



LOCAL & STATE | A3

### REMEMBERING HOMELESS WHO DIED IN 2017

SPORTS | B1

### TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

Eight teams have been added to the Dvorak wrestling showcase, and six states will be represented as the holiday tourney returns to Harlem High School on Friday and Saturday

# Rockford Register Star

Friday, December 22, 2017

NEWSPAPER OF THE ROCK RIVER VALLEY

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## Pay hikes given amid budget crisis

**Contract awards raises to court employees under Chief Judge Joe McGraw**

By Chris Green  
Staff writer



McGraw

ROCKFORD — While Winnebago County departments absorb spending cuts of \$6.8 million amid a budget

crisis, nearly 100 people working under Chief Judge Joe McGraw will get a 3 percent pay raise each year for the next four years starting Jan. 1.

The employees — 78 probation and detention officers and

20 circuit court employees — are members of the Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council.

The contract was adopted without approval of the Winnebago County Board.

Unlike other unionized employees working in county government, the court employees are considered employees of the state,

said Dave Kurlinkus, chief of staff in the Civil Bureau of the State's Attorney's Office.

"We get no say in it or involvement in the process, but we have to pay for it with limited dollars in the midst of a budget crisis," Winnebago County Administrator Carla Paschal said.

Trial Court Administrator

Tom Jakeway — on McGraw's behalf — negotiated the wage agreement with union leadership. The contract was ratified Tuesday.

County Board Chairman Frank Haney said neither his administration nor the County Board was represented

See BUDGET, A9

## End of an eyesore



A flag atop the Amerock building Wednesday signals that the downtown Rockford renovation project is moving forward. Gary Gorman has closed on the financing needed to turn the factory tower into a \$64 million Embassy Suites Hotel with an adjoining \$12.5 million Rockford Conference Center. [ARTURO FERNANDEZ/RRSTAR.COM STAFF]

**Loan closing signals new beginning for vacant Amerock factory; downtown building will be remade into hotel and conference center**

By Jeff Kolkey  
Staff writer

ROCKFORD — Construction workers were already removing lead paint from the former Amerock factory as years of work culminated this week with the closing of a series of loans and investments that will finance the project.

Gorman & Company CEO Gary Gorman said that where a downtown eyesore currently stands, Rockford will have a \$64

million Hilton Embassy Suites and \$12.5 million Rockford Conference Center when construction is complete.

"The hotel and conference center represent a true public-private partnership," Gorman said. "One could not have been done without the other, and many people pushed through five years of hard work to make it happen."

The project promises to generate 123 permanent hotel jobs, 553 construction jobs and millions in economic activity.

Gorman said this is his 34th historic rehabilitation project. He had an American flag planted last week atop the former Amerock building to signal that the project is

moving forward.

In addition to removing lead paint from the structure, asbestos remediation also must be done as part of Gorman's plans to remodel the building into a four-star hotel.

The 160-room hotel will overlook the Rock River and include a rooftop lounge, first-floor restaurant, bar with outdoor patio, swimming pool, fitness center, business center and other amenities.

"This is a major turning point for our downtown," Mayor Tom McNamara said in a news release.

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**"The hotel and conference center represent a true public-private partnership. One could not have been done without the other, and many people pushed through five years of hard work to make it happen."**

Gorman & Company CEO Gary Gorman

DIGITAL EXTRA

### ENJOY BONUS CONTENT NOT FOUND IN PRINT

Climate change will drive more human migration to Europe, a new study asserts

rrstar.com/e-edition



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### BURGER BLAST AT BAKER STREET

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## Beloit casino, water park 'promising'

**Illinois Sen. Dave Syverson warns the project 'would devastate' Rockford entertainment venues**

By Georgette Braum  
Staff writer

SOUTH BELOIT — Prospects look good for a casino with an indoor water park to be built in Beloit, Wisconsin, in time for a 2021 opening, backers of the project said at a news conference Thursday.

An Illinois legislator said the project would hurt Rockford.

Officials of the city of Beloit and Ho-Chunk Nation, a Native American tribe that runs

See CASINO, A9

## UN pans Trump plan

**General Assembly overwhelmingly votes to reject US recognition of Jerusalem as capital**

By Edith M. Lederer  
The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly Thursday to denounce President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, largely ignoring Trump's threats to cut off aid to any country that went against him.

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