

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

July 4 to July 11, 2026

The Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing is a weekly governance intelligence product curated by BoldPath Consulting from Wisconsin local journalism, public-sector think tanks, and credible regional media. Source collection is automated; editorial selection, summarization, and topic assignment are overseen by Patrick Glynn. Source links accompany every item so readers can verify the underlying reporting. The briefing is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice.

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Generative AI as an Internal Consultant: pre-conference workshop set for September 16

A note from the editor: I am leading a new pre-conference workshop for the Wisconsin Association for County Personnel Directors, **Generative AI as an Internal Consultant**, on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Timber Ridge Lodge at the Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva. The session runs the day before the WACPD Fall Conference (September 17-18, 2026) and costs \$250 per participant. The curriculum splits between a foundation segment covering how generative AI works, governance and risk, and prompting as a form of professional supervision, and an applied-practice segment covering HR, finance, and administrative use cases through structured exercises with realistic scenarios. Participants will learn to apply structured prompting as a supervisory discipline, produce defensible first drafts for real government work, and distinguish appropriate from high-risk AI use cases, while accountability for all outputs remains with the employee. The session is designed for HR directors, administrators, finance leaders, and department heads with organizational responsibility.

Registration: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/generative-ai-workshop-lake-geneva-wi>

Budgets and Finance

Supervisor calls for referendum on Milwaukee County Courthouse revamp

Milwaukee County Board Supervisor Justin Bielinski has authored a resolution seeking a contingent November 3 referendum asking voters whether County Board approval would be required for any additional financing on the construction phase of the county's courthouse complex overhaul, now estimated at \$897 million after the county roughly doubled its earlier projection in early July 2026. The resolution also requests transferring \$18,000 from the contingency appropriation to the County Election Commission to offset referendum costs. The county has allocated roughly \$38.6 million across fiscal years 2024 through 2026 for planning, design, and consulting, leaving approximately \$858 million for remaining construction. The adopted 2026 capital budget carries a \$56.8 million bonding cap, leaving \$63.3 million in requested bonding authority unfunded. County Executive David Crowley has separately stated his funding approach would cut costs to property taxpayers by more than \$400 million. The resolution goes before the finance committee on July 23.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/10/milwaukee-county-supervisor-referendum-courthouse-revamp/>

Notice of referendum on Village of Rochester tax levy

The Village of Rochester will place a referendum on the August 11, 2026 ballot asking voters whether the village may exceed its state-imposed levy limit for fiscal year 2027. Under current law the allowable increase is capped at 1.283 percent, producing a levy of \$1,359,010. The referendum would instead authorize a 10.302 percent increase, raising the levy to \$1,499,010, a difference of \$140,000 designated for maintaining fire protection and emergency medical services at their current level. If approved, the \$140,000 increase would be incorporated into the base levy on an ongoing basis in each subsequent fiscal year. The Village of Rochester executed the resolution

directing submission of the question on July 2, 2026. Full text is available from the Village Clerk, and photo identification will be required to vote.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/community/article_25f8264c-cc2c-52a7-9b3f-dc30a33c7211.html

Jefferson County administrator approved to manage Sigma remediation budget

The Jefferson County Finance Committee unanimously approved a resolution granting County Administrator Michael Luckey budget-management authority to execute work authorizations for The Sigma Group's environmental remediation of the county's 12-acre former highway department site at North Main and Puerner streets. The defined scope covers Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments, DNR reporting assistance, case closure, remedial evaluation of petroleum-impacted soils, remediation and redevelopment budgeting, and DNR Chapter NR-718 sampling. The resolution also waives competitive bidding for Sigma based on the firm's existing site knowledge and prior relationship with the county, while requiring compliance with applicable public-works subcontracting statutes. The county has pursued development of the parcel with Milwaukee-based VIRTUS Development, LLC since 2023, and contaminated soil requiring off-site relocation was identified as a complicating factor. No timeline for remediation completion was specified in the committee action.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/jefferson-county-administrator-approved-to-manage-sigma-remediation-budget/article_845e359d-fbfe-44a8-8c33-0a081c075fbd.html

Stanley Council greenlights water plant payments, road maintenance

The Stanley Common Council, at its July 6 meeting, approved two payment applications to Market & Johnson for the Central Water Treatment Plant project totaling \$940,622.50, plus a payment of \$206,857.73 to Haas Brothers Inc. for the 345th Road project. The council approved three water-plant change orders: No. 6 at \$22,173.56, No. 7 as a credit of \$29,723.94, and No. 1 at \$91,957.30. Total accounts-payable disbursements approved were \$1,111,825.82, plus a separate water debt-service payment of \$99,437. Additional actions included a new \$10 dump-station fee for outside campers at Chapman Park, a Three C's cross-connection inspection contract effective August 1 covering 101 inspections at \$916.67, and county agreements for Industrial Road patching and Janicki Road repairs. The council also approved closing two Marine Credit Union accounts, remitting \$58 in remaining CDBG Revolving Loan Fund money to the state. A plant tour is scheduled July 20 before the next council meeting.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | <https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/stanley-council-greenlights-water-plant-payments-road-maintenance,197698>

Airport hangar lease rates rising 22% after commission review

The Amery City Council voted unanimously on July 9, 2026, to raise airport hangar lease rates from 9 cents to 11 cents per square foot, a 22 percent increase and the first adjustment in years. The Airport Commission recommended the change after finding Amery's rates low relative to comparable municipal airports. Mayor Rick Van Blaricom, who sits on the commission, said he supported the increase. The vote prompted discussion of aviation fuel pricing after a council member relayed a pilot's concern that Amery's fuel costs exceed those at some competing airports; Van Blaricom said the commission has given the airport manager discretion to price fuel more competitively. City Administrator Alex Mansfield noted the city purchased its current fuel

supply in April near a price spike and that Amery's lower fuel turnover limits its exposure to daily price swings.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/airport-hangar-lease-rates-rising-22-after-commission-review/article_9812c2be-1d48-4b6b-a1f5-0ba7ad770e3a.html

City of Eau Claire scheduling citywide property revaluation for 2027

The City of Eau Claire announced it will conduct a citywide property revaluation in 2027, following the appointment of Deneen Nagel as City Assessor. The Assessing Division will continue routine annual work in 2026 covering new construction, property improvements, and significant condition changes as of the January 1 assessment date, with the city stating most property owners will see little to no impact this year. Three procedural dates are set for 2026: assessment notices for qualifying net new construction and condition changes will be mailed September 3; Open Book sessions are scheduled for September 14 and 15; and the Board of Review is set for September 22. The citywide revaluation itself is targeted for 2027.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/09/city-eau-claire-scheduling-citywide-property-revaluation-2027/>

Public-sector collective bargaining training set for August 17-18 at WCTC

A note from the editor: With the session about a month away, seats remain open for Wisconsin Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining for the Public-Sector Supervisor, which I am co-teaching with Attorney Kyle Gulya of von Briesen and Roper on August 17-18, 2026, at Waukesha County Technical College, 800 Main Street, Pewaukee. The 12-hour program runs 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Day 1 and 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Day 2, with registration at \$385 per participant. The curriculum covers Wisconsin collective bargaining law, negotiation preparation through interest arbitration, contract administration, grievance processing, past practices and prohibited practices, and leverage dynamics, delivered through instruction, scenarios, and hands-on grievance and bargaining exercises. The session is designed for administrators, human resources, finance, public safety supervisors, transit supervisors, and school district administrators. Space remains available; registration is at www.wctc.edu/cjtraining under Specialized Training.

Workforce and Labor

Solway out as Marinette County administrator

Marinette County Administrator Kevin Solway submitted his resignation to the county Executive Committee during a closed session on Monday, July 7, 2026, citing personal reasons. Under a 60-day clause in his contract, the latest effective date of his departure is September 4, 2026, though County Board Chairman John Guarisco indicated it could be earlier. Solway had held the administrator position for just over three months, taking over on March 19, 2026, from John Lefebvre, who retired after nearly 10 years as administrator and more than 40 years with the county. Before becoming administrator, Solway served Marinette County as chief information officer for 14 years and as a sheriff's deputy for 10 years. The Executive Committee is scheduled to

meet Thursday at 9 a.m. in open session to discuss replacement strategy; Guarisco said the committee may consider an outside search firm and that internal promotion is unlikely.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/solway-out-as-marinette-county-administrator/article_cb0fb9ee-7ae9-4528-8bfb-2e28df614c4f.html

Douglas County district attorney leaving for state post

Douglas County District Attorney Mark Fruehauf has resigned effective August 22 after 10 years in the role, departing to become an assistant attorney general with the Wisconsin Department of Justice Crime Litigation Unit. Fruehauf submitted his resignation in a letter to Gov. Tony Evers. The governor announced he is seeking applicants to fill the vacancy, with an application deadline of July 27; the appointee will serve the remainder of Fruehauf's elected term, which runs through January 2029. Fruehauf was first sworn in as district attorney in January 2017 after defeating 25-year incumbent Dan Blank by nearly 9 percentage points, and had previously served as a Douglas County assistant district attorney from 2010 to 2012. In his resignation letter, Fruehauf asked the governor to appoint a replacement as soon as possible.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegam.com/news/local/douglas-county-district-attorney-leaving-for-state-post>

Janesville City Council to consider back pay, extra work hours for interim city manager

The Janesville City Council will consider amending the work agreement for Interim City Manager Jay Shambeau, raising his authorized hours from 35 to 40 per week and adding up to \$750 per week at his contractual rate of \$150 per hour. A staff memo from Human Resources Director Tara Semenchuk and City Attorney Wald Klimczyk states Shambeau's workload has consistently exceeded the council-authorized limit since his May appointment. Time records show he worked 39 hours the week ending May 29, 38.5 the following week, 42 the week ending June 12, and 31.25 the week ending June 26, totaling 15.75 hours beyond schedule; the council will also consider back pay for those excess hours. Finance Director Dave Godek confirmed sufficient funding exists in the current operating budget. Shambeau is expected to serve until a permanent city manager begins, anticipated in late September or October 2026.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/janesville-city-council-to-consider-back-pay-extra-work-hours-for-interim-city-manager/article_2723cdfb-7d50-4077-8e66-efbe8e29161f.html

Limited Term Employee position proposed for open records requests

Barron County's Executive Committee approved a new limited-term employee position on July 1, 2026, to manage the county's growing volume of open records requests. The position is set at 24 hours per week with no benefits and will be housed in the Information Technology Department under the oversight of County Corporation Legal Counsel John Muench, who indicated the employee will spend most time at the Sheriff's Department, which receives the largest share of requests. County Administrator Jeff French confirmed the county has budget capacity to fund the position through all of 2027 and 2028, with flexibility to modify the role as demand warrants. Sheriff Jodi Kummet expressed support and asked that the position be filled as soon as possible. The position still requires formal approval by the full Barron County Board before it can be filled.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_de2eb10a-acba-4e33-b753-16dab792d4fd.html

New Plymouth Fire Chief sworn in

Plymouth City Clerk Anna Voigt administered the oath of office to new Fire Chief Jim Klug at the June 30 City Council meeting. Klug had joined the Plymouth Fire Department five weeks before the swearing-in. No additional details regarding salary, contract terms, or the selection process were reported.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/new-plymouth-fire-chief-sworn-in/>

Infrastructure and Utilities

Milwaukee mayor favors improving I-794 freeway over removal

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson announced he favors improving the existing Interstate 794 elevated freeway rather than removing it, and said he will formally share that preference with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, which has led a corridor study since 2022. The roughly one-mile spur runs between the Hoan Bridge and the Milwaukee River downtown. WisDOT's environmental impact statement is evaluating freeway slimming, maintenance of the current structure, or removal in favor of an at-grade boulevard. The boulevard option would cost less than partial reconstruction, which WisDOT estimates at \$675 million to \$1.25 billion, while removal could free 16 acres with potential development value near \$500 million by 2050. Johnson cited a separate WisDOT study projecting increased downtown congestion under the boulevard scenario and noted Port Milwaukee generates roughly 1,000 truck trips daily. The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce announced support for Johnson's position. WisDOT is expected to begin construction in 2030 pending funding and approval.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/09/milwaukee-mayor-favors-improving-i-794-freeway/>

The SMRT move? La Crosse County poised to discontinue bus service

La Crosse County's executive committee voted unanimously on July 9, 2026, to recommend permanently discontinuing the Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) bus service effective January 1, 2027, citing rising costs, declining ridership, and neighboring counties' unwillingness to contribute. The SMRT system, which has connected La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford counties since its 2012 launch, cost approximately \$748,000 in 2026, with state and federal grants covering more than half; La Crosse County and its municipalities paid roughly \$224,000, representing 81 percent of local funding that year, up from 32 percent in 2025. Daily ridership stood at about 29 riders in 2025, placing the county-wide per-rider cost at \$22. Crawford, Vernon, and Monroe counties have already ended or plan to end their contributions. The full county board must still vote on the resolution, and officials said they would schedule a public hearing before that vote.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_7243e523-c3c3-416b-a822-6c848d353f71.html

Marinette council adopts bicycle and pedestrian plan

The Marinette Common Council voted 5-3 on July 8, 2026, to adopt a new bicycle and pedestrian master plan prepared by engineering firm Mead & Hunt using state funding. A prior motion by Alderman Tom Karban to return the plan for revisions failed, with only Karban and Alderperson Liz

Mikutowski in favor. Planner Brian Carranza of Mead & Hunt described the document as a planning-level tool representing step five of an eight-step process, with feasibility studies, detailed design, and funding searches to follow. The plan was developed over nearly a year through a project website, surveys, an interactive map, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings, with projects scored on safety, connectivity, access, community support, and equity. Supporters argued adoption positions the city for future grant applications and guides capital reconstruction decisions. Any individual street or intersection project will still require separate feasibility work, design, funding authorization, and council action before construction.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-council-adopts-bicycle-and-pedestrian-plan/article_2fe7122f-6fb4-48a2-a812-51f9fbd8b64.html

Amery exploring contracted operator for wastewater treatment plant

Amery City Administrator Alex Mansfield told the city council on July 9 that he met with plant staff on June 29 to discuss contracting an outside engineering and operations firm to run the city's wastewater treatment plant, citing a statewide shortage of certified operators holding the advanced certification the facility requires. The plant is currently staffed in-house by Superintendent Jeremy Wood and operator Josh Burr. Public Works Director Jeff Mahoney separately reported the plant is experiencing problems with its phosphorus removal process and has brought in a contract operator from Chetek, arranged through engineering firms SEH and Larkin Johnson, to spend several days fine-tuning operations. Mahoney described the plant's sequencing batch reactor system as new territory for existing staff. No formal action on contracted operations was taken; Mansfield said the city will continue exploring options.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-exploring-contracted-operator-for-wastewater-treatment-plant/article_5c9896cd-47ed-49c1-ab16-99380d54b7af.html

Public hearing on Glade Ave. bridge set for July 21

The Spring Valley Village Board scheduled a public hearing for 6 p.m. July 21 at the Spring Valley Community Center to gather input on the Glade Avenue bridge project, following a large turnout at the July 1 board meeting. The bridge was permanently closed to vehicle traffic after its annual inspection found deterioration to the concrete beams, structure, and south abutment. Two options were presented at the June 3 meeting: a \$960,000 removal-and-culvert option supported by a \$280,000 state grant, and a \$115,000 sloped-abutment reinforcement option that would likely forfeit the grant. Public Works Director Steven Kirby reported that a county bridge aid program covering 50 percent of post-grant costs would have reduced the village's share to roughly \$350,000, but villages were confirmed ineligible. A potential third route involving purchase of an adjacent property for sale could cut the project cost to roughly half the original estimate while potentially preserving the grant, pending state confirmation.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/public-hearing-on-glade-ave-bridge-set-for-july-21,197319>

Park Board tweaks Glen Park's second phase to remove ball field, reallocate funds to other amenities

The River Falls Parks and Recreation Advisory Board voted at its June 17 meeting to remove a youth ball field from the second phase of the Glen Park improvement project and reallocate the \$70,000 budgeted for it to other amenities within the phase. City Conservation and Parks Manager Brooks

Ostendorf noted available park impact fee funds have grown from a December 2024 balance of \$743,132 to approximately \$950,000, following a January 2026 policy shift to consolidate fees into a single fund rather than allocating them by proximate development. Total projected cost for Glen Park Phase 2 remains \$850,000, funded entirely by park improvement fees. The phase includes removing existing structures and constructing a multi-use sport court, open-air pavilion, play area, and Cascade Avenue trail improvements. Board and Council member Sean Downing led discussion favoring an expanded sport court for basketball, pickleball, and tennis. The board will revisit design details before the plan advances to the full city council.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/park-board-tweaks-glen-parks-second-phase-to-remove-ball-field-reallocate-funds-to-other,197343>

City of Eau Claire sits down with trash haulers amid compost ordinance concerns

Eau Claire City Council members Andrew Werthmann and Joshua Miller, co-authors of a proposed composting ordinance developed with the Sustainability Advisory Committee over more than six months, held a review session at City Hall after local trash haulers submitted a letter raising legal objections to the draft. The ordinance would require all waste haulers operating in Eau Claire to offer composting as an opt-in option for residents, not a mandate on residents. Attorney Jason Johns, representing local haulers, said the provision could double or triple collection costs because haulers would need to prepare infrastructure for citywide capacity regardless of resident uptake; only one of the city's four major haulers currently offers composting. The July 13 council presentation was postponed two weeks; a public hearing is now scheduled for July 27, with a council vote currently targeted for August 11.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/city-of-eau-claire-sits-down-with-trash-haulers-amid-compost-ordinance-concerns/article_46aea4b1-3567-432c-bff2-753af81345f6.html

Robot greenskeepers may take over

The Ozaukee County Natural Resources Committee voted to recommend a \$405,235 purchase of four robotic fairway mowers for the county-owned Mee-Kwon and Hawthorne Hills golf courses, comprising a \$385,938 base cost plus a 5 percent contingency of \$19,297. Planning and Parks Director Andrew Struck cited a projected elimination of about 1,900 labor hours per season; fairway mowing currently requires 68 hours per week over an average 28-week season, with staff arriving as early as 3 a.m. The county has piloted robotic mowers at both courses for three years. The robots would operate from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., covering 50 acres of fairways every other day and 75 acres of rough across a 224-acre mappable area. Funding will come from the department's golf course capital reserves, and four existing backup mowers will be auctioned. The full Ozaukee County Board must still approve the purchase.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/robot-greenskeepers-may-take-over>

Dane County breaks ground on new landfill and sustainability campus

Dane County broke ground on July 9, 2026, on a new landfill and sustainability campus off Highway 12 in Madison. The landfill portion is scheduled to open by summer 2027, with campus buildings to follow in fall 2027. John Welch, director for Dane County Waste and Renewables, stated the project is funded entirely through the county's enterprise fund, drawing no general-purpose tax dollars; revenue sources include customer service fees and renewable energy production. The campus will

include educational space for school groups, classroom and maker space for community programming such as composting and repair workshops, and a planned sustainable business park. Welch described the project as designed to increase future waste diversion and expand recycling capacity to reduce long-term landfill volume.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/09/dane-county-breaks-ground-new-landfill-sustainability-campus/>

Two Rivers Answers Questions About Upcoming Neshotah Beach Paid Parking Pilot Program

The City of Two Rivers approved a 10-day paid parking pilot for lots 2 and 3 at Neshotah Beach, charging \$10 per vehicle on select high-demand summer days. The program applies to all visitors, including Two Rivers residents, because state law prohibits the city from offering free parking to residents while charging others. City staff cited increased maintenance costs for the beach, parking lots, restrooms, and public safety as the rationale. All revenue collected will be directed back into Neshotah Beach operations and maintenance, shifting financial responsibility from local property taxpayers to beach users. The city did not specify which 10 days the requirement will be in effect; additional details are available through the Two Rivers City Hall Facebook page.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/10/two-rivers-answers-questions-about-upcoming-neshotah-beach-paid-parking-pilot-program/>

Public Safety

Washington County Board approves funding for Anti-Crime Plan C

The Washington County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved funding and implementation of Anti-Crime Plan C on July 9, 2026, a public safety initiative covering law enforcement, courtroom security, emergency communications, and narcotics prosecution. Chief Public Safety Officer Dave Seager stated that funding derives from opioid settlement dollars, increased court fee revenue authorized under Wisconsin Act 179, surplus funds from the county's radio project, and other existing resources, minimizing impact on the General Fund. Components include a dedicated narcotics prosecutor targeting large-scale drug trafficking organizations, courthouse security staffing, a second-shift patrol sergeant, dispatch compensation improvements for 911 recruiter retention, an additional \$200,000 for the County Radio Grant Program, and compensation adjustments for Sheriff's Office staff. County Executive Josh Schoemann and Supervisor Michael Schwab both spoke in support. The next board meeting is scheduled for August 12 at the Herbert J. Tennes Government Center in West Bend.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/daily_news/news/washington-county-anti-crime-plan/article_477ca3d9-248a-533b-8a2b-3ab975a3fd45.html

Dane County won't close 'borderline unconstitutional' jail as planned

Dane County Sheriff Calvin Barrett announced that the City-County Building portion of the county jail will remain open after the new \$207 million jail facility opens, reversing a commitment made when the County Board approved the project. In 2022, board members agreed to reduce total jail capacity by nearly one-fifth, from 1,013 beds to 825, on the understanding that the City-County Building jail would close upon completion of the new South Tower addition to the Public Safety

Building. As of the reporting date, 640 people were housed across the two buildings, with 27 held in Iowa County and 106 under community supervision. The City-County Building currently holds about 250 medium- and maximum-security detainees, roughly 39 percent of the jail population, and county officials allocated no renovation funding for it because closure was assumed. The South Tower is expected to be complete by the end of 2026, with the full project finishing in 2027.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/dane-county-won-t-close-borderline-unconstitutional-jail-as-planned/article_d1e34006-5915-4d6d-900d-c647df551003.html

West Allis police officer charged for knee on neck of man during arrest

West Allis Police Officer Anton Best, 32, was charged with felony misconduct in office after prosecutors allege he forcefully dropped his left knee onto the neck and shoulder blade of a compliant, handcuffed man on January 30, 2026. The incident began when officers responded to a vehicle with no license plates that fled and crashed in Brookfield; Best was not among the three officers initially securing the suspect. The West Allis Police Department determined through initial review that the use of force did not appear consistent with state guidelines or department policy and contracted with the Brookfield Police Department for an independent outside investigation. Best was placed on administrative desk duty during the investigation and later moved to administrative suspension following the charges. If convicted, he faces up to three years and six months in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both. His initial court appearance is scheduled for July 30, 2026.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/west-allis-police-officer-charged-for-knee-on-neck-of-handcuffed-man/71899182>

Janesville woman sues county in federal suit over hijab policy

Lynn Tanner filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin against Waukesha County and Sheriff Eric Severson, alleging jail staff violated her First Amendment religious freedom rights during a November 17, 2025 booking. Tanner, arrested on a traffic stop, was ordered to remove her hijab for a booking photograph over her explicit objection, under a jail policy requiring removal of religious head coverings; the resulting image was stored on the jail server, printed on her inmate wristband, and made available as a public record. The complaint argues the policy cannot survive strict scrutiny because Wisconsin exempts religious head coverings from driver's license photos and the federal government does the same for passports. Tanner seeks compensatory and punitive damages and asks the court to order the county to revise its policy and to seal and replace the booking photo. County Corporation Counsel Erik Weiding declined to comment on pending litigation.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/waukesha-county-sued-hijab-rights/article_b64d958b-5db2-591f-b285-bd744921c93a.html

Second member of the Milwaukee Police Department charged with misuse of license plate reader system

Milwaukee Police Detective Tehrangi Chapman, a 22-year department veteran assigned to internal affairs, was charged with misconduct in public office, a felony, and misuse of a GPS device. A criminal complaint states Chapman used the Flock Safety license plate reader system 20 times to track two people: 17 searches from January 10, 2024 through January 3, 2025 targeting one individual's vehicle, and three searches on January 7, 2025 targeting a second, with training listed

as the stated reason. Chapman also admitted installing a GPS device on one person's vehicle. The complaint notes Chapman had previously conducted the department's internal investigation into Officer Josue Ayala's similar Flock misuse; Ayala pleaded guilty to attempted misconduct in June and resigned. Chapman has been on suspension since March 13, and his initial court appearance is scheduled for July 17. Separately, Dane County, the City of Verona, UW-Madison Police, and the City of Kaukauna have each moved to terminate their Flock contracts.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/member-milwaukee-police-department-misuse-of-license-plate-reader-system>

Kaukauna is the latest area community to end contract for Flock Safety surveillance cameras

Kaukauna Police Chief Jamie Graff announced the City of Kaukauna will not renew its contract with Flock Safety, which expired in June 2026. The city had entered the three-year contract in June 2023 for six automated license plate readers. The decision follows multiple other Fox Valley municipalities dropping their Flock contracts over privacy concerns, including the inability to audit data sharing and insufficient account security. Graff said the city is working with Flock Safety to deactivate and remove the equipment and cited the inability to partner with area communities, a primary appeal of the original contract, as making continued investment fiscally unjustifiable. The department stated it remains committed to public safety tools while responsibly managing resources. No replacement technology or procurement process was announced.

Source: Kaukauna Community News (Northeastern) | <https://kaukaunacommunitynews.com/2026/07/08/kaukauna-is-the-latest-area-community-to-end-contract-for-flock-safety-surveillance-cameras/>

Antigo council OKs Flock Camera policy

The Antigo City Council unanimously approved a new policy governing the Antigo Police Department's use of automated license plate readers and Flock cameras at its July 9, 2026 meeting. Police Chief Joe Husnick, who took over from recently retired Chief Dan Duley, stated the department had been operating under an existing Flock contract arranged by Duley but without a formal usage policy. The new policy establishes a designated license plate reader administrator within the department to oversee usage, software updates, and compliance, reporting directly to Husnick, and defines prohibited uses and consequences for abuse. Husnick said the department will compile a running log of investigative successes tied to the cameras, which have been in place for several years and used in theft, drug, missing-persons, and stolen-vehicle cases. No contract amendment or additional appropriation was reported as a next step.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/antigo-council-oks-flock-camera-policy/article_2f0f0959-fd40-4f24-87ca-35daedd32dc8.html

'This is people's liberties': Trempealeau County officials clash over flock camera usage in heated debate

Trempealeau County Sheriff Erica Koxlien held an informational meeting with the County Board on July 9, 2026, regarding the county's use of Flock automated license plate reader cameras. County Board Committee Member Andy Parrish raised oversight concerns, citing a figure of more than 5,000 outside organizations and agencies accessing the county's Flock data within a single month. The meeting became contentious when another committee member interrupted Parrish's

presentation; Parrish responded with an expletive and continued. Following the meeting, Parrish posted to Facebook asserting that a committee member had prevented him from completing his presentation on Flock use and the board's oversight responsibilities. No vote, resolution, or final board action was reported, and no next procedural step was announced.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/local-politics/this-is-peoples-liberties-trempealeau-county-officials-clash-over-flock-camera-usage-in-heated-debate/article_0eff257d-8efa-41b9-ada9-d6ed8143a2a2.html

Johnson Creek cop no longer employed after DUI arrest; may face more charges

Peter Chin's employment with the Johnson Creek Police Department ended June 29, roughly one month after the Oconomowoc Police Department arrested him for operating while intoxicated in May. The Village of Johnson Creek confirmed the separation date but did not clarify whether Chin resigned or was terminated, and the police chief did not respond to comment requests. Chin, who began as an officer in 2024 out of the academy, faces a \$1,000 OWI citation and a non-criminal lane-deviation charge and has pleaded not guilty to both. The Waukesha County District Attorney's Office confirmed the case is still being investigated for potential criminal charges, with records withheld pending the investigation, and Oconomowoc Police Chief James Pfister cited the active investigation in denying open-records requests. The Village posted a police officer job opening the day after Chin's last day, and a virtual court hearing is scheduled for August 4.

Source: The Badger Project (South Central) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/07/09/johnson-creek-cop-no-longer-employed-after-dui-arrest-may-face-more-charges/>

Ex-Sheboygan Co deputy accused of threatening landlord hired by Marathon Co Sheriff

The Marathon County Sheriff's Office hired former Sheboygan County Sheriff's Deputy Jacob Mertzig in 2025, roughly three years after Mertzig resigned from the Sheboygan County Sheriff's Office while under internal investigation. Mertzig worked for Sheboygan County from 2018 to 2022 and was flagged in a Wisconsin Department of Justice database tracking law enforcement officers fired or forced out, with his entry noting he resigned prior to completion of an internal investigation. The investigation stemmed from allegations by landlords Dawn and David Walczak that Mertzig threatened to enforce code violations against their properties during a May 22, 2022 key exchange, after the Mertzigs vacated a Town of Sheboygan rental; Mertzig had disclosed he was running for Town of Sheboygan constable, a role with code-enforcement authority. Marathon County Capt. Andrew Seubert confirmed the department reviewed the circumstances of Mertzig's departure before hiring him.

Source: The Badger Project (Central/Northern) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/07/06/ex-sheboygan-co-deputy-accused-of-threatening-landlord-hired-by-marathon-co-sheriff/>

Merrill Fire Department hosting meetings on ambulance service

The Merrill Fire Department will host five public informational meetings in July 2026 on ambulance operations and community needs, coinciding with active contract negotiations between the City of Merrill and Lincoln County over ambulance service. The two entities have jointly provided service to the southern two-thirds of Lincoln County since 1970. The first meeting is scheduled for July 8 at 6 p.m. at Merrill Fire Station, featuring James Small of the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health. Each session includes presentations from the department's command staff on ambulance service history, operational challenges, and funding options, plus a different outside EMS resource per

meeting. Additional meetings are set for July 14, 15, 27, and 28 at various times and locations, with a livestream available on the department's Facebook page.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/07/merrill-fire-department-hosting-meetings-ambulance-service-this-month/>

Federal disaster relief available for those affected by spring storms in Kenosha County

A Presidential Disaster Declaration covering Kenosha County and 18 other Wisconsin counties has opened federal assistance to residents and businesses affected by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding that occurred April 13 through 23. County Executive Samantha Kerkman announced that homeowners and renters with uninsured damage to their primary residence may apply to FEMA for grants covering temporary housing, home repairs, appliance and furniture replacement, vehicle repairs, childcare costs, and moving and storage. Businesses and nonprofits may borrow up to \$2 million through the U.S. Small Business Administration for physical disaster loans, while homeowners may borrow up to \$500,000 for their primary residence and up to \$100,000 for personal property, with a possible mitigation increase of up to 20 percent of verified damage. Applications are accepted at DisasterAssistance.gov, and the filing deadline is August 31. State and FEMA in-person office hours in Kenosha County are forthcoming.

Source: Kenosha News (Southeastern) | https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/government-politics/article_5a11a650-9153-438e-abce-a204a2598648.html

ICE officials reportedly in Beloit making arrests

Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents conducted an enforcement operation in Beloit on July 7, 2026, making arrests at multiple locations including the 1900 block of Park Avenue at approximately 7:30 a.m., near the Hackett Street and Portland Avenue intersection, and on Eaton Avenue. The Beloit Police Department issued a written statement confirming awareness of the federal operation but stating it had not been requested to assist and had received no information about the nature or scope of the action. Rock County Sheriff Curtis Fell confirmed no information had been shared with his office and that no one had been brought to the county jail for detention. Both agencies directed inquiries to the FBI Madison office. Nationally, ICE arrested 10,000 people over a five-day period at the end of June, including 39 in Wisconsin, primarily in the Milwaukee area. No detainee count specific to Beloit was confirmed as of publication.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/ice-officials-reportedly-in-beloit-making-arrests/article_5c1f46e6-6f91-4627-8038-5511672a6061.html

Traffic accident occurs during ICE investigation in Janesville

The Janesville Police Department issued a formal statement on July 8, 2026, clarifying its non-participation in a multi-agency federal operation that included Immigration and Customs Enforcement and resulted in a vehicle collision. The department stated it was not asked to assist in, participate in, or provide information for the targeted operation, which began at 5:30 a.m. and concluded at approximately 12:30 p.m. A federal vehicle and a van collided just before 7 a.m.; Chief Chad Pearson confirmed the van was driven by the individual federal agents were targeting and that the crash did not involve a pursuit. Pearson stated the department does not know which vehicle initiated contact or how many federal agents were involved, and directed all inquiries about detentions to the ICE Chicago Field Office. The department's investigation into the crash circumstances remains open.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/traffic-accident-occurs-during-ice-investigation-in-janesville/article_1a1a5a8e-b20f-48c4-afd0-6741918b2b2c.html

Brady Street seeking comment on summer safety pilot in Milwaukee

Milwaukee's Department of Public Works is operating a six-week public safety pilot on Brady Street, now in its third weekend, that includes a no-parking restriction from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. along the corridor between Humboldt Boulevard and Farwell Avenue. The pilot targets reckless driving, loitering, and loud music in response to prior calls for increased policing in the entertainment district. Between July 2 and July 4, 2026, the department recorded 37 calls for tows; 14 vehicles were relocated, with 5 towed on July 2, 5 on July 3, and 4 on July 4, and all towed vehicles received citations. The Brady Street Business Improvement District is soliciting public comment on the pilot's effectiveness through an online form. The BID did not respond to a request for comment before publication.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/brady-street-seeking-comment-on-summer-safety-pilot>

Land Use and Development

New Berlin neighbors push back on proposed Rockwell Automation plant

Rockwell Automation has proposed constructing a 1-million-square-foot manufacturing campus on a 100-acre site in New Berlin, requiring the city to rezone the land before construction can proceed. The company projects capital investment of between \$211 million and \$246 million and says the facility would create hundreds of jobs. Neighbors, including Dan Weber and Dan Olstinske, oppose the proposal, citing the site's proximity to Elmwood Elementary School, residential subdivisions, and parks, and arguing the area was zoned residential and light industrial when they purchased their homes. The city has already held a community listening session that drew strong opposition. Kyle Lindberg, Rockwell's vice president of supply chain strategy and planning, said the company has adjusted plans in response to concerns about noise and traffic. The New Berlin Plan Commission is scheduled to take up the potential rezoning on July 15.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/waukesha-county/new-berlin-neighbors-push-back-on-proposed-rockwell-automation-plant>

Madison proposes zoning changes for 4,000 homes as some locals raise questions

Madison's zoning office has proposed rezoning approximately 4,000 single- and two-family homes spanning 16 alder districts, moving them out of Planned Development zoning into conventional residential zoning. Zoning Administrator Katie Bannon said PD zoning, commonly applied to residential developments built between the 1970s and early 2000s, requires city staff to review development-specific documents sometimes hundreds of pages long before determining applicable standards for routine improvements such as additions, decks, or egress windows. Bannon confirmed some proposed districts would permit duplexes and accessory dwelling units where existing PD designations do not, and that properties within Transit-Oriented Development overlay districts could allow up to four-unit buildings, though no other density changes are proposed. The rezoning would not alter existing homeowner association covenants, and the city

has notified affected homeowners by postcard. The proposal must receive a Plan Commission recommendation before proceeding to the Common Council for a final vote.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/10/madison-proposes-zoning-changes-4000-homes-some-residents-raise-questions/>

Groups sue Wisconsin DNR over environmental review of Port Washington data centers

Midwest Environmental Advocates filed suit in Ozaukee County Circuit Court on behalf of Sierra Club Wisconsin, challenging the Wisconsin DNR's decision to issue permits for Vantage Data Centers' \$15 billion, 672-acre Lighthouse campus in Port Washington without conducting an environmental impact statement under Wisconsin's Environmental Policy Act. The DNR issued permits for the project on June 12 after conducting an environmental analysis summary rather than a full EIS. Emails obtained through a public records request show DNR attorney Molly McNab informed Vantage in July 2025 that an EIS would be required, and a September 23 text from a Vantage official to Port Washington Mayor Ted Neitzke referenced the governor's office seeking information on why an EIS would kill the project. The project's first phase would consume 1.3 gigawatts of electricity and fill 4.7 acres of wetlands. MEA attorney Michael Greif said the suit seeks a full environmental review of the data centers and associated electrical infrastructure. The DNR declined to comment on pending litigation.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/lawsuit-wisconsin-dnr-environmental-review-port-washington-data-centers>

Big crowds have Town of Janesville seeking bigger venue for data center discussion

The Town of Janesville Board voted unanimously at its July 7, 2026 meeting to advance a draft 12-month township-wide moratorium on data centers to the planning and zoning committee for a public hearing, tentatively scheduled for August at a location yet to be determined. The moratorium, if ultimately adopted, would freeze any data center projects on any parcel of town land while exempting other development types. Town Chairman Bruce Schneider, who has served on the board since 1994, read the draft moratorium aloud at residents' request, after which staff printed dozens of copies for the crowd. A June regular board meeting drew approximately 200 attendees, most opposing an undisclosed data center proposal by a developer eyeing a parcel off Polzin Road. Town officials are now seeking a venue capable of accommodating several hundred people. The draft must receive a planning and zoning committee recommendation before returning to the town board for final consideration later this year.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazetteextra.com/news/big-crowds-have-town-of-janesville-seeking-bigger-venue-for-data-center-discussion/article_4e522b1d-843b-4004-a1f3-de6efa5ab3fe.html

Turtle board narrowly approves reimbursement agreement with data center developer

The Town of Turtle Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to approve a cost reimbursement agreement with Irvine, California-based Panattoni Development Co., which is evaluating more than 600 acres in the towns of Beloit and Turtle for a proposed \$1 billion data center campus. Board Chair Roger Anclam, Bill Brewer, and Tim Sanders voted in favor; Christine Walsh and Tim Kopp voted against. Under the agreement, Panattoni will provide an initial \$250,000 to fund independent studies on noise, water, and power usage. The board had tabled the agreement the prior month after more than 100 residents appeared to oppose the project. Anclam stated the approval carries no obligation to

permit a data center. Board member Tim Sanders cited concern that rejecting the agreement could lead Panattoni to seek annexation through the City of Beloit, though city officials stated no annexation discussions have occurred. The Town of Beloit has not yet scheduled a vote on its own reimbursement agreement.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/turtle-board-narrowly-approves-reimbursement-agreement-with-data-center-developer/article_7ac2b6bd-877f-4f6f-896b-f294a3d7cbbc.html

Oneida County pushes data center moratorium to county board

The Oneida County Planning and Development Committee voted unanimously on July 8, 2026, to advance a one-year data center moratorium to the full county board for a final vote. The committee acted following public comment at the Oneida County Courthouse, where residents raised concerns centered on water usage, citing Clean Wisconsin research that a hyperscale data center consumes more than double the daily water use of the entire city of Green Bay. Planning and Zoning Director Karl Jennrich said that if the moratorium is adopted, he will research how other counties regulate data centers and what zoning districts they are considering, and noted an outright ban may not be legally permissible for the county. The moratorium would prohibit the county from accepting, processing, approving, or issuing permits for new data center developments for at least one year, and excludes the unincorporated areas of Sugar Camp, Monico, and Enterprise and the City of Rhinelander. The county board is expected to vote in late August 2026.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/oneida-county-pushes-data-center-moratorium-to-county-board/article_1b00ab3b-f0e4-41fb-9bad-b799c2384c4c.html

Dovre Township uses 12-month freeze to hold off data center scouts

The three-member Dovre Town Board enacted a 12-month temporary moratorium on the siting, construction, and operation of high-intensity industrial facilities and data centers, roughly two weeks before a June 5 informational town hall to gather public input. Township Chairperson Diane Vaughn, who also serves on the Barron County Board, cited the township's unzoned status as the primary vulnerability, noting a developer had been scouting unzoned municipalities in Barron County with particular interest in Dovre's decommissioned frac sand plants. The Great Northern Sand Complex spans over 420 acres, and both it and the Chieftain Sand and Proppant Complex feature high-voltage electrical hookups and direct natural gas line access. A recent property review found nearly 50 percent of Dovre land is owned by non-residents or out-of-state agricultural conglomerates. The board may extend the moratorium by an additional six months for a total of 18 months. A non-binding straw poll showed near-unanimous resident support for pursuing county zoning maps.

Source: Bloomer Advance (Western) | https://www.bloomeradvance.com/news/regional_news/article_77ba66f9-3636-561f-b8e4-04e67f1ffe4d.html

'Are our voices being heard?': Wheatland residents upset as Robin Energy files battery storage plan with state

Robin Energy Storage filed an engineering plan with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission on June 18, bypassing a unanimous 22-0 Kenosha County vote adopting a one-year moratorium on battery storage approvals. The project, assigned PSC docket number 9842-CE-100, proposes

placing 244 battery storage containers on active agricultural land in the Town of Wheatland, with construction potentially beginning as early as late 2027. Kenosha County Executive Samantha Kerkman characterized the PSC filing as a direct circumvention of local control and stated she is lobbying the Legislature to establish state regulations on battery storage systems, which currently do not exist. When asked whether the county moratorium carries standing in the PSC review, the commission stated any legal conflict between its authority and a local ordinance would be for courts to resolve. Once Robin Energy submits its full application, the PSC will open a public comment period and schedule hearings where residents may testify on the record.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/kenosha-county/are-our-voices-being-heard-wheatland-residents-upset-as-robin-energy-files-battery-storage-plan-with-state>

Brown County Celebrates New Contract Moving Coal Piles Away From Fox River

Brown County and the City of Green Bay executed a contract with C. Reiss Company on July 11, 2026, establishing a 60-year lease of the north portion of the former WPS Pulliam Power Plant site in downtown Green Bay. Under the agreement, C. Reiss will relocate its salt piles from Fox River Terminals to the Pulliam location, and the existing coal piles along the Fox River will move to the Fox River Terminal. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation awarded Brown County a \$500,000 grant through the Idle Sites Redevelopment Program to finance acquisition of the former power plant site in support of the relocation. Governor Tony Evers attended the signing alongside state, county, and city officials. The freed Fox River Terminals site is designated for new mixed-use development, with infrastructure improvements at the Pulliam site planned as part of the redevelopment effort.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/11/brown-county-celebrates-new-contract-moving-coal-piles-away-from-fox-river/>

Racine Common Council to consider Shoop Park golf course lease referral, 16th Street rezoning July 7

The Racine Common Council took up File 0609-26 on July 7, a mayor-sponsored communication authorizing the mayor and city clerk to enter an agreement with Leipold Johnson Golf Group for shoreline stabilization, habitat restoration, clubhouse construction, and a long-term lease to operate Shoop Park, a nine-hole municipal golf course on Lake Michigan. City Clerk Tara McMenamin confirmed the item was listed for referral only, not a final vote, and no draft agreement, lease terms, fiscal note, or staff recommendation was attached to the Legistar file as of Monday night. The city estimates roughly \$1.8 million in deferred physical need at the property, including a shoreline revetment projected to cost \$1.2 million to \$1.3 million; earlier materials described the private redevelopment pitch as more than \$10 million in outside investment, with a spring 2028 grand opening targeted. Separately, the council will vote on rezoning 64 properties along the 16th Street corridor to a single B1 Neighborhood Convenience District, following a June 15 Planning Commission recommendation.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountye.com/2026/07/07/racine-common-council-shoop-park/>

\$24M mixed-use development breaks ground

Heimat Capital, a Mequon-based real estate firm, broke ground on June 21 on The Meridian, a \$24 million mixed-use development at 301 N. Main St. in Thiensville, anchoring the village's Thiensville Crossing tax incremental financing district, a 15-acre TIF district created in 2020. The three-story building will contain 80 apartment units and 5,000 square feet of street-level retail, commercial, and community amenity space on a 2-acre site at West Freistadt Road and North Main Street. The village acquired the land between 2021 and 2024 using TIF funds, demolished existing structures, and approved sale of the parcel to Heimat Capital for \$1 on March 16, 2026, following a development agreement reached in early 2026 and 2025 zoning code updates and site plan approvals. Village President John Rosing noted no new apartments have been built in Thiensville since 1991. Completion and occupancy are projected for fall 2027.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/10/24-million-mixed-use-development-thiensville-groundbreaking/>

Falls Village Board denies downtown cell tower

The Menomonee Falls Village Board voted unanimously on July 11, 2026, to deny a Conditional Use Permit for an AT&T wireless communication facility proposed at N89-W16785 Appleton Ave. in downtown Menomonee Falls. The proposed structure would have stood 80 feet tall, which residents described as two to three times the height of surrounding buildings, and board members reported receiving more than 40 messages in opposition before the meeting. Multiple residents testified during the public hearing, citing concerns about health effects, property values, and visual impact on the historic downtown. Property owner George Hinkens, whose apartment building sits near the proposed site, asked the village to work with AT&T on an alternative location. The Plan Commission had recommended denial on June 2, and the Architectural Control Board followed with its own denial recommendation on June 23, before the Village Board's final action.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/menomonee-falls-cell-tower-denied/article_6850fef2-37ef-5d8c-b8c4-aab8cb65e09a.html

Oshkosh-based paper plate maker to add 100 manufacturing jobs in Clintonville

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation authorized up to \$1 million in state tax credits over three years to support a \$65 million manufacturing expansion by Hoffmaster Group at its Clintonville facility. The tax credit amount will be determined by the number of jobs actually created and the company's verified capital investment. Hoffmaster projects the expansion will create more than 100 manufacturing jobs at the Clintonville plant, which produces paper plates, napkins, table covers, and baking paper, and expects to double the plant's paper plate output. WEDC Secretary John Miller and Hoffmaster CEO Craig Cappel both issued statements confirming the partnership. The company also operates a manufacturing facility and corporate offices in Oshkosh, where it was founded in 1947. The tax credit disbursement will be conditioned on job-creation and investment benchmarks met over the three-year authorization period.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Northeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/economy/business/hoffmaster-group-paper-plate-maker-to-add-100-manufacturing-jobs-in-clintonville>

Grant in motion: County moves to authorize Breselow's submission

The Jefferson County Finance Committee unanimously approved a motion authorizing the county to submit a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Site Assessment Grant application on behalf of Cady Bridge LLC for the former Breselow's Family Market site at 100 E. Cady St. in Watertown. The motion, proposed by District 5 Supervisor James Braugher, also directs the county to enter a contract with WEDC and create a corresponding budget amendment. Cady Bridge LLC acquired the property at a Jefferson County Sheriff's auction last month for \$947,505. The WEDC program requires a government entity to apply as a pass-through to the developer; Thrive Economic Development's Emily Clavette recommended the county rather than the City of Watertown as applicant to accelerate the timeline and cited a September 1 target start date. The grant would fund environmental assessment and potentially building demolition, with future development envisioned as mixed-use or multifamily residential. No county funds are committed to site development.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/grant-in-motion-county-moves-to-authorize-breselow-s-submission/article_6ddbcbbaa-4646-447c-9cbc-4e0473dfd496.html

Council delays deal for city land

The Port Washington Common Council voted unanimously to extend two deadlines tied to the \$465,000 sale of the city's police and fire station properties at Wisconsin and Pier streets to PFD Redevelopment. The developer's agreement signing deadline moved from July 31 to August 21 to allow continued negotiations and accommodate council schedules, and the land sale closing date shifted from September 15 to September 30. City Attorney Matt Nugent noted the developer's agreement will define construction timelines and cost-sharing terms, including reimbursement to the developer for demolition and utility work capped at \$464,999, meaning the city could net as little as \$1 from the transaction. The closing delay allows the city to hold an equipment sale, which cannot begin until at least September 16; items remaining at closing become the buyer's property. PFD Redevelopment's proposal calls for 20 townhouses valued at approximately \$16 million, with completion targeted for spring 2029.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/council-delays-deal-city-land>

Deal calls for county to own Waubeka Mill site

An Ozaukee County supervisors committee approved a memorandum of understanding with the Town of Fredonia under which the town will transfer the Waubeka Mill and Button Factory, along with one acre of Milwaukee River frontage, to the county for brownfield remediation and possible park development. The Town of Fredonia purchased the two buildings and the land for \$40,000, then sought county reimbursement of half that amount; supervisors declined, citing \$38,700 already committed in remediation matching funds. The county holds a \$142,800 grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. to assess the site for brownfield status. Planning and Parks Director Andrew Struck said the mill would likely be demolished while a remnant of the Button Factory, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, would be preserved, and described a planned kayak launch and loop connecting the site to Waubedonia Park. The full Ozaukee County Board must still approve the MOU.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/deal-calls-county-own-waubeka-mill-site>

Options weighed on East End parking, property demolition and alley

The Ellsworth Village Board addressed three actions tied to the East End Redevelopment Plan. The board approved village code changes including a parking permit program for a 19-space lot off Broadway Street, setting the annual permit fee at \$250, with passes reserved for residents and business owners lacking off-street parking to maintain a mix of permit and free public spaces. The board also authorized going out to bid for demolition of 245 Broadway St., a property the village acquired for \$1 following condemnation proceedings that were subsequently dismissed. On a third matter, the board tabled a decision on a Broadway Street alley bridge after Village Administrator and Clerk-Treasurer Brad Roy reported that a 1923 easement, surfaced by a resident after a 2024 title search found no village responsibility, does assign the village maintenance authority; a formal vote is required to accept the easement, and staff will first define its scope and reach agreement with adjacent property owners.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/options-weighed-on-east-end-parking-property-demolition-and-alley,197325>

Kronenwetter to address four-year gap in oak wilt enforcement

The Kronenwetter Village Board is scheduled to discuss a four-year enforcement gap in its oak wilt ordinance at its July 13, 2026 meeting. Trustee Dan Lesniak requested the discussion after identifying that the village has had no contracted urban forester or formally designated tree inspector since January 1, 2022, leaving the ordinance's inspection, permitting, notification, and abatement procedures without an authorized official to carry them out. The ordinance, originally adopted January 28, 2014, and amended in its entirety December 13, 2016, designates the tree inspector as the authority for annual surveys, emergency inspections, certified-mail notifications, and abatement contracting, with costs recoverable as special assessments. A 2013 village survey funded in part by a DNR urban forestry grant identified 578 actively dying trees and 1,236 already dead, and the associated cost-sharing program reimbursing property owners 50 percent of management plan costs up to \$350 per parcel has also been suspended. The meeting packet includes no staff recommendation, proposed replacement inspector, or cost estimate.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/07/11/kronenwetter-to-address-four-year-gap-in-oak-wilt-enforcement/>

Douglas County committee puts hold on some land sales

The Douglas County Land and Development Committee voted June 30 to withhold from sale any tax-forfeited parcels of 20 acres or more where at least 75 percent of the property consists of wetlands, adopting a proposal by Supervisor Alan Jaques. The policy applies only to parcels taken for unpaid taxes prior to 2022; state law enacted that year requires all properties subsequently taken for unpaid taxes to be offered for sale. The decision was prompted by the county's broader effort to develop a wetland mitigation credit program, which the County Board funded at \$50,000 on June 18, itself triggered by the County Highway Z reconstruction project, which had to be scaled back after open-market wetland mitigation credits proved prohibitively expensive. County Clerk Kaci Lundgren had sought committee guidance after a May decision to pause appraisals on several parcels containing significant wetlands. The committee agreed to revisit the paused appraisals involving parcels smaller than 20 acres at a future meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegam.com/news/local/douglas-county-committee-puts-hold-on-some-land-sales>

Polk County residents have until July 24 to flag errors in new flood maps

Polk County is accepting public comments through July 24 on draft floodplain maps produced under FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning initiative, following a Flood Risk Review meeting held in June with representatives from the Wisconsin DNR and FEMA. The draft maps were developed using 2015 LiDAR terrain data, revised flood modeling, and updated stream studies. Floodplain designations carry regulatory consequences including effects on building permits, development rules, and insurance requirements. County Zoning Administrator Logan Hacker is the designated contact for questions and comments. Public input collected during this period will be used to refine the maps before FEMA issues preliminary versions, expected within six to twelve months. A Local Officials Meeting and public open house are planned for spring or summer 2027, followed by a formal 90-day appeal period, with final adoption estimated for early 2028.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/polk-county-residents-have-until-july-24-to-flag-errors-in-new-flood-maps/article_fe5b01c3-9ced-4721-b754-06f0a8e3667b.html

West Salem school's offer to purchase La Crosse County Farm property delayed by committee

La Crosse County's committee of chairs voted unanimously to delay responding until October to the School District of West Salem's offer to purchase approximately 10 acres of the former County Farm property. West Salem Superintendent Ryan Rieber submitted the offer June 23, proposing to buy the parcel at \$40,000 per acre, totaling roughly \$400,000. Committee members acknowledged the offer was a reasonable deal but expressed concern that accepting it before the end of August could restrict flexibility for developers whose early proposals for the broader County Farm site are due at that time. A March 2025 offer from the Village of West Salem had proposed \$100 and other incentives for eight acres. County Administrator Jane Klekamp advised that the October timeline would allow staff to review developer submissions and discuss them with county board and West Salem officials. The developers' plans have been crafted under the assumption that the 10 acres remain county-owned.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_c734fe1a-dc65-53b8-8f4e-be37923eff10.html

Second online survey launched to help finalize Rice Lake waterfront plans

The Rice Lake Brownfield Reuse Concept Plan project team has launched a second online community survey, open through July 16, 2026, to gather public input on final redevelopment concepts for the Broten property along East Charles and East Allen streets on the Rice Lake shoreline. Barron County Economic Development Corp., the Wisconsin DNR, engineering firm SEH, and the city of Rice Lake are collaborating on the effort, which also encompasses adjacent Johnson Truck Bodies land. The DNR awarded a Brownfield grant to Barron County to fund environmental contamination assessment at the Broten property, which has sat abandoned with unpaid property taxes for years; concern over unknown ground and water contamination previously deterred the county from claiming the land. A first-round survey followed an April 2 public workshop attended by at least 32 residents who reviewed and voted on SEH proposals. Results of the second survey will finalize the concept plan, which will then be presented at an upcoming public open house.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/second-online-survey-launched-to-help-finalize-rice-lake-waterfront-plans/article_2241fe26-b9f6-4f21-9d0c-b497799887f2.html

Altoona launches "Safe Steps Home Improvement Program"

The City of Altoona launched the Safe Steps Home Improvement Program, offering qualified homeowners no-interest, affordable loans for home repairs including plumbing and electrical upgrades, carpentry-related repairs, and handyman projects. The program is administered through the city's grants and housing office under Grants and Housing Program Manager Julian Emerson. Eligibility requires applicants to reside in Altoona, own their home, and earn 80 percent or less of the area median income. The city identified preservation of existing affordable housing stock as a stated objective. No maximum loan amount or total program funding figure was reported. The program is scheduled to begin later in July 2026, and residents may contact the grants and housing office for eligibility information.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/08/altoona-launches-safe-steps-home-improvement-program/>

Governance and Elections

Green Bay city clerk on leave after state calls for investigation into duplicate ballots

Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich placed City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys on administrative leave on July 9, 2026, pending an internal city review and a state investigation into duplicate absentee ballots issued in two consecutive elections. The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted unanimously the same day to investigate whether Jeffreys or city employees violated state law in the preparation and mailing of absentee ballots. In April, the city issued two absentee ballots to 152 voters, prompting a complaint from the Republican Party of Wisconsin, and commission staff subsequently found probable cause that state law was violated; Green Bay then issued duplicate ballots again in the August primary. The commission delayed punitive action pending investigation. Jeffreys must submit a plan by July 31 detailing how the city will ensure only one vote is counted per voter in the August primary, and by August 14 a broader plan ensuring one ballot per voter going forward.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Northeastern) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/green-bay-city-clerk-on-leave-after-state-calls-for-investigation-into-duplicate-ballots/article_8bc2811c-1c4d-4f4b-9c40-042bfda9d52f.html

Green Bay city council members asking for audit of election procedures

Alderspersons Melinda Eck and Jennifer Grant submitted a resolution to the Green Bay City Council requesting an independent operational audit of city election administration procedures, scheduled for consideration by the Protection and Policy Committee at 4 p.m. July 14, 2026, in Room 207 of City Hall. The resolution follows the Wisconsin Elections Commission's vote to investigate the Green Bay clerk's office after the city sent 152 duplicate absentee ballots during the April 2026 election and is reasonably certain 244 duplicate ballots were sent for the August 2026 election; City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys was subsequently placed on administrative leave. The proposed audit covers six areas including absentee ballot processing, quality assurance controls, election management software, and staffing. The commission requires Green Bay to submit by July 31 a detailed explanation of how only one ballot per elector will be tabulated, and Jeffreys must file by August 14 a plan to prevent future duplicate mailings.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/green-bay-city-council-members-melinda-eck-jennifer-grant-audit-election-procedures-clerk-celestine-jeffreys-administrative-leave-duplicate-absentee-ballots-wisconsin-elections-commission-investigation>

Waukesha Co. sets Dec. 15 special County Executive election; interim exec explains process

The Waukesha County Board unanimously approved a December 15 special election to fill the county executive seat left vacant by the death of Paul Farrow, who died July 7 following a two-year illness. County Board Chairman Jim Heinrich automatically assumed an interim executive role upon Farrow's death and is required by state law to appoint a temporary county executive within 30 days; Heinrich announced that appointment will occur July 28 but did not name the individual. The December 15 winner will serve only until the April general election, when Farrow's four-year term was scheduled to expire, and the April winner will then serve a full four-year term. State statute mandates that the nonpartisan county executive race cannot appear on the November general election ballot, necessitating the separate special election. Heinrich noted the process creates the possibility of five different county executives within a single calendar year and acknowledged the additional costs to the county.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/waukesha-county/waukesha-co-sets-dec-15-special-county-executive-election-interim-exec-explains-process>

Janesville City Council to weigh in on ballot referendum question on GM-site megaprojects

The Janesville City Council is scheduled to vote Monday on ballot language for a November referendum that would require voter approval before the city could proceed with development agreements, sales, or leases at the former GM/JATCO site for any project exceeding \$450 million in total cost. The referendum stems from a direct-legislation petition filed in January under Wisconsin's direct legislation statute; 4,600 people signed the petition, and 3,927 were certified as meeting residency and voter registration requirements. The council declined to adopt the proposed ordinance outright, which under state law pushed the measure to a public vote. If a majority of voters approve the referendum on the November 3 ballot, the ordinance would take effect upon publication and could not be repealed or amended for two years except by another voter referendum. The council must approve ballot language by the August 25 deadline for submission to the Rock County Clerk.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/janesville-city-council-to-weigh-in-on-ballot-referendum-question-on-gm-site-megaprojects/article_11a4bee7-e1d9-4897-be0a-9e4c7824bd19.html

Tempers flare over public comment restrictions at Town of Beloit

The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors, facing an unusually large turnout at its Monday meeting, enforced recently adopted public comment restrictions that limit speakers to two minutes each, prohibit yielding time to another speaker, cap total public comment at 30 minutes unless the board votes to extend it, and confine remarks to actionable agenda items. Town administrator Malizio stated the restrictions were implemented after it became public that developers were considering the town for a hyperscale data center campus. The primary action item was a proposal to merge the fire and emergency medical departments of the city and town of Beloit. Former Beloit City Council member Brittany Keyes was among several speakers whose comments were cut short and publicly accused the board of stifling discussion. Panattoni Development held a June 22 open house presenting preliminary plans for a 2-million-square-foot data center campus across 600 acres valued at approximately \$1 billion; no formal development proposal has yet been submitted.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/tempers-flare-over-public-comment-restrictions-at-town-of-beloit/article_f4856108-f9fe-4de6-a973-bf1969ef357e.html

DOJ warns Milwaukee officials over ICE mask ban

The U.S. Department of Justice sent a letter dated July 10, 2026, to Milwaukee officials warning that a recently passed Milwaukee Common Council ordinance prohibiting federal law enforcement officers from wearing masks is unconstitutional and raises the specter of a confrontation between local and federal law enforcement. The letter was signed by Brad Schimel, First Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, and Assistant Attorney General Brett Shumate, and demanded written assurances by July 17, 2026, that the ordinance will not be enforced against federal officers. The letter states federal officers will not comply and will continue wearing masks. The ordinance was among a series of ICE-related measures recently passed by the council, and the DOJ letter did not specify consequences for non-compliance. Mayor Cavalier Johnson's spokesperson Jeff Fleming said the mayor would leave specific legal issues to the City Attorney. The July 17 assurance deadline is the next reported milestone.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/doj-warns-milwaukee-officials-over-ice-mask-ban/71899819>

Attorney finds no conflict in mayor's Housing Authority board service

Attorney Dean Dietrich of Wausau issued two legal memoranda, dated May 14 and July 8, concluding that Superior Mayor Jim Paine did not violate HUD conflict-of-interest regulations during his service on the Superior Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. HUD requested the opinion in March after a Housing Authority employee raised allegations, and the board hired Dietrich to render it. The May 14 memo found Paine's self-appointment lawful under state law permitting up to two city officials on the five-member board. The July 8 memo addressed a February 25, 2025 board vote in which Paine and City Councilor Lindsey Graskey voted to block the Housing Authority from challenging the city's nullification of cooperative agreements covering snow plowing and sewer service at Catlin Courts and Bayview, facilities tied to a \$36 million rental assistance demonstration renovation; Dietrich concluded neither official gained personally. Paine resigned from the board May 13, the City Council confirmed Councilor Joe Radtke as replacement May 19, and the Housing Authority formally accepted both actions June 24.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/attorney-finds-no-conflict-in-mayors-housing-authority-board-service>

La Crosse County certifies French Island election winners

La Crosse County's canvass board met Thursday morning and certified results from the Village of French Island's inaugural board election, confirming the six-member governing body for the newly reincorporated municipality. Peter Davison, a write-in candidate who received approximately 3 percent of the nearly 5,500 votes cast in the trustee race, secured the sixth and final trustee seat and will serve until April 2027. He joins five on-ballot trustees, Bob Wolfert, Heather Harney, Mary Jo Werner, Lee Donahue, and Mike Stolpa, along with village president Dan Kapanke. Lee Donahue received the highest individual vote total of any candidate at roughly 13 percent of votes cast. Donahue, Werner, and Wolfert, as the three top vote-getters, will serve terms one year longer than their peers under the staggered-term structure standard for newly incorporated villages, according

to County Clerk Ginny Dankmeyer. Write-in candidate Jason Stratman finished roughly 100 votes behind Davison.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/elections/article_484e230c-7d60-49a2-9ae2-b6cb8fb827c5.html

Rock County board seeks applicants for District 19 board vacancy

The Rock County Board of Supervisors chair is accepting applications to fill a vacancy in Supervisory District 19, which covers Janesville Wards 2 and 5 and was previously held by Lori Pennycook. Under Wisconsin statutes, the County Board chair appoints a qualified elector and resident of the district, subject to confirmation by the full County Board, and the appointee will serve the remainder of the unexpired term, which runs through the April 2028 election. Interested applicants must submit materials through the online portal on the Rock County website, accessible via the Residents section of the county homepage. The application deadline is 5 p.m. on July 24, 2026.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/rock-county-board-seeks-applicants-for-district-19-board-vacancy/article_33f85ef6-2430-43d7-97fb-ba6f038078d6.html

Human Services

Wisconsin governments have received \$160 million in opioid settlement funds. Here's where it's going.

An analysis by Wisconsin Watch reports that local Wisconsin governments have received more than \$160 million from drug makers, distributors, and pharmacies, with total projected payments to the state and 87 local governments expected to exceed \$874 million by 2038. As of the end of 2025, only eight local governments had spent more than half of their received funds, while 16 had spent none. Counties reported spending nearly \$6 million on prevention, the largest single category among 10 tracked by the Wisconsin Counties Association. At least 17 local governments directed settlement dollars toward law enforcement, including co-responders, surveillance cameras, and drug task force investigators; more than \$2 million was reported spent on treatment for incarcerated people; and about a dozen counties allocated funds to foster care or family-preservation services. Seventy of Wisconsin's 71 counties participate, with Polk County's board having declined to join the state lawsuit. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services receives 30 percent of the state's payments and reports spending to the Legislature quarterly.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-opioid-settlement-funds-governments-counties-municipalities-health-database-2026/>

Wisconsin child care bridge payments end, raising costs for Ashland and Bayfield County families

Wisconsin's Child Care Bridge Payments ended June 30, 2026, removing \$16,530 per month for Ashland County child care providers and \$10,400 per month for Bayfield County providers, according to Wisconsin Early Childhood Association Executive Director Ruth Schmidt. The bridge payments had replaced the federally funded Child Care Counts program; combined, those streams had totaled \$22 million per month statewide before declining 60 percent over time. A WECA survey of Ashland and Bayfield county providers found 41 percent plan to raise tuition by more than \$26

per week, roughly \$100 per month, while 26 percent said they are likely to close permanently. In Ashland County, median full-time infant care costs \$7,800 annually through licensed family providers and \$11,000 through group facilities. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families market rate survey found the Wisconsin Shares subsidy covered only 60 percent of child care slots statewide as of December 2025, against a statutory target of 75 percent.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/wisconsin-child-care-bridge-payments-end-raising-costs-for-ashland-and-bayfield-county-families/article_5bfb94a5-79cd-41c7-b40e-cc217d27dc1b.html

Oshkosh to open new 18-hour, two-shift childcare center in 55-unit housing complex

The Oshkosh Child Development Center will open September 1 as the first two-shift childcare facility in Oshkosh, operating 18 hours per day from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. The center will be housed within The Corridor, a new 55-unit affordable housing complex on Main Street north of downtown, developed by Commonwealth Development Corporation. Board Chair Su Van Houwelingen and Executive Director Liz Storms lead the center's governance and operations. The facility can accommodate up to 42 children per shift, ranging from 6 weeks to 12 years of age, with capacity to serve roughly 40 to 50 children per shift across both shifts. Enrollment is open to families regardless of whether they reside at The Corridor, and pricing is set at market rate with no differential by shift time. The center's September 1 opening is the next confirmed operational milestone.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/oshkosh-to-open-new-18-hour-two-shift-childcare-center-in-55-unit-housing-complex-child-development-center-wisconsin-shares-second-shift-the-corridor-apartments-townhomes>

Nailing it down

Taylor County Health Officer Michelle Cahoon presented data to the Taylor County Board of Health on July 2, 2026, making the case for retaining the county health department's nail care program after the county finance committee had considered eliminating the service. Cahoon compiled the program data specifically in response to the finance committee's proposal and delivered her findings directly to the board of health. The article does not report a final vote by either the board of health or the finance committee on the program's continuation, nor the program's annual cost or number of clients served. Whether the board of health will issue a formal recommendation to the finance committee, or whether the finance committee will take a follow-up vote, is not reported.

Source: Medford Star News (Central/Northern) | <https://www.centralwinews.com/a-main/2026/07/08/nailing-it-down/?destination=star-news>

School Districts

Janesville School District progressing toward \$98 million referendum on November ballot

The Janesville School District's Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee authorized the full school board on Tuesday to direct administration to draft a referendum question for the November 3 ballot. The proposed four-year, \$98 million measure would allow the district to exceed the state-mandated revenue limit by \$18.5 million in 2027-28, \$22.5 million in 2028-29, \$26.5 million in 2029-

30, and \$30.5 million in 2030-31. The first-year figure was reduced from an earlier draft of \$19.5 million after a community survey found only 47 percent of participants responded yes or probably yes to that amount, and Chief Financial Officer Dan McCrea said it could be scaled back further to \$18 million. The committee is scheduled to meet August 4 to review the proposed terms before finalized language returns to the full board, which must approve the question by August 25. The district's current two-year, \$14.5 million non-recurring operational referendum, approved in November 2024, expires June 30, 2027.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-progressing-toward-98-million-referendum-on-november-ballot/article_f9cfbe94-557f-4110-972a-939d2de9d541.html

Janesville School District slows decision on whether to close Washington school

The Janesville School District has postponed a scheduled July 14 school board vote on whether to permanently close flood-damaged Washington Elementary School, Superintendent Mark Holzman announced via email to Washington parents and staff. The delay follows a Monday meeting between Holzman, public information officer Patti Lux Mlsna, board members Lisa Hurda and Greg Ardrey, and three members of the Save Washington Elementary School parent group, which had been considering fundraising to cover an estimated \$3 million in flood repair costs. District officials suggested holding off pending a clearer determination of need. The district will instead apply for FEMA disaster relief under a \$22.6 million federal aid package approved for Rock County and other Wisconsin counties affected by severe storms during the week of April 17; the application window opened Monday with an August 31 deadline. The district will monitor enrollment trends, building capacity, and budget status, including its November operational referendum, before rescheduling a board vote.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-slows-decision-on-whether-to-close-washington-school/article_ccf94726-01c6-4acb-b9f1-bb44172ad4bf.html

Accusers in Oconto Falls case say school had 'deliberate indifference' to abuse for decades

A federal complaint filed in March 2026 against the Oconto Falls School District alleges that school officials practiced deliberate indifference to sexual misconduct by educators and staff spanning 35 years. The complaint, originally filed by three former students, has since been amended three times and now names seven plaintiffs, 19 sworn affidavits, and 12 staff members as alleged perpetrators dating to the early 1990s; two of those staff members have been criminally charged. Chicago attorney Cass Casper represents the plaintiffs, and West Bend attorney Ron Stadler represents the district and has filed a motion to dismiss, arguing a district is not liable for a bad actor's individual conduct. The complaint documents specific instances in which administrators were informed of abuse and took no formal action. Wisconsin law requires all school employees to report suspected child abuse as mandated reporters. No trial date was reported.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-oconto-falls-school-district-student-sexual-assault-abuse/>

Lincoln Avenue School students will move to Casimir Pulaski High School

Milwaukee Public Schools administrators announced that the full Lincoln Avenue School community, students, teachers, and staff, will relocate to Casimir Pulaski High School on Milwaukee's south side for the upcoming school year. The decision follows a June 30 fire that broke

out at approximately 3 a.m. and caused catastrophic damage to the Lincoln Avenue building, which Milwaukee Fire investigators have declared a total loss requiring demolition. Superintendent Dr. Brenda Cassellius stated the placement keeps the entire elementary school community in one building roughly a mile and a half from the original site. Pulaski was selected in part because it already contains separate offices, stairwells, classroom spaces, entrances, exits, and cafeterias from its prior dual-school configuration, and Lincoln's bell schedule, systems, procedures, and transportation parameters will transfer directly. Parents of current Lincoln students do not need to re-register. In-person community meetings are scheduled for July 13 and July 14 at Rogers Street Academy Boys and Girls Club.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/lincoln-avenue-school-students-will-move-to-casimir-pulaski-high-school/71897990>

Growth plays role in DeForest's 2026-27 general aid estimate increase

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released its July 1 general aid estimates showing the DeForest Area School District is projected to receive \$27,469,134 in general aid for 2026-27, up from its final 2025-26 amount of \$24,681,869, an increase of approximately \$2,787,265. Kathleen Davis-Phillips, the district's director of business and auxiliary services, attributed the increase primarily to rising enrollment and the district's shared costs, which factor into the equalization aid calculation. Statewide, 252 school districts, representing 59.9 percent of all districts, are projected to receive less general aid in 2026-27, and 92 districts face potential decreases of 15 percent, the maximum loss permitted under the hold-harmless provision. The state's total general aid appropriation remains flat at \$5.58 billion, with no increase in the 2025-27 biennial budget. Davis-Phillips stated the mill rate for DeForest taxpayers is expected to be slightly lower, though the levy will still increase due to revenue limits and population growth. Final amounts will be certified October 15.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/growth-plays-role-in-deforests-2026-27-general-aid-estimate-increase/article_a5809c05-1241-4a48-b39e-3f1cf2d1be12.html

Staff repeatedly raised alarm about Madison principal, records show

The Madison Metropolitan School District determined that Van Hise Elementary School Principal Rebecca Stein did not violate any district policies and will remain in her role for the 2026-27 school year, according to district spokesperson Ian Folger. The decision followed a formal parent complaint filed during the 2025-26 school year and an internal review overseen by Deputy Superintendent TJ McCray. School climate surveys spanning fall 2022 through spring 2025, obtained under Wisconsin open records laws, show that prior to Stein's tenure beginning in 2022-23, few survey comments referenced school administration, while dozens appeared over the following two years, a majority expressing concerns about leadership. Six staff exit interviews conducted during Stein's tenure showed three respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with management. The district's legal team continues to review three unresolved items from the formal complaint, and the district engaged an external consultant to work with the principal and staff during the review.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/education/staff-repeatedly-raised-alarm-about-madison-principal-records-show/article_8003e4cc-2e8a-4ba9-84c2-572640c43349.html

Madison Elementary principal retired after investigation into 'inappropriate contact' with student, records show

Stephanie Filter, who had served as principal of Madison Elementary School in the Janesville School District for 12 years, retired after being placed on paid administrative leave in May 2026 while the district investigated allegations of inappropriate contact with a student. The district received an anonymous complaint on May 21 regarding the physical handling of a student and reviewed hallway surveillance footage from May 20 capturing a 1-minute, 44-second video allegedly showing Filter escorting a student in visible distress. Superintendent Mark Holzman decided Filter should not return to Madison Elementary for the remainder of the school year following a meeting in which Filter declined to watch the footage before administrators played it regardless. District records indicate a formal discussion regarding appropriate physical handling expectations had previously occurred with Filter in September 2025, and a formal verbal warning had been issued in March 2018. Matt Peerenboom has since been named the new principal of Madison Elementary.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/09/madison-elementary-principal-retired-after-investigation-into-inappropriate-contact-with-student-records-show/>

Local foundation helps keep Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center open

The Antigo School Board voted last month to keep the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center open for one additional year after high operational costs nearly forced a closure. The YMCA of Wausau, which serves as the facility's Director of Aquatics, has signed a one-year contract to continue managing the center. The Foundation of the Unified School District of Antigo, led by Board President Tom Koss, has committed to raising \$500,000 from local foundations and community members, and a separate donor has pledged to match the first \$500,000 raised, making the total potential funding commitment \$1 million. Koss stated the foundation has fulfilled its initial financial commitment and will next launch an area-wide fundraising campaign open to all donors. The aquatic center is also used by Aspirus for physical therapy. No specific timeline for the public fundraising campaign was reported.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/local-foundation-helps-keep-clara-r-mckenna-aquatic-center-open/article_7b7024fa-61df-4419-9d7a-955a47878da2.html

EL-G school board approves preliminary 2026-27 budget; 3% property tax levy increase

The Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah Board of Education approved a preliminary 2026-27 budget at its June 22 meeting, setting a proposed property tax levy of \$9,850,087, an increase of \$276,758 or approximately 3 percent over the prior year's levy. The meeting lasted approximately 20 minutes. The proposed 3 percent increase follows a 46 percent levy hike in 2025-26, which the article attributes to the debt service fund rising from zero. No vote count, dissenting votes, or named board members were included in the available article text, and no public hearing date or final budget adoption timeline was reported.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/el-g-school-board-approves-preliminary-2026-27-budget-3-property-tax-levy-increase/>

Trane Technologies donates land to School District of La Crosse

Trane Technologies donated 41.5 acres on Pammel Creek Road and the Reuben Trane Building to the School District of La Crosse, as announced July 9, 2026. The district plans to use the building for additional warehouse storage, including basement space designated for sensitive document storage and staff offices, while the open land will be developed into soccer and lacrosse fields to address a documented shortage of dedicated athletic facility space. Superintendent Aaron Engel stated that students currently must share spaces, hold early or late practices, or forgo practice entirely due to facility constraints. District officials explicitly clarified that the acquisition does not signal a merger of Central and Logan high schools, and no such merger is planned. No purchase price was reported, as the transaction is a donation, and no formal board acceptance vote or construction timeline was identified.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/09/trane-technologies-donates-land-school-district-la-crosse/>

State-Local Interface

Gov. Evers, WisDOT Announce Over \$180 Million to Improve Local Roads Statewide

WisDOT and Governor Tony Evers announced that Wisconsin counties and municipalities received more than \$180 million in third-quarter 2026 payments under the General Transportation Aids, Connecting Highway, and Expressway Policing Aids programs. The GTA program reached its highest funding level in state history under the 2025-27 Biennial Budget, and for full calendar year 2026 local governments will receive more than \$570 million in GTA assistance. Municipalities will receive \$33.2 million more over Fiscal Years 2025-27 compared to the prior period, and counties will receive nearly \$10 million more over the same span. Total funding for all local transportation programs constitutes nearly one-third of the state transportation budget. Under the Evers administration, the state has upgraded 2,400 bridges and more than 9,600 miles of highways. The fourth and final quarterly payment for 2026 has not yet been announced.

Source: WSAU 550 AM / 99.9 FM Wausau (Statewide) | <https://wsau.com/2026/07/08/gov-evers-wisdot-announce-over-180-million-to-improve-local-roads-statewide-2/>

State announces fire dues payments

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services distributed \$38,181,592 to fire departments statewide on July 8, 2026, under the Wisconsin 2% Fire Dues Program, representing a nearly 6 percent increase over the 2025 distribution. DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth authorized the payments, which are calculated from a 2 percent levy on insurer premiums collected for fire-loss coverage, gathered by the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance and redistributed by DSPS according to a prescribed formula. Rusk County municipalities received a combined \$74,612.98, with Ladysmith alone receiving \$11,542 based on reported property improvements valued at \$222,349,100. Recipient departments may use the funds to purchase and replace equipment, deliver fire prevention programming, and train personnel, and professional, volunteer, and hybrid departments statewide are eligible. A full accounting of the 2026 distribution is available on the DSPS website.

Source: Bloomer Advance (Statewide) | https://www.bloomeradvance.com/news/regional_news/article_35ea3719-5c2c-59ea-8e42-984cfd215e0d.html

Newly enacted Wisconsin law could speed up housing construction

2025 Wisconsin Act 68, signed by Gov. Tony Evers in December and effective July 1, 2026, amends Wisconsin's subdivision plat approval process with two principal changes affecting local governments statewide. The law establishes a pre-submission conceptual review process permitting developers and municipalities to meet and resolve potential issues before a subdivision application is formally submitted, and it requires that a final approved plat be certified within 10 days of a request from a subdivider who submits the required affidavits. Jerry Deschane, executive director of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, said the law makes the review process more predictable for both municipalities and developers and could shave months off approval timelines. Brad Boycks, executive director of the Wisconsin Builders Association, said reduced timelines could lower housing costs. A City of Madison report released earlier in 2026 found demand for new housing continues to outpace supply while homeownership costs rise faster than incomes.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/newly-enacted-wisconsin-law-could-speed-up-housing-construction/article_ca2261fe-66cb-41c5-a67d-ca9c3328563c.html

Gov. Evers urges Congress to reject 'SAVE' Act

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers sent a letter on July 10, 2026, to every member of Wisconsin's Congressional delegation urging opposition to the federal Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act. Evers's letter identifies three primary concerns for local government operations: the Act would impose unfunded administrative burdens on municipal and county clerks, require states to immediately transfer voter rolls to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and mandate new voter registration documentation requirements, including passports or certified birth certificates, on an accelerated timeline with little to no additional federal funding. Evers states the requirements would divert staff, time, and resources from existing election administration systems, and specifically identifies military families, students who move frequently, and individuals who have changed their last names after marriage as eligible voters likely to face new obstacles. No dollar figure for the projected administrative cost is included in the letter text.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/10/gov-evers-urges-congress-reject-save-act/>

Wisconsin Supreme Court refuses to release voter records sought by conservative activist

The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled 5-2 on July 7, 2026, that guardianship records identifying people found ineligible to vote are not public records under Wisconsin law and need not be released to the Wisconsin Voter Alliance. Justice Janet Protasiewicz wrote for the majority, joined by four liberal justices and conservative Justice Brian Hagedorn, that state law is clear the records are not public and the Alliance has no right to them. The ruling overturned a 2023 Waukesha-based appeals court order directing Walworth County to release the records with birth dates and case numbers redacted, while reinstating a contrary Madison-based appeals court ruling denying access. Conservative Justices Annette Ziegler and Rebecca Bradley dissented. Ron Heuer and the Wisconsin Voter Alliance originally filed suits in 13 Wisconsin counties in 2022 seeking guardianship records to cross-check against voter registration lists. No further procedural steps are reported as pending.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-supreme-court-refuses-to-release-voter-records-sought-by-conservative-activist/article_5e01c0ac-943b-5daa-8926-f63119aae3b4.html

Wisconsin regulators refuse to loosen data center credit rules, setting up Oracle court fight

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission declined to act on We Energies' June 10 petition asking the agency to reconsider credit rating rules adopted in April as part of the utility's very large customer rate structure. The April decision requires data center developers with credit ratings below A- to provide financial guarantees before receiving electric service; Oracle, which holds a BBB credit rating and is co-developing a Port Washington data center campus, faces financial guarantee obligations exceeding \$100 million per year under that threshold. The PSC did not place the reconsideration request on its Thursday meeting agenda and had not scheduled a Friday meeting, allowing Friday's statutory deadline to lapse without action; state law requires at least 24 hours of public notice before a commission meeting. Oracle filed suit against the PSC in Ozaukee County Circuit Court on June 19, arguing the commission acted outside its authority and without sufficient evidence. The PSC will defend the credit rating requirements in that litigation.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-regulators-refuse-to-loosen-data-center-credit-rules-setting-up-oracle-court-fight/>

Donald Trump ousts election commission members in latest push to reshape US voting process

President Donald Trump on Friday removed the two Democratic members of the federal Election Assistance Commission, Thomas Hicks and Benjamin Hovland, leaving the four-seat bipartisan body without a functioning quorum ahead of November midterm elections. Republican member Christy McCormick resigned, and former Republican commissioner Donald Palmer had already left voluntarily earlier in 2026, rendering the commission fully vacant. The White House cited the Supreme Court's recent Slaughter decision, which held the president may remove members of independent agency boards without cause, as legal authority. Congress created the EAC under the Help America Vote Act of 2002, which requires two Democratic and two Republican members. The agency distributes federal grants to state and local election offices, oversees voting-system testing and certification, and maintains the national voter registration form. A vacancy of indeterminate duration could prevent the agency from distributing new grants to state and local jurisdictions and may complicate voting-system certification. Trump had not announced replacement nominations as of the reporting date.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/elections/donald-trump-ousts-election-commission-members-in-latest-push-to-reshape-us-voting-process/article_75600cd3-4a5d-59a9-817d-82d233581538.html

Kaul joins suit accusing Trump administration of ending mental health grants despite court order

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined 14 other state attorneys general on Friday in a lawsuit accusing the U.S. Department of Education of terminating school mental health grants in violation of a permanent injunction. The coalition alleges the department is moving to end some or all of the grants by the end of July, citing the grants' perceived ties to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, despite congressional approval of the funding. According to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, terminating the grants would cost the University of Wisconsin system and the state Department of Public Instruction approximately \$12.5 million combined. Kaul is joined by attorneys general from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland,

Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington. The attorneys general are asking a federal judge to issue an additional injunction blocking the department's plan.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/kaul-joins-suit-accusing-trump-administration-of-ending-mental-health-grants-despite-court-order/article_a2d04ac6-c21d-5e01-ada7-182e88503211.html

Wisconsin sues HUD over new rule on funds to combat homelessness

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a multi-state lawsuit filed against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, challenging a June 2026 HUD rule that sets aside \$1.3 billion in Continuum of Care funds for Transitional Housing and Supportive Services projects. The plaintiffs, Kaul, 20 other attorneys general, and two governors, argue the reallocation effectively caps permanent housing at approximately 68 percent of total CoC funding, which they classify as illegal under recently passed federal legislation. Dane County and the City of Madison collectively receive approximately \$14.6 million in annual CoC funding, and most of Wisconsin's permanent housing beds were obtained through the program. The lawsuit follows a separate multi-state victory earlier in 2026 in federal court in Rhode Island, where states successfully challenged HUD's imposition of conditions on CoC funding. No hearing date for the current suit was reported.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-sues-hud-over-new-rule-on-funds-to-combat-homelessness/article_2e77a8eb-2428-4181-a053-0287455805e6.html

Evers appoints 2 to Waukesha County bench

Gov. Tony Evers announced July 7, 2026, the appointment of two attorneys to the Waukesha County Circuit Court bench to succeed retiring Judges William Domina and Ralph Ramirez, whose retirements take effect at the end of July. Jeremy Guza, who has owned and operated Guza Law Office LLC since 2014, was appointed to succeed Ramirez, and Michael Schindhelm, currently an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Wisconsin with nearly two decades of prosecutorial experience, was appointed to succeed Domina. Both Domina and Ramirez have previously been named Judge of the Year by the State Bar of Wisconsin, Domina in 2015 and Ramirez in 2021. Guza and Schindhelm will serve terms expiring July 31, 2027, and to continue beyond that date, both would need to win outright election in April 2027.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Statewide) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/guza-schindhelm-appointed-judges/article_37b6b5f8-f7e5-4f92-836e-9a41317cfca2.html

Gov. Evers accepting applications for Buffalo County Sheriff

Governor Tony Evers announced July 10, 2026, that he is accepting applications to fill the Buffalo County Sheriff vacancy created by the resignation of Sheriff Michael H. Osmond. The appointed sheriff will serve the remainder of Osmond's unexpired term, which ends in January 2027. Applicants must submit the Register of Deeds, Coroner, and Sheriff application form, available at evers.wi.gov, no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, July 20, 2026.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/10/gov-evers-accepting-applications-buffalo-county-sheriff/>

Deere & Company settlement ends monopoly on farm equipment repair resources, Wisconsin DOJ says

The Wisconsin Department of Justice secured a settlement with Deere & Company resolving a joint antitrust lawsuit filed in January 2025 that alleged Deere unlawfully maintained monopoly power over repair services for its farm equipment. Under the 10-year agreement, supervised by the FTC and plaintiff states, Deere must provide farmers and independent repair providers access to the same software repair tools and resources currently available to authorized Deere dealers, on fair and reasonable terms. Required resources include reading, clearing, and resetting electronic fault codes; reprogramming electronic components; restarting machines following emissions-related shutdowns; and accessing technical manuals and troubleshooting solutions. Any future repair resources made available to more than 50 percent of Deere's authorized U.S. dealer network must also be extended to independent providers, and Deere is prohibited from directing dealers to retaliate against those who use them. The settlement term may be extended if Deere violates its terms.

Source: WXOW ABC19 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.wxow.com/news/top-stories/deere-company-settlement-ends-monopoly-on-farm-equipment-repair-resources-wisconsin-doj-says/article_6e4616f9-e0cf-48fa-9a8d-8187e6082072.html

Dugan fined \$5,000 for her federal obstruction conviction over a 2025 ICE arrest

U.S. District Judge Lynn Adelman sentenced former Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Hannah Dugan on July 8, 2026, to a \$5,000 fine following her December 2025 felony obstruction conviction. Dugan, 67, had held her Milwaukee County circuit judgeship for nine years before resigning in January 2026. Federal sentencing guidelines called for 15 to 21 months of incarceration, but Adelman, appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1997, was not bound by them. The conviction stems from an April 18, 2025 incident in which Dugan directed ICE agents to the chief judge's office and then led defendant Eduardo Flores-Ruiz through a private jury-room door to avoid arrest; agents subsequently apprehended Flores-Ruiz outside after a foot chase, and he was deported in November 2025. Jurors acquitted Dugan of a separate misdemeanor charge of concealing an individual to prevent arrest. Attorney Jason Luczak stated after sentencing that the defense will appeal the felony obstruction conviction.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/dugan-fined-5000-for-her-federal-obstruction-conviction-over-a-2025-ice-arrest/>

More Wisconsinites are behind bars for intoxicated driving

A Wisconsin Policy Forum report published July 9, 2026, found that the number of adults incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons for Operating While Intoxicated offenses was four times higher in 2025 than in 2000. In December 2025, 2,750 adults were held in Wisconsin prisons for OWI offenses, comprising approximately 12 percent of the total prison population, up from roughly 3 percent in 2000. A record 1,313 adults entered the Wisconsin prison system for OWI offenses in 2023, though admissions declined over the following two years. The report notes Wisconsin has one alcohol outlet per 345 residents, far above the national average per Medical College of Wisconsin data, and that Black Wisconsinites and American Indian/Alaska Native Wisconsinites are overrepresented in OWI incarcerations. The report identifies policy options for legislators, including reducing the legal BAC limit to 0.05 percent, expanding OWI courts in underserved areas

such as northern Wisconsin, increasing prison substance-use program funding, and limiting alcohol retail licenses.

Source: Phillips Price County Review (Statewide) | https://apg-wi.com/news/state/more-wisconsinites-are-behind-bars-for-intoxicated-driving/article_da29d7a8-35b6-59a2-aada-d1dada950430.html

Each edition reflects ongoing refinement of the underlying workflow, and I expect the product to keep improving. Source articles are not independently verified beyond the curation process, and errors in source reporting may occur. Some Wisconsin news outlets restrict automated access to their content, which can limit coverage in any given edition. If you notice an inaccuracy, a story of statewide governance significance that was missed, or have feedback on how this briefing can better serve your work, I welcome hearing from you. Forward this edition to a colleague who works in Wisconsin local government if you find it useful. Reach me at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.
