

Dual role politics leads to debate

Municipal leaders in county positions a conflict of interest, opponents say

By Scott Cooper Williams

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As the Green Bay City Council prepared for a closed-door discussion Oct. 18 about sensitive negotiations with Brown County, longtime Alderman Guy Zima raised a thorny question.

"Is any of this secret?" he said.

The reason for Zima's inquiry was that he and several other aldermen also serve on

ONLINE CHAT

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the Brown County Board, and would have a hand in deciding the county's strategy in the negotiations.

Zima wondered if he and the others had a conflict of interest.

It is a question that political leaders in the Green Bay area have asked many times before, because of a culture of dual representation that has existed in local government here for decades.

Of the 26 current Brown County supervisors, 11 hold another elected office simultaneously in their hometowns, including six Green Bay aldermen.

The arrangement gives those officials keen insight into government affairs. But it also sometimes requires them to juggle the opposing interests of different government entities — and to choose one over the other.

Some other recent examples:

» County Board members moved the sheriff's department to new headquarters in Bellevue, despite Green Bay's preference for keeping the department in the city.

» Holland town officials went to court in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the county from placing a future landfill site in their community.

» KI Convention Center expansion could hinge on Green Bay's request for hotel tax revenue, which the county controls and may want to use elsewhere.

» When the Renard Isle waste dump was being closed, county and Green Bay

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