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Packers top Lions for NFC title **SPORTS, A4**



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State transportation chief can no longer handle politics **OPINION, PAGE A5**

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2017

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SAUK COUNTY | DEATH INVESTIGATION



SAUK COUNTY STAFF PHOTO

A photo taken by Sauk County zoning inspector Steve Sorenson shows Christopher Scott Mueller's cluttered trailer in the town of Bear Creek.

Man lived and died in hazardous home

Attorney didn't use legal authority to enforce removal

TIM DAMOS
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Christopher Scott Mueller was what some people might call a hermit.

He lived alone in a rundown trailer in the town of Bear Creek, about 30 miles southwest of Baraboo. His mobile home didn't have working heat or septic systems, and was situated in a field about 600 feet from a rural road.

Although some describe him as well-educated, Mueller also was strange and troubled by many accounts.

"If you talked to him, he didn't have problems," said Joseph Bauer, a neighbor. "The whole rest of the world had problems."

Mueller was 64 years old on Oct. 26 when he was found dead on a mattress inside his trailer. His passing was barely acknowledged by a two-sentence

Only online

To see additional photos from Christopher Scott Mueller's property, go to www.baraboonewsrepublic.com.

death notice in the *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram* that got his age wrong. The same day his remains were discovered, the coroner ruled that Mueller died of natural causes. But documents raise questions about whether environmental factors played a role, and whether a government official should have intervened.

Jean Berlin, a member of the Sauk County Board whose district includes the town of Bear Creek, said a county attorney failed Mueller by not removing him from a dangerous environment.

"I don't think that was acceptable," Berlin said. "Why should someone live without heat? He didn't have indoor plumbing. He lived like an animal."

Health nuisance

Documents contained in a



TIM DAMOS, NEWS REPUBLIC

Sauk County government's chief legal counsel, Todd Liebman, speaks during a Sauk County Board meeting.

Sauk County zoning file show officials had declared Mueller's property a danger to public health at least as early as December 2014, nearly two years

before his death. And although a county attorney had a legal obligation to enforce Mueller's

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SAUK COUNTY | LEADERSHIP

Committee to pick new staff leader

Supervisor questions quick action to fill coordinator vacancy

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The process for selecting the next leader of Sauk County's \$84 million government operation may move faster than some expected.

The agenda for today's meeting of a Sauk County Board committee includes a closed session to interview a candidate, or candidates, for the vacant administrative coordinator position.

After that, the Executive and Legislative Committee is slated to reconvene in open session to recommend its final pick to the board.

Those procedural steps go beyond what the five-person panel agreed upon during a meeting last week.

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If you go

What: Sauk County Executive and Legislative Committee meeting

When: 1:30 p.m. today

Where: Room 213, West Square Building, 505 Broadway, Baraboo

Legislature opens to formidable problems

TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press

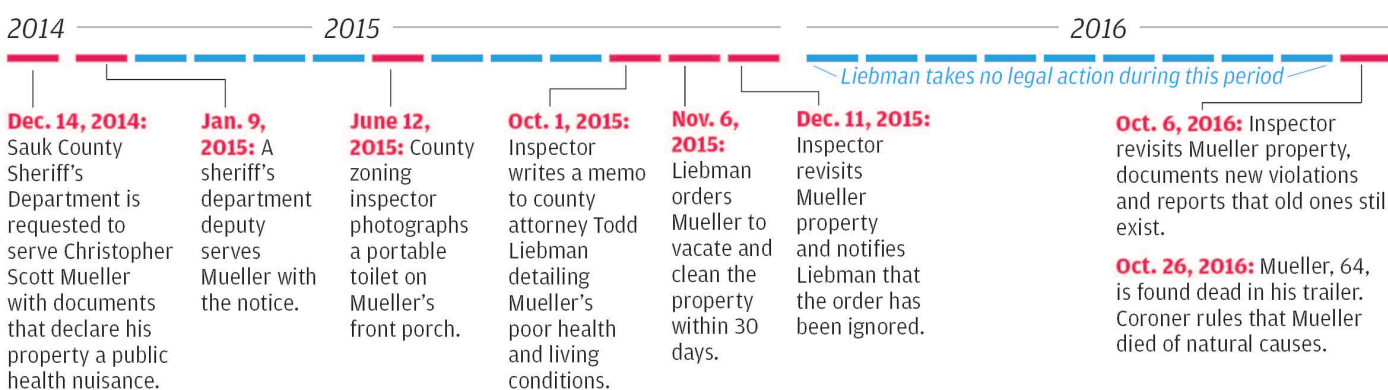
MADISON (AP) — Wisconsin legislators will start their next two-year session with plenty of pomp and circumstance today but the honeymoon will end quickly as lawmakers dive into a thicket of divisive budget issues. Some key things to know about the upcoming session:

New bosses same as before

Republicans rode President-elect Donald Trump's momentum to their largest majorities in both the Senate and Assembly in decades. The GOP goes into the session with a 64-35 advantage in the Assembly, their largest since 1957, and a 20-13 edge in the Senate, their largest since 1971. Republicans re-elected Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald to their leadership posts days after the

Please see **LEGISLATURE**, Page A3

Key dates in Christopher Scott Mueller case



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