

# Community Coalition spells out 2010 agenda

James Goodman • Staff writer • March 10, 2010

The Rochester Community Coalition has evolved over the past five years from seeking a fair share of state funding for the area to focusing on several key projects and achieving **savings** in government.

This year, the coalition is calling for \$5 million in state funds for an after-school initiative and another \$40 million for the Rochester Institute of **Technology's** sustainability institute.

It also seeks support for a federally funded Interstate 390 interchange project and changes in state labor law.

"We have identified priority items," said Rochester Business Alliance CEO Sandy Parker, who was among several coalition members who spoke to the *Democrat and Chronicle* editorial board on Tuesday.

The coalition includes college presidents and representatives from the business community, city and county government and the nonprofit sector.

Parker said that the funds sought for RIT's Golisano Institute for Sustainability is a "big ask" but that the institute has job-creating potential.

About 6,000 jobs could be created by the institute, according to the Center for Governmental Research. And the \$5 million over four years would help "jump-start" the Rochester After-School Plan developed by local officials.

"The community is failing the kids," said Jennifer Leonard, president of the Rochester Area Community Foundation

Just 7 percent of the children in Rochester are in after-school programs and 70 percent of Monroe County children have no parents at home after school, Leonard said.

The coalition supports changes in the Taylor Law, which provides arbitration in contract disputes with public employees. It wants the binding arbitration provision of this law to be amended with wording that would give substantial weight to the government's "ability to pay" without having to raise taxes.

Jim Bertolone, president of the Rochester and Vicinity Labor Council, said that his organization has dropped out of the coalition because it has become an "agent" of the business alliance.

Changes in the Taylor Law would be a bad idea because "ability to pay" is already considered in negotiations, he said.

Putting that provision into the law would result in arbitrators not focusing on such expenses as the costs of central office administrators.

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