

## WSPE eNews

**A monthly publication from the Wisconsin Society of Professional Engineers**

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#### 1. **WI Valley Chapter Awards Scholarship**

By Anglea Hanz, P.E.



Congratulations to Connor Falk!

Connor was awarded the WSPE Wisconsin Valley Chapter Scholarship. Connor attended high school at Stevens Point Area Senior High School (SPASH) where he was a member of the Football and Basketball Teams as well as National Honor Society. Connor's future plans include studying Biomedical Engineering at UW-Madison.

Archie Becher, P.E. of Becher Hoppe Associates received and scored 18 scholarship applications from high school seniors throughout the WI Valley Chapter area. The top six students from the application scoring process were then interviewed as part of the next step of the scoring process. Connor was the top scorer for the WI Valley Chapter Scholarship.

Thanks to all of the WI Valley Chapter members who have contributed time and money to the local scholarship fundraising efforts and thanks to Archie for all of his work scoring the applications! The chapter is now working on organizing a local golf outing in September for a scholarship fundraiser in order to continue the local scholarship funding.

## 2. Sir Joseph Bazalgette: More Than Just an Engineer with an Epic Mustache

Amazon Book Review



Sir Joseph Bazalgette:  
*The Man with the Plan to Get Rid of the Big Stink.*

(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Amazon Book Review of

### [The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis](#)

In the sweltering summer of 1858 the stink of sewage from the polluted Thames was so offensive that it drove Members of Parliament from the chamber of the House of Commons. Sewage generated by a population of over two million Londoners was pouring into the river and was being carried to and fro by the tides. The Times called the crisis "The Great Stink". Parliament had to act - drastic measures were required to clean the Thames and to improve London's primitive system of sanitation. The great engineer entrusted by Parliament with this enormous task was Sir Joseph Bazalgette. This book is an account of his life and work.

Click here to open a link to buy this book on Amazon.com:

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Great-Stink-London-Bazalgette/dp/0750925809>

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## 3. Challenging Property Tax Assessments

By Attorney Randall J. Andersen

Some say nothing in this world is certain except death and taxes. However, the amount of taxes you pay is not so certain.

It is no secret that real estate values have declined significantly during the last six years. It is estimated that the overall value of real estate in the United States has fallen more than 30% since the high point in 2006.

A major part of our overall tax burden in Wisconsin is based on real estate assessments. Assessors are required to value real estate at the "full market value" which means the fair market value at which the property would sell upon an arm's length negotiation in the open market between an owner willing but not obligated to sell, and a buyer willing but not obligated to buy. In other words, not a forced sale or a fire sale.

The best indicator in value is a recent sale of the property itself in an arm's length transaction (i.e., not a forced sale or a sale between relatives, etc.). In the absence of a recent sale of the property, appraisers look for comparable sales of similar properties to determine value.

What if you think that your property has been valued too high? The first step is to meet with the assessor and request a reduction. This can occur at the "open book," which is an opportunity to meet in person with the assessor and discuss the value of your property.

If you are unable to convince the assessor to voluntarily decrease the assessment, the next step is to challenge the assessment. The City of Milwaukee and a few other cities have a "board of assessors," which is the first step in the appeal process. If your municipality does not have a board of assessors, the first step will be to file an objection with the board of review. The board of review is normally composed of a group of local citizens. In the objection, the property owner is required to indicate his/her opinion as to the value of the property. The board may require the use of a form approved by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. A hearing date is scheduled, at which the property owner is required to present evidence supporting his/her contention as to value. This could include evidence regarding comparable sales, a recent sale of the property and in some cases, the amount of income generated by the property. The property owner has the right to be

represented by an attorney in this process.

The board of review has authority to override the assessor's determination as to value. If the property owner is not satisfied with the board of review's decision, there are several options for further review. One option is to appeal to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue pursuant to §70.85, Wisconsin Statutes. If the value of the property does not exceed \$1,000,000.00, and the assessment is "radically out of proportion to the general level of assessment of all other property in the district," an appeal to the Department of Revenue is permitted.

A second method of appealing the board of review determination is to file for certiorari with the circuit court. The circuit court will review the record presented at the board of review, and determine whether the board of review acted appropriately. With a certiorari proceeding, the circuit court is limited to the record presented at the board of review, and is not allowed to accept new evidence.

A third method of review is to file a claim for excessive assessment under §74.37, Wisconsin Statutes. With a claim for excessive assessment, the property owner is given a hearing de novo and is allowed to present new evidence which was not presented to the board of review. This is the method of review which is favored by most attorneys.

As with most things in the law, there are various deadlines, filing requirements and procedures which must be carefully followed to protect your rights in the process. If you feel that your property has been over-assessed, you or your attorney will need to follow the detailed requirements for preserving your rights to challenge the assessment and presenting evidence which supports your position as to the value of the property.



*Attorney Randall J. Andersen represents professional engineers, architects, contractors, materials suppliers and owners of construction projects, and is with the law firm of Kay & Andersen, LLC. Please feel free to contact him at (608) 833-0077 or visit [www.kayandandersen.com](http://www.kayandandersen.com).*

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#### **4. Another Bridge Prone to the Dangers of Natural Frequency?**

By John Gregerson, For Engineering News Record

Wind-induced cable vibrations caused steel diaphragm plates to fracture and fail on a 2,200-ft cable-stayed suspension bridge in Minneapolis, according to a preliminary report prepared by Northbrook, Ill.-based engineer Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, the firm the city hired to investigate the cause of the failure.

Click on the link below to read the entire article on [enr.construction.com](http://enr.construction.com):  
<http://enr.construction.com/infrastructure/transportation/2012/0625-report-minneapolis-footbridge-not-designed-for-wind-loads.asp>

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#### **5. WSPE Executive Committee and State Board Meeting Minutes Available**

By Angela Hanz, P.E., WSPE Secretary

Click the link below to download a pdf of the WSPE **Executive Committee Meeting** Minutes, March 22, 2012:  
[http://wspe.org/docs/\\_Minutes/2012-03-22\\_Exec\\_Comm\\_Minutes\\_Final.pdf](http://wspe.org/docs/_Minutes/2012-03-22_Exec_Comm_Minutes_Final.pdf)

Click the link below to download a pdf of the WSPE **State Board Meeting** Minutes, April 14, 2012:  
[http://wspe.org/docs/\\_Minutes/2012-04-14\\_State\\_Board\\_Minutes\\_Final.pdf](http://wspe.org/docs/_Minutes/2012-04-14_State_Board_Minutes_Final.pdf)

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#### **6. WSPE Executive Board Election Results**

Submitted by Ed Rodden, II, E.I.T.

WSPE Executive Board Officer Position Elected

The elections are completed and the results are unanimous. There was one write in for Treasurer; otherwise the proposed slate was voted in.

## **WSPE Executive Board Elected**

(2012 – 2013 Term)

### **President**

Fred Groth, P.E. S.E.  
Southwest Chapter

### **President-Elect**

(OPEN)

### **Vice President – Membership Portfolio**

(OPEN)

### **Vice President – Governmental Affairs Portfolio**

Glen Schwalbach, P.E. F.NSPE  
Fox River Valley Chapter

### **Vice President – Education**

Pam Mazur  
Fox River Valley Chapter

### **Treasurer**

James Buggs, P.E.  
Metro Chapter

### **Secretary**

Angela Hanz, P.E.  
Wisconsin Valley Chapter

There are still a few vacancies as shown above. If interested in the position or have questions please forward to Keith Nikolay at [nikolayk@AyresAssociates.com](mailto:nikolayk@AyresAssociates.com) or Ed Rodden II at [ExecDir@wspe.org](mailto:ExecDir@wspe.org).

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## **We Need Your News!**

- Is your chapter hosting an event?
- Did your chapter get some new members?
- Have you started your own business?
- Is your company taking on a really challenging project?

If you said "yes" to any one of these questions, or would like to share anything even remotely newsworthy with the rest of WSPE, please send your articles to Clayton Grow, WSPE eNews Editor, [clayton@thewritingengineer.com](mailto:clayton@thewritingengineer.com).

We look forward to including your news in our monthly updates!

## **We Need Your Email Address!**

If you are reading a paper copy of the WSPE eNews, you're missing out! Send your email address to Ed Rodden, WSPE Executive Director, at [ExecDir@wspe.org](mailto:ExecDir@wspe.org) or call him at (414) 531-1129 to receive electronic eNews.

## **Advertisers Wanted!**

If you are interested in advertising in the WSPE eNews, please contact Ed Rodden, WSPE Executive Director, at [ExecDir@wspe.org](mailto:ExecDir@wspe.org) or (414) 531-1129.

## **Update Your Information with WSPE**

Did you...

- ...get a new job?
- ...get promoted?
- ...get a new phone number or email address?
- ...get your PE license?

**Tell us about it!** Send your new information to Ed Rodden, WSPE Executive Director, at [ExecDir@wspe.org](mailto:ExecDir@wspe.org) or call him at (414) 531-1129 and he'll make sure your information is updated in both the WSPE and NSPE databases. We'd also like to include an article in the next eNews summarizing your recent change or accomplishment to inform your fellow WSPE members.



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