on 15-year, fixed-rate loans declined to 3.90 percent from 3.94 percent last week.

Mortgage rates rose steadily in January, February and early March, as interest rates generally increased in response to higher levels of government debt and expecta-

tions of rising inflation.

In addition to higher mortgage rates, home affordability also has been affected by increases in average home prices that have eclipsed wage growth. And the number of homes for sale has been shrinking.

The government reported Tuesday that consumer prices increased at a modest pace in February, indicating that inflation pressures may be easing. Overall consumer prices rose 2.2 percent in February from a year earlier.

The report spurred a decline in the yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury note, which is closely tracked by mortgage rates. The yield stood at 2.82 percent Thursday, compared with 2.46 percent at the start of the year.

To calculate average mortgage rates, Freddie Mac surveys lenders across the country between Monday and Wednesday each week.

Park

From A1

above the street and the park, with a glass wall and terrace facing the Mississippi River and some sort of stairway or entrance down from the second-story to the street.

However, that leaves a portion of the park underneath the building, which Kevin Bills of ISG said gave the city some new opportunities to connect downtown, the Mississippi River, Riverside Park and the La Crosse Center.

The idea, Bills said, is to make the space functional, whether by putting playground equipment underneath, creating activity space for yoga or other group classes, or some sort of multi-purpose art display.

"It's all about welcoming interaction, people who are coming down to the walkway, people who are coming off the river," Bills said.

"We think this is a great opportunity not just for the building but also with this function underneath to create a beacon for down-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This rendering from Gensler and ISG shows a mock-up of what the La Crosse Center would look like from the park. The final design, including the materials, has not yet been approved.

town, to sort of enhance and show the character of our community," he added.

The stairway to the park, which Bills called the "river lobby," would provide structural supports and sidewalk access to the park-side of the building.

The design includes a 17,669-square-foot ballroom which will be suspended over Front Street and include an entrance from Riverside Park, as well as 12,000 square feet of additional meeting rooms.

On the downtown side, they would build a new

lobby, which give them room to expand the bathrooms and concessions, and add corridors to connect the front- and back-ends of the building.

"We're kind of departmentalized on the front end of the building right now," Fahey said.

While the parks board didn't take any formal action, members did share concerns about parking and funding for any work in the park, which wouldn't be included in the \$49 million price tag.

The city parks director, Steve Carlyon, spoke

in support of the project, saying it could work well with future plans for Riverside Park, which include efforts to attract river cruise ships.

"I think the expansion of this center is very important to this community. I see it having a lot of value for the park, a lot of value for the community. It kind of sets La Crosse up for the next 50 years to be very prosperous in terms of conventions and travel," Carlyon said.

That ties together tourism and supporting local business, he added.

Safety

From A1

"There is some serious politics being played between the two houses. School safety and security must not be allowed to become a casualty," he wrote.

report any suspected threats of school violence to law enforcement.

Walker also proposes requiring districts to create school safety plans for school activities outside of the normal school day, which they are currently not mandated to do; amending state law to

restrictions such as universal background checks for firearm purchases.

Evers also said it's good that Walker wants to give schools more money for safety, but he said the funds should be ongoing rather than one-time. Evers also objected to putting the grant



**3232 MORMON COULEE ROAD,
LA CROSSE**
CLASONBUICKGMC.COM
608-788-7246 • 866-399-1220

LOTS TO CHOOSE FROM