

300-member-strong Verona Area Chamber of Commerce and is planning to spread the work around much more evenly than in the past. It also might shake up what it can in the five months remaining before HomeTown Days draws thousands of people to town and jump-starts the fund-raising for a host of youth and community groups.

Turn to **Betterment** Page 3

Joint meeting to set final course for comp plan

By **Jim Ferolie**
Verona Press editor

It's been just over a year since the Comprehensive Plan Committee first formed — 13 months of studying the issues, gathering information and soliciting public input.

And now the nine-member committee will sit with the group it answers to, the city's Plan Commission, and the body that group answers to, the Common Council, to attempt to put it all together.

Town Sup. Laura Dreger — along with others at last week's Town Board meeting — tries to keep a dummy alive with the help of a metronome and the encouragement of Fitch-Rona EMS personnel.



Jim Ferolie photo

is to keep the pressure up long enough for emergency medical personnel to arrive.

"In a sudden cardiac-arrest situation, the chest compressions are the most important thing you can do," said Fitch-Rona EMS deputy chief Dale Dow, who held a training program last week before the monthly Verona Town Board meeting. "You want to get blood and oxy-

gens.

The training was the first full one that Fitch-Rona has done for CCR, which is only recently catching on in most parts of the country. In fact, the procedure, which was pioneered in 2003 by the University of Arizona and imported to Walworth and Rock counties in Wisconsin a year later, was instituted in

Turn to **CCR** Page 2

VAHS sophomore ready for whirlwind week in D.C.

Ennis will see inauguration, hear Gore, Powell speak

By **Seth Jovaag**
United Newspaper Group

Morgan Ennis admits she's "a little overwhelmed" by the week she's about to have.

On Saturday, the Verona teenager and her mom, Terri Kaegi, will board a plane for Washington, D.C., where some 2 million people are expected to

arrive by Tuesday to witness Barack Obama be sworn in as the nation's 44th president.

As one of 7,300 high school students attending a four-day "Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference," Ennis will have one of the coveted 250,000 standing-room-only tickets that will get her closer to the 10:30 a.m. ceremony on the National Mall. The rest of the crowd will be further from the podium and

Turn to **Inauguration** Page 5



Submitted photo

VAHS sophomore Morgan Ennis.

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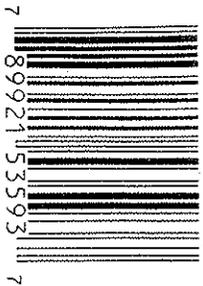
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The Verona



Turn to **Plan** Page 3



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BETTERMENT Continued from page 1

PLAN

Continued from page 1

get more members and people that participate and come to the planning meetings we will be able to explore a couple of new ideas," said new president Mary Egan, a vice president at State Bank of Cross Plains. "I think it's important to keep the festival fresh with new entertainment."

One idea already in the works is a Guitar Hero competition, something that was brought up last year but couldn't be implemented in time. But Egan said the group would also entertain the notion of events that haven't been seen around here before, such as skateboarding competitions or dog shows.

"Just some acts to bring people down and have fun, she said.

Any new event, of course, needs someone to help plan it and run it, as with last year's painting competition. And with a few of the more active members from the past few years having left, there are some other tasks that still need a person to take ownership.

"We need somebody to kind of spearhead our kids' events," Egan said. "And something to draw people to the festival after the parade."

That's a reference to some recent lazy Sunday afternoons, where many people simply thought the festival was basically over and didn't bother to find a new parking spot after taking the family to the pancake breakfast, car show and/or parade. So

whether it's a new musical act, a special contest or a completely wacky idea that promotes itself well, the organization is up for new ideas.

Another task that remains unfiled is someone comfortable coordinating the use and layout of the Festival Park grounds with the city's Parks department to make sure everyone is in the right place and knows what they're supposed to be doing from setup to cleanup. That had been the job done for the past several years by former president Randy Wixson.

Many of the other tasks that still need to be claimed — such as fund-raising and arranging signage, were shouldered by last year's co-presidents, Diane Wixson and Bobby Drury. Drury and the Wixsons made the 2008 festival their last after seven years with Betterment, where they have instituted many of the free events the festival has come to be known for.

"That was a real feather in that group's hat," Egan said of the free events. "They've got a lot of good structure in place. So it's not like having to start all over. That's been extremely helpful to me."

Egan said the key with anyone who wants to help with Hometown Days this year — or next — is to bring some energy and a smile.

"The bottom line is I want to have fun with it," she said. "I want us all to have a good time."

the future is acceptable."

It's a big job and one that probably will stretch every minute of the two-hour time limit that's been strictly enforced by the committee's chair, Ald. Steve Ritt. And that's one reason it won't be structured as a public hearing and won't have a public comment portion scheduled.

Another is that the plan simply isn't ready for that level of scrutiny, as it has so far gotten little feedback from council, which must make the ultimate decision to approve it later this year. But there will be one more open house designed specifically to get public feedback, and Sylvester said Monday's meeting will be taped and later televised on VHAT-98.

The real purpose for the meeting is to see if commissioners and alders can add any concepts or ideas that can help really separate Verona's plan from that of many others in cities and villages around the state.

"A lot of detail work went into the background chapters, the initial goals and objectives have been created," Sylvester said. "Staff hopes (the council and commission will) take that and expand on it as they see fit ... to make this plan unique to Verona."

That might be a new goal, such as sustainable building practices, bigger or grander parks, preservation of Verona's few remaining historical structures or a tall, compact, New Urbanist

downtown — or perhaps even a long, spread-out quaint one.

It might be a suggested directive they would like to mix, such as pushing downtown and Verona Avenue as the city's commercial center, promoting a mixture of housing types, limiting growth outside the city borders or even encouraging the growth of the city's small mass-transit system.

Some important topics won't merit much discussion — "There's going to be no debate that we need better north-south transportation," Sylvester pointed out — but there should still be plenty to ponder as city leaders try to envision Verona 20 or 30 years from now.

After Monday's meeting, the plan will be revised and will go before the committee again for adjustments, and at the end of March the committee will hold its final open forum, where residents and other stakeholders can look at the goals and objectives of the plan and critique them.

Though some discussions have delved into mind-numbing detail in order to make decisions, don't expect to see too many juicy bits ripe for controversy, like the roundabout that has been studied at Main Street and Verona Avenue. While that will have to be addressed someday, there was enough variety of opinion in the community that such decisions will be left for future planners and councils.

"We're not going to make a decision in this plan on the downtown intersection," Sylvester said.

But while Monday's meeting and the March forum won't answer that or, say, get an aquatic center put into the plan, they could inspire a sentence that says "Verona values its recreational facilities and will make every effort to make them the best in the area."

All the input — from the three surveys, from the three public forums and from all of the plan chapters that were mailed to interest groups —

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will be cobbled together and used to fine-tune the draft plan. That will be sent this spring to several state-mandated entities, including all the neighboring governing bodies, the Verona Area School District and Dane County.

After they have taken their cracks at it, Sylvester and the committee will bring a final version to the Plan Commission for a public hearing, likely in late summer. And what happens after that is up to the citizens of Verona.

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