

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

August 8 to August 15, 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, and a source link accompanies every item so readers can verify the underlying reporting. Items are selected for governance relevance, not political leaning. If a story meets the newsworthiness standards built into this workflow, it is included regardless of which direction it cuts, and contested or uncomfortable decisions are reported rather than avoided. The intent is to put the week's governance record in front of the practitioners who have to work with it, not to add to the argument surrounding it. The briefing is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice.

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Budgets and Finance

Rhineland properties being reassessed for property tax purposes

The Rhineland City Council engaged Associated Appraisal Consultants to conduct a citywide property revaluation, and letters to property owners are already being distributed. Mark Brown of Associated Appraisal Consultants told the council the revaluation is required because the city's assessed values have not been within 10 percent of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue's equalized values for five consecutive years. State law permits municipalities up to six years of noncompliance before the Department of Revenue intervenes, conducts the revaluation itself, and bills all associated costs back to the city. The reassessment notice requests permission from property owners to allow interior inspections; owners may refuse interior access, but exterior photographs will be taken regardless. If the city does not complete a revaluation by the end of the sixth year, the state will assume control of the process and charge the full cost to Rhineland.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhineland (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wxpr.org/local-news/2026-08-14/rhineland-properties-being-reassessed-for-property-tax-purposes>

Wausau alders back an outside audit after budget investigation

Six of the 11 members of the Wausau Common Council said they support commissioning an independent operational or performance audit of how the city prepares its budget and reports its finances, and no council member opposed one. The statements followed a Wausau Pilot and Review examination finding that the Budgetary History tables in the city's budget book present prior years' adopted budgets rather than actual spending or revenue, without stating so in the document. District 11 Alder Bruce Trueblood said he was told the city's last comprehensive audit of this kind was conducted in the late 1990s. District 7 Alder Matt Hoenecke said he will formally ask the mayor and council president to schedule a Committee of the Whole so the full council can vote on pursuing a comprehensive independent audit. Finance Committee Chair Michael Martens raised timing, noting the council must adopt a budget by its second November meeting for property tax bills to go out on schedule. Mayor Doug Diny has directed the Finance Department to examine presenting actual prior-year figures in the next budget book.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/13/wausau-alders-back-an-outside-audit-after-budget-investigation/>

Town of Delafield voters pass \$450,000 fire, EMS referendum

Town of Delafield voters approved a referendum on August 12, 2026, authorizing the town to increase its annual property tax levy by \$450,000 to fund additional staffing at Lake Country Fire and Rescue. The measure passed 1,622 votes to 829, or 66.2 percent to 33.8 percent, across both precincts. The levy authority runs from 2027 through 2030 and represents a first-year increase of 14.509 percent, raising the town levy from approximately \$3.1 million to \$3.55 million across 3,563 taxable parcels. The owner of a home at the median assessed value of \$683,950 would pay an estimated \$121.46 more annually. Town Chairman Edward Kranick stated the funds will help Lake Country Fire and Rescue strengthen frontline staffing and reduce reliance on mandatory overtime. Fire Chief Matthew Fennig described the measure as the second phase of a multi-year

staffing plan under which a 2023 referendum funded 14 additional firefighters, with this measure targeting the remaining 7 of 21 planned positions. Results remain unofficial until canvassed.

Source: Oconomowoc Enterprise (Southeastern) | https://oconomowocenterprise.com/the_freeman/news/delafield-voters-approve-tax-referendum/article_4bfec015-17ae-4148-b8e2-4e14b9d57698.html

Final numbers for police dept. expansion reviewed, with referendum to follow

The Plymouth City Council, sitting as Committee of the Whole, reviewed final financial figures for a proposed police department expansion at its Tuesday meeting. Financial advisor Kayla Thorpe of Ehlers presented the numbers to committee members. The full City Council is expected to approve the final referendum question at its August 24 meeting, which would place the measure on the November 3 ballot for voter consideration. Dollar figures, bond amounts, and specific expansion details were not disclosed in the published portion of the report.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/final-numbers-for-police-dept-expansion-reviewed-with-referendum-to-follow/>

Workforce and Labor

Viroqua names Julie Emslie as new city administrator

The Viroqua Common Council finalized the hiring of Julie Emslie as city administrator, ending an executive search to replace former administrator Nate Torres, who resigned to become Vernon County administrative coordinator after serving as Viroqua's top official since 2019. Emslie assumes the role September 15 and most recently served five years as economic development administrator for the City of La Crosse. Council members split over search method, with Alderperson Kyle Bartelt arguing Viroqua could recruit on its own appeal and redirect the fee toward a signing bonus, while Alderpersons Cyndy Hubbard and Todd Spaeth favored a professional firm. The council voted to retain Public Administration Associates for \$15,750, funded by splitting the cost between the general fund and the utility departments in proportion to how the administrator position itself is funded, with the city's share drawn from unbudgeted investment revenue. The search produced 14 applicants, narrowed to seven semifinalists, and concluded with a two-day assessment of city tours, interviews, and a public meet and greet. Torres worked part time during the vacancy to help draft the 2027 budget and complete the capital improvement plan.

Source: Vernon Reporter (Western) | <https://vernonreporter.com/viroqua-names-julie-emslie-as-new-city-administrator/>

Plainfield Board approves take-home squad car and new park bench

The Plainfield Village Board approved a request from Police Chief Ben VanHaren at its monthly meeting on August 4 to take his village squad car home. The board acted on the request as a departmental item and approved a new park bench during the same session. Vote counts, dollar figures, and ordinance or resolution identifiers were not reported, nor was the rationale VanHaren provided for the take-home vehicle arrangement. No further procedural steps were reported for either action.

Source: Waushara Argus (Northeastern) | <https://wausharaargus.com/stories/plainfield-board-approves-take-home-squad-car-and-new-park-bench,349530>

Infrastructure and Utilities

City of Colby Files Application for Water Rate Increase

The City of Colby Municipal Water Utility will file an application with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin on September 1, 2026, seeking authority to increase water rates by 3.0 percent across general service, Public Fire Protection, and Wholesale rate categories. The utility cites an existing deficiency in present rates as the basis for the request and is filing under Wis. Stat. 196.193, under which rate increases granted do not require a public hearing. The utility anticipates the new rates will take effect November 15, 2026. Customers with questions may contact the City of Colby Municipal Water Utility at (715) 223-4435.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/08/15/city-of-colby-files-application-for-water-rate-increase/>

Wood County Holding Public Transportation Feasibility Study; Open House Next Monday, August 17th

Wood County is conducting a Public Transportation Feasibility Study to determine whether a public transit system is viable for the county's residents, workers, students, and visitors, examining potential service designs, operating hours, and fare structures. The Wood County Health Department is coordinating the effort and is gathering public input through bilingual surveys available in English and Spanish via SurveyMonkey. The county scheduled two open houses in August: the first on Monday, August 17, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Marshfield Public Library, Alder Room, 105 S. Maple Ave., Marshfield; the second on Monday, August 24, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at McMillan Library, All Purpose Room, 490 E. Grand Ave., Wisconsin Rapids. Questions may be directed to the Wood County Health Department at 715-421-8911 or health@woodcountywi.gov. No vote or formal action has been reported at this stage.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/08/10/22487/>

UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield to Receive Grant From WEDC to Renovate Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation awarded a \$2 million grant to Wood County, which owns the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building on the UW-Stevens Point at Marshfield campus, for renovation of artistic spaces within the facility. WEDC Secretary and CEO John W. Miller announced the award. The grant will be managed by an advisory committee comprising representatives from Wood County, UW-Stevens Point, the City of Marshfield, the Universities of Wisconsin, and the Laird Endowment for the Arts, which is also contributing funding to the project. Renovation work is scheduled to begin in fall 2027 and will encompass the main theatre, black box theatre, dressing rooms, lobby area, and offices, along with technology upgrades enabling the space to function as a large meeting and conference venue. Wisconsin Representative John Spiros and UW Commission Chairperson Donna Rozar are among the named officials on record supporting the grant.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/08/14/22597/>

New report values Superior utilities at \$195M to \$217M

The Superior City Council's Public Works Committee received the final appraisal report from Raftelis Financial Consultants on August 6, valuing the three utility systems of Superior Water, Light and Power, covering electric, natural gas, and water, at a combined \$195 million to \$217 million. Raftelis appraised the electric system at \$97 million to \$104 million and the natural gas system at \$40 million to \$55 million, and had previously placed the water utility at \$58 million. A separate analysis commissioned by SWL&P from Concentric Energy Partners estimated acquisition costs at \$274 million to \$306 million. Raftelis recommended financing any acquisition through revenue bonds repaid via utility rates rather than general obligation debt. Councilor Nicholas Ledin indicated acquiring all three utilities is likely off the table. The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin would set the final acquisition price, a rate impact analysis is expected within one to two months, and the Public Works Committee next meets September 3.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/new-report-values-superior-utilities-at-195m-to-217m>

Panel recommends referendum for Superior water utility acquisition

Superior's Public Works Committee voted on August 6 to recommend that the City Council place a water utility acquisition question on the April 6 election ballot, asking voters whether the city should transition to a community-owned water utility if the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin determines the purchase cost is within the city's financial means. Mayor Jim Paine, who authored the referendum question, said a majority yes vote would trigger the municipal acquisition process under state law, which permits municipalities to acquire utilities from unwilling sellers at fair market value. Raftelis Financial Consultants appraised the water utility assets at \$58 million, projecting annual debt service of approximately \$3.6 million based on a 30-year revenue bond at 4.5 percent interest, to be paid by utility users; SWL&P's own study valued the water utility assets at \$136.7 million within a total \$186 million takeover cost. The Council must first vote to publish notice of a proposed resolution before voting at a subsequent meeting to set the ballot question.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/panel-recommends-referendum-for-superior-water-utility-acquisition>

MPU Starting Next Stack Filter And Clarifiers

Manitowoc Public Utilities has begun a second-phase rehabilitation project at its wastewater treatment plant, targeting the East Stack Filters and Clarifiers 1 and 4. The East Stack Filters were taken offline at the end of April 2026 following completion of the West Stack Filter and Final Clarifiers 2 and 3 upgrades the prior year. The current phase involves full media replacement and installation of new mechanical drives, distributor arms, and fans in the East Stack Filters. Clarifier 1 has been fully demolished and is nearly complete, with new effluent infrastructure, concrete, and the center column and bridge being assembled; restart is scheduled for the end of August. Clarifier 4 is offline and awaiting demolition, set to begin the following week. MPU describes the rehabilitation as necessary for the plant to produce permit-compliant effluent, and the full project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2026.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/08/14/mpu-starting-next-stack-filter-and-clarifiers/>

Menomonie considering extending lawn watering ban

The Menomonie City Council is scheduled to vote Monday on Resolution 2026-22, which would extend the city's full lawn irrigation ban through October 31, 2026, roughly a two-month extension of restrictions that took effect July 14. Public Works Director David Schofield warned in a memorandum to the council that allowing the ban to expire Tuesday could return automated sprinkler demand to levels that triggered the initial low-pressure event, during which extreme summer usage drained all three of the city's elevated water towers and forced boil-water notices across high-elevation areas. Since the ban began, municipal staff have issued 51 warning letters to property owners for violations, with the most recent sent July 27. The proposed resolution targets only automatic and automated sprinkler systems; hand watering of lawns, gardens, and flowers remains permitted. Violators who continue running automated systems after receiving warnings face daily civil forfeitures of up to \$150. Schofield indicated staff will draft a permanent lawn irrigation ordinance this winter establishing alternate-side watering as the year-round standard.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/14/menomonie-considering-extending-lawn-watering-ban/>

Eau Claire City Council approves composting ordinance, next round of Carson Park upgrades

The Eau Claire City Council voted unanimously at its August 12, 2026 meeting to adopt a composting ordinance that modernizes the city's composting rules, expands residential and community composting opportunities, and is intended to divert organic waste from local landfills; the ordinance takes effect January 1. In a second unanimous action, the council approved a \$1.3 million construction contract for the next phase of Carson Park upgrades. According to Recreation and Facilities Manager Patrick Newkirk, the contract covers construction of a new bathroom and retail space behind the first-base bleachers and conversion of the pedestrian walkway from the first-base ticket entrance to the Eau Claire Express fan deck from gravel to concrete. Construction is expected to begin within a couple of weeks and be completed before the next baseball season. A subsequent phase, including replacement of first-base bleachers with 408 chair-back seats elevated above the dugouts and ADA-accessible front-row seating, will not begin until after the 2027 season, with completion targeted before the 2028 season.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/13/eau-claire-city-council-approves-composting-ordinance-next-round-carson-park-upgrades/>

La Crosse Common Council rejects bid for ADA-compliant water fountains citing budget concerns

The La Crosse Common Council voted unanimously on August 13, 2026, to reject the sole bid received for its Placement of Accessible Water Bubblers project, citing cost overruns. Fowler and Hammer submitted the only bid, at \$186,573, which the City Engineer's office determined exceeded the project's budget and formally recommended rejecting. The historic green bubblers currently remain turned off because they do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act compliance

standards, and the engineering department stated the fixtures will remain off indefinitely as the only available path to ADA compliance short of a funded replacement. The department confirmed there is no plan to remove the bubblers. With the bid rejection, the city must reassess its approach, with options including soliciting alternative bids or reducing the project scope to align with available budget constraints. No timeline or revised budget figure for a subsequent bid process was reported.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/local-news/la-crosse/la-crosse-common-council-rejects-bid-for-ada-compliant-water-fountains-citing-budget-concerns/article_f7797fd1-4bd1-4a66-a007-2f6ba6fb949d.html

Viroqua receives USDA loan for solid waste infrastructure

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Wisconsin is making a \$2.518 million loan available to the City of Viroqua to install new solid waste infrastructure at the city's closed landfill and prevent landfill gases from migrating into surrounding air. Funding comes through Rural Development's Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program, which Wisconsin USDA Rural Development State Engineer Steven Opatik said is available for solid waste construction needs in addition to its more common drinking water and wastewater applications. Viroqua will construct a gas extraction system after the closed landfill's passive gas venting system stopped operating, installing wells and drawing a vacuum on them to prevent gas migration, according to Opatik. Wisconsin State Director for Rural Development Andrew Iverson said the program provides financing capital that municipalities need to complete local projects. City officials say they hope to have the new gas extraction system completed by winter.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/11/viroqua-receives-loan-solid-waste-infrastructure/>

Cheesemaker fined nearly \$240K for violating Clean Water Act at Wisconsin facility

A federal judge ordered Wisconsin Cheese Group, LLC, a Monroe-based cheesemaker, to pay \$237,500 in fines and improve its Monticello facility after the company pleaded guilty to violating the Clean Water Act. U.S. Attorney Chadwick Elgersma said the company discharged untreated wastewater from its Monticello cheesemaking plant into the village's municipal sewer system between June 6 and November 5, 2022, disrupting the village's water treatment works for 19 days. Some discharges of wastewater exceeded the company's permitted biological oxygen demand limit by 1,500 percent. Elgersma stated the company lacked adequate controls to ensure permit compliance and failed to properly train employees on wastewater management. EPA Criminal Investigation Division agents executed a federal search warrant at the Monticello facility in May of the preceding year. In addition to the financial penalty, Wisconsin Cheese Group was placed under one year of probation.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (South Central) | https://www.news8000.com/news/environment/cheesemaker-fined-nearly-240k-for-violating-clean-water-act-at-wisconsin-facility/article_9860fc14-39a4-56a2-ae9a-26f2541f16a2.html

Curious where Madison's water is from? A new truck wants to show you.

Madison Water Utility is developing Water on Wheels, a repurposed utility truck converted into a mobile public education exhibit, with interior retrofitting estimated to cost approximately \$30,000

funded through a combination of grants and donors. Outreach specialist Jody Berndt is overseeing the project, which was designed with assistance from the Madison Children's Museum. The truck will carry interactive exhibits on Madison's drinking water system, water quality factors including PFAS contamination and road-salt infiltration, and conservation practices. The utility, founded in 1882, operates 21 wells and manages more than 9,000 fire hydrants and reservoirs holding over 42 million gallons of water. The utility closed one well in 2019 after detecting PFAS contamination and reopened it six years later following construction of a new PFAS treatment system; all active wells are tested for PFAS twice annually. Water on Wheels will complement the existing Water Wagon trailer in service since 2012 and is expected to be operational by spring 2027.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/curious-where-madison-s-water-is-from-a-new-truck-wants-to-show-you/article_21070a20-53e6-45e2-bbdc-c6eed646713.html

Trump is blocking billions of dollars of grants that would fix the grid

Alliant Energy canceled a grid-reliability project serving disadvantaged and tribal communities in Wisconsin after the U.S. Department of Energy terminated the federal grant that would have funded it; the grant amount was not specified. According to an April 2026 report from the DOE Alumni Network, the department has announced termination of 356 awards totaling \$12.5 billion since January 2025 and has threatened to terminate 303 additional awards worth \$12.2 billion. Of roughly \$11.4 billion in DOE funds obligated to grid infrastructure and resilience, including the bipartisan infrastructure law's Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships program, \$9.1 billion remains categorized as at risk, with funding stalled or project timelines shortened, according to High Road Analytics founder Emlyn Bottomley. A consortium of regional grid operators, utilities, and state agencies in the upper Midwest is awaiting \$464 million in DOE transmission-line funding, and the administering agency states that funding will soon be restored. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-energy-grid-trump-funding-grants-alliant-power-electricity/>

Public Safety

District attorney clears Superior officer in fatal shooting

Douglas County District Attorney Mark Fruehauf announced Friday that he will not pursue charges against Superior Police Department Officer Ibrahim Carson in the April 7 fatal shooting of David Menton outside Northern Aire Apartments in Superior. Fruehauf concluded that Carson used justifiable deadly force in self-defense after Menton, who had an active arrest warrant and methamphetamine in his system, resisted arrest and possessed a loaded firearm during a ground struggle. Carson, who had less than two years of patrol experience, fired one shot after pushing Menton's gun into the mud and believing his life was at risk. A separate Superior Police Department use-of-force review board, consisting of Superior officers and one outside officer, unanimously found Carson's actions consistent with department policy. Use-of-force consultant Gerald Katchka, a former state investigator retained by Fruehauf, independently concluded Carson's response was appropriate. Fruehauf leaves the district attorney's office next week to join the Wisconsin Department of Justice Crime Litigation Unit as an assistant attorney general.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/district-attorney-clears-superior-officer-in-fatal-shooting>

Rhinelanders renew bow hunt for deer within city limits for upcoming season

The City of Rhinelanders renewed its within-city-limits bow deer hunt for the 2026-2027 season, with the bow season running September 12, 2026, through January 3, 2027. The program was approved to continue through the nine-day gun season, muzzleloading season, and antlerless-only hunt, provided hunters wear blaze orange during those periods; the only suspension date is Halloween, October 31. The Mayor and Police Chief retain authority to suspend the hunt in emergency situations. The State of Wisconsin awarded Rhinelanders antlerless deer permits, meaning city-issued permits cover antlerless deer only, and hunters pursuing antlered deer must carry a Department of Natural Resources buck tag. All hunters must hunt from an elevated stand at least six feet off the ground and must submit to a criminal background check. Applications are available at the City Clerk's Office, 135 S. Stevens Street, or online at rhinelandercityhall.org, and the application deadline is noon on September 11, 2026.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelanders (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/rhinelanders-renews-bow-hunt-for-deer-within-city-limits-for-upcoming-season/article_43e2fea7-3f1f-4826-af49-472d2d83f843.html

Town of Turtle has sticker shock over future EMT services

The City of Beloit notified the Town of Turtle on July 25 that it will terminate the existing emergency medical services contract effective December 31, and offered a new annual fee of \$225,000 for EMS coverage under the forthcoming consolidated City and Town of Beloit Fire Department, which launches in January 2027. The Town of Turtle currently pays \$27,344 annually for that service, making the proposed increase approximately 723 percent. Town Board Chairman Roger Anclam called the figure entirely unmanageable, noting the town's total 2025 revenues were \$1,323,920 against \$1,218,337 in expenses. City Attorney Elizabeth Krueger stated the city calculated its actual annual cost to serve Turtle at between \$207,000 and \$259,000, and that the consolidated department will not subsidize neighboring municipalities. The city separately declined to negotiate any new agreement with the Town of LaPrairie, citing distance. Anclam said he must identify a city contact to explore whether a lower figure is negotiable, and described creating an in-house EMT capability using the town's all-volunteer fire department as untenable at present.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/town-of-turtle-has-sticker-shock-over-future-emt-services/article_a8d414ca-4b12-418e-a4b5-7e487aee311d.html

BCSO armored vehicle debut

The Burnett County Sheriff's Office debuted a Casspir armored vehicle at the Siren National Night Out event, adding the heavy-duty four-wheel-drive to its Emergency Response Team inventory at no direct cost to the county. Chief Deputy Jameson Wiltrout confirmed the department acquired the vehicle from the Racine County Sheriff's Office after Racine upgraded its own armor, and that beyond maintenance no county funds were expended on the acquisition. The Casspir, built in the 1980s in South Africa, is right-hand drive with a turbocharged diesel engine, four-wheel-drive system, and capacity for 12 passengers in the rear plus two in the cab. It features a V-shaped armored hull, ballistic glass, and 12 hinged firing ports. The vehicle was repainted dark grey at the

Burnett County Highway Shop, and department logos and stickers are on order. Emergency lighting and specialized equipment will be added before active deployment, and two Emergency Response Team commanders will have primary responsibility for the vehicle.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/bcso-armored-vehicle-debut/article_14c06d5d-6e95-46c4-a252-683881dfcd1b.html

Kiel Baitinger-Peterson ID'd as Madison officer who killed Corey Ruiz

The Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation identified Madison Police Officer Kiel Baitinger-Peterson on Monday as the officer who fatally shot Corey Ruiz, 38, on July 22, 2026, at the intersection of Williamson and South Baldwin streets on Madison's east side. Baitinger-Peterson has nearly 11 years of law enforcement experience and joined the Madison Police Department in 2015. State investigators reported that Ruiz pulled a knife during a struggle with four officers, injuring Baitinger-Peterson, and that two other officers deployed a Taser without success before Baitinger-Peterson fired. Baitinger-Peterson was treated at a local hospital and released the same day. From 2023 until February 2026 he served on the department's five-officer gang and neighborhood crime abatement team, then transferred to the Central District Community Police Team. The Division of Criminal Investigation is conducting the mandatory outside-agency review of the officer-involved death required under state law, and no timeline for completing that review has been disclosed.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/kiel-baitinger-peterson-idd-as-madison-officer-who-killed-corey-ruiz/article_7a952d83-b21f-47c1-bd4b-e10e9dd35bfd.html

Experts discuss de-escalation tactics after Madison police shooting

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway stated at a press conference that her office will explore expanded de-escalation training for a broader array of city employees, following the July 22 fatal shooting of Corey Ruiz by Madison Police Officer Kiel Baitinger-Peterson at the intersection of Williamson and South Baldwin streets. Rhodes-Conway also pledged to propose funding for body-worn cameras in next year's capital budget, though she has not specified a dollar amount. Madison Police Chief John Patterson has identified body-worn cameras as his top capital budget request for the coming year. The Madison Police Department does not currently deploy body-worn cameras; a 90-day pilot program conducted in 2024 expired without renewal. Department standard operating procedure recommends de-escalation when safe and without compromising law enforcement priorities. Crisis Intervention Team training, a 40-hour program offered in partnership with NAMI Wisconsin, provides officers structured de-escalation instruction for mental-health crisis response. No vote or formal budget action has been scheduled.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/experts-discuss-de-escalation-tactics-after-madison-police-shooting/article_db089ee7-1e7f-4438-af7e-00b06d572e1a.html

Black pastors call for justice, reform after Madison police shooting

The African American Council of Churches held a demonstration at the Wisconsin state Capitol on August 8, 2026, calling for accountability following the July 22 fatal shooting of Corey Ruiz, a 38-year-old Black man, by a Madison police officer at Williamson and South Baldwin streets. The coalition's formal demands include an independent investigation, full preservation and accounting of evidence, release of involved officers' names when legally permissible, and a

review of Madison Police Department use-of-force, de-escalation, and crisis intervention policies. The Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation is conducting the outside review mandated under state law; upon completion, Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne will determine whether to file criminal charges. Madison's Office of the Independent Monitor, led by interim monitor Aeiramique Glass, has separately subpoenaed the Police Department for records related to the shooting. Speakers noted Madison is one of the largest police departments in the country without body-worn cameras. No timeline for either investigation's conclusion was reported.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/black-pastors-call-for-justice-reform-after-madison-police-shooting/article_aa6bb552-5963-485c-9811-77dd21989abf.html

Report: ICE agent, witness accounts conflict in July vehicle crash during immigration stop

Janesville police investigated a July 8 vehicle crash in the 200 block of Rockport Road involving an ICE agent's pickup truck and a van driven by a Hispanic Janesville man who was subsequently detained by ICE during a weeklong Rock County enforcement operation. One human rights nonprofit reported that 28 immigrants were detained during that operation. The crash report obtained by the Gazette shows the ICE pickup struck the driver's side panel of the van with its front driver's side corner, with the two vehicles traveling in opposite directions at the time of impact. An ICE agent told Janesville police the collision occurred after the van had already struck a tree head-on during a containment maneuver as the van drifted toward the terrace. A nearby resident, described in the report as adamant, told police they heard the ICE vehicle strike the van before hearing it crash into the tree. The crash diagram confirms the van was hauling a trailer, no video evidence of the crash was collected, and no official wrongdoing has been indicated against either the ICE agent or the detained man.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/report-ice-agent-witness-accounts-conflict-in-july-vehicle-crash-during-immigration-stop/article_85f8ba50-5d30-4ecc-abbe-e929a4a58e47.html

Land Use and Development

New senior housing development breaks ground in Rhinelander

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in Rhinelander on August 12, 2026, for Riverview Senior Living, a 48-unit housing development serving residents aged 55 and older, including six units designated for local veterans. The project carries a total cost of approximately \$10.5 million. Tony Pharo, executive director of the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, described it as the largest development project in Rhinelander since 2011 and said Oneida County has an identified need for approximately 1,400 additional homes or apartments by 2030. The project required a contractor change after the original contractor withdrew due to financial difficulties. Rhinelander Mayor Kris Hanus participated in the groundbreaking and cited regional housing demand as a driver. Completion of Riverview Senior Living is projected for summer 2027.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/new-senior-housing-development-breaks-ground-in-rhineland/article_6f26e093-e539-4e98-bf0c-69c5a5d34492.html

Wisconsin Rapids commission votes in favor of data center moratorium draft

The Wisconsin Rapids Planning Commission voted 6-0 on August 10, 2026, to draft a data center moratorium, with commission member Katy Baily recusing from the vote citing a conflict of interest. The meeting, originally scheduled for August 3, was rescheduled due to high community interest and relocated to the Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School theater to accommodate public attendance. Mayor Matt Zacher characterized the vote as the first step in the moratorium process. The draft moratorium would not affect PNK Group's pending application for a conditional use permit at the former mill site, as that application was filed prior to the vote and is grandfathered for consideration. PNK Group has not yet submitted a development plan; once submitted, the plan will proceed to a public hearing for determination of compliance with local ordinances. Additional commission meetings must occur before a moratorium can be brought to a formal vote.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/wisconsin-rapids-commission-votes-in-favor-of-data-center-moratorium-draft/article_371582a7-7561-485f-8242-da7eb779f907.html

Oak Creek could rename part of Elm Road 'Buc-ee's Boulevard'

The Oak Creek Common Council is scheduled to consider a community partnership agreement with Buc-ee's on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, in what city officials describe as the final public action related to the company's first Wisconsin travel center. Under the proposed agreement, Buc-ee's would make a one-time \$350,000 contribution to a city-selected community project, payable within 30 days of the travel center's opening, and would provide \$15,000 annually for city marketing and events contingent on council approval to rename a section of Elm Road, from Interstate 94 west to South 27th Street and Highway 241, as Buc-ee's Boulevard. Buc-ee's would bear all costs for signage installation in accordance with Wisconsin Department of Transportation requirements. The agreement requires construction to begin by September 1, 2026, and reach substantial completion by August 1, 2028. The private investment is valued at a minimum of \$65 million and is projected to create approximately 200 full-time jobs. City Administrator Andrew J. Vickers confirmed the agreement includes no city tax breaks or tax increment financing.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/oak-creek-could-rename-part-of-elm-road-buc-ees-boulevard/73440020>

Groundbreaking Scheduled on Former Mirro Property

The City of Manitowoc is scheduled to break ground August 27, 2026, on the Maritime Lofts housing development at the former Mirro site on Washington Street. The completed complex will contain 59 apartments, comprising 21 one-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom, and 18 three-bedroom units, targeting residents earning between 30 percent and 80 percent of the county median income. Construction costs are projected at just over \$14 million, bringing the total project cost to approximately \$19.5 million. City and state officials will participate in the groundbreaking ceremony at 10:30 a.m. The project is described by the city as advancing downtown revitalization on a long-vacant property.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/08/14/groundbreaking-scheduled-on-former-mirro-property/>

Land-Use Committee approves rezones, plat; reviews budget

Burnett County's Land Use and Information Committee voted 7-0 at its August 4 meeting to recommend two rezoning requests to the Burnett County Board of Supervisors for final action and to approve the final plat for Shady Oaks 2nd Addition, a 10-lot subdivision phase in the Town of Meenon. The first rezone would convert 5.3 acres in the Town of Siren from RR-3 to RR-1 for applicant Andrew Hursh on behalf of Jean LLC, enabling a parcel split into one residential lot and one stormwater-pond lot tied to an adjacent mini-storage development. The second rezone, requested by the Town of Roosevelt, covers 47 parcels totaling more than 1,600 acres, converting a mix of RR-1, RR-2, and C-1 zoning to A-2 agricultural-residential. The Land Services Department's proposed 2027 budget, projecting approximately \$300,000 in revenue against roughly \$739,800 in expenses, was forwarded to county administration. Zoning Administrator Jason Towne noted 957 permits issued year to date and that permit fees have not been adjusted since 2014, with a fee review planned for fall or winter. The committee next meets September 1.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/land-use-committee-approves-rezones-plat-reviews-budget/article_edaa2c8a-d255-4ed8-adcc-a2fe4928c0d6.html

Residents press for data center pause

Burnett County's Land Use and Information Committee devoted most of its August 4, 2026 meeting to refining draft language for a proposed I-2 Tech-Energy Industrial District covering data centers, solar and wind farms, and battery storage facilities. During public comment, Town of Siren Supervisor Diane Lund asked the committee and the county board to consider a temporary moratorium on data center development until a zoning ordinance is in place, citing concerns about electricity and water use, noise, and environmental pollution, and noted that several neighboring counties are informally discussing similar pauses. The draft ordinance under review already includes noise limits of 55 decibels daytime and 45 decibels nighttime at the property line, a requirement that at least 75 percent of a data center's roof and parking areas be covered with solar panels, and independent semiannual groundwater and noise-and-vibration testing for larger facilities. The committee discussed but did not finalize setback distances, moving away from a proposed 500-foot buffer toward 300 feet measured from the property line. Committee chair Craig Conroy noted no data center project has yet been proposed in Burnett County.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/residents-press-for-data-center-pause/article_5ef03873-5f5e-4246-8fa6-bf3724fb93dd.html

Board raises concerns over permitting breakdowns, contractor accountability

The Burnett County Board of Adjustment, meeting the week of August 14, 2026, reviewed multiple variance cases in which construction proceeded without required permits due to incorrect guidance from either contractors or county staff. In at least two separate cases, a county permitting employee no longer in the position had provided applicants with incorrect setback measurements, measuring from the road centerline rather than the surveyed right-of-way line. A third case involved a contractor who twice told a property owner no permit was required for a patio that ultimately failed to meet the shoreline setback. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff submitted comments across multiple applications stating that building without a permit does not independently satisfy the legal hardship standard for a variance. Board members discussed contacting contractors with recurring violations directly but took no formal action on

that measure. In the case involving a garage converted to a residence, the board conditioned variance approval on the property owner obtaining sign-off from the county's Uniform Dwelling Code inspector.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/board-raises-concerns-over-permitting-breakdowns-contractor-accountability/article_f637fe26-2392-409a-a249-8982750a748a.html

What's next after Burnett County's August variance decisions

The Burnett County Board of Adjustment approved four variances and deferred one case at its first August 2026 meeting. Colin Hooker received approval for a story-and-a-half cabin addition on Little McGraw Lake but was denied a deck extension; he must remove a lakeside gravel patio and lock his septic tank by October 1, and a surveyor must recalculate impervious surface against the county's 15 percent limit. The Ruble Revocable Living Trust won approval for a bedroom and bathroom addition on Stub Road with a reduced front setback, contingent on removing a camper by September 15. Douglas Beasley was approved to retain an unpermitted floodplain addition, with a December 31 permit deadline. Last Resort Condominium on Clam Lake secured approval for three unpermitted patios, with permits due October 15 and a plat update due December 31. Outdoor Me LLC's two-story garage-bunkhouse proposal near Big Trade Lake was deferred after plans presented differed substantially from public notice, and an October rehearing is anticipated after re-notification.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/what-s-next-after-burnett-county-s-august-variance-decisions/article_16ad9675-2e08-41dd-8e11-1af5b8ad829b.html

Madison to acquire 200 acres for 'naturalized park space'

The Madison City Council voted unanimously to acquire seven parcels totaling approximately 200 acres of reclaimed quarry and gravel pit land from Madison Crushing and Excavating Inc. for future parkland. The parcels are located in the town of Burke and include four unaddressed lots, one parcel at 3328 Nelson Road, and portions of two lots at 5185 Reiner Road. The purchase price is \$6 million, funded through the parks department's designated parkland acquisition fund, which carries a balance of approximately \$28 million. The city is also applying for up to \$1.5 million in grant funding from the Dane County Conservation Fund to offset acquisition costs. The purchase and sale agreement includes a public access easement, as the property is currently landlocked by a railroad track to the north and a quarry to the south. The acquisition has not yet closed and remains in the due diligence period, and a public engagement process to develop a master plan for the site will follow acquisition, with timing not yet determined.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-to-acquire-200-acres-for-naturalized-park-space/article_ea1b9771-737f-40f0-88de-6fee4dcd9c0c.html

La Crosse Common Council approves 18-month moratorium on data center development

The La Crosse Common Council voted Thursday, August 13, 2026, to approve an 18-month moratorium on data center development, effective immediately, halting city issuance of permits for new data center facilities. The moratorium applies to facilities capable of storing, processing, retrieving, or distributing more than 1 petabyte of data or consuming more than 2 megawatts of electricity. The action mirrors a La Crosse County moratorium approved in June 2026 covering

unincorporated areas, which also established an ad hoc committee to study data centers and develop recommendations. The city will participate in that county committee's work as it develops its own regulatory standards. Stated concerns include energy demand, electromagnetic fields, noise pollution, air and water quality impacts, water use, and fire hazards. The moratorium will remain in effect for 18 months or until the council adopts zoning code amendments recommended by the county ad hoc committee, adopts amendments recommended by city staff, or rescinds the moratorium.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/local-news/la-crosse/la-crosse-common-council-approves-18-month-moratorium-on-data-center-development/article_401f11b3-6a6d-45c5-9d12-8a20b27fce36.html

Sandhill Solar Project: Barron County residents raise concerns over proposed solar farm

MN8 Energy has proposed the Sandhill Solar Project, a \$180 million solar development in the town of Dallas, Barron County, that would occupy approximately 600 acres of privately owned land and generate enough electricity to power roughly 17,000 homes. The project includes battery storage and carries a 35-year operational life cycle. Charlie Hooley, MN8 Energy's project development manager for the western region, stated the town of Dallas and Barron County would receive combined annual utility aid payments of up to \$550,000, with an additional \$20,000 per year designated for the Barron Area School District. MN8 Energy has 900 acres under agreement but plans to use only 600 in the final buildout. The company must submit a permit application to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission by the end of 2026, as required by state law; the commission will then evaluate economic, environmental, and public-interest factors before issuing a decision. MN8 Energy projects operations to begin in 2029.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/12/sandhill-solar-project-barron-county-residents-raise-concerns-over-proposed-solar-farm/>

Rock County committee rejects proposal for countywide data center moratorium

Rock County's Planning and Development Committee unanimously rejected a resolution proposing a 12-month countywide data center moratorium at its August 13, 2026, meeting. Committee Chair and County Supervisor RJ Sutterlin cited a legal review by county attorney Richard Greenlee concluding that the county lacks a zoning framework under state law to enact or enforce such a moratorium, because land-use authority rests with individual towns. Greenlee's review warned the resolution would expose the county to lawsuits from data center developers and that the county's insurers would likely decline to cover a loss in such litigation, placing costs on taxpayers. The committee also narrowly rejected a companion proposal for a 13-member exploratory panel to study data center compatibility, though a revised version of that panel proposal is referred to the County Board's Staffing Committee for separate consideration in September. Supervisors Doug Sutter and Kim Schneider had introduced both items. County Administrator John Light confirmed no towns have formally requested a countywide moratorium.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/rock-county-committee-rejects-proposal-for-countywide-data-center-moratorium/article_e16e40b6-3e99-443a-b367-b82427240b24.html

Governance and Elections

An election night error overshadowed Milwaukee's improvements at processing absentee ballots

Milwaukee Election Commission Executive Director Paulina Gutierrez confirmed that city election staff failed to export results from five of nine tabulators at the city's central count facility during the April 1, 2026 spring election, delaying Milwaukee's results by approximately 90 minutes. Officials discovered the error at approximately 11:10 p.m. and returned under police escort around midnight to retrieve the missing data. The mistake marked the third significant tabulator-related error in recent years: in November 2020 a flash drive was forgotten at the facility, and in November 2024 officials recounted 31,000 absentee ballots after tabulator doors were not locked. Former election chief Claire Woodall, who created a post-2020 checklist of more than two dozen steps for extracting and transmitting results, attributed the latest error to inconsistent staff training, noting that results from some tabulators took only three minutes to download when the process requires more than three minutes. Gutierrez stated the city would investigate how the error occurred and implement measures to prevent recurrence.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/an-election-night-error-overshadowed-milwaukees-improvements-at-processing-absentee-ballots/>

Wick wins clerk of courts race in Douglas County

Douglas County incumbent Clerk of Courts Michele Wick won the August 11 partisan primary, receiving more than 72 percent of the over 5,000 votes cast, defeating challenger Char Kastern, who had worked in the Clerk of Courts Office for 10 years. Because no Republican filed for the race, Wick will appear as the sole candidate on the November 3 general election ballot for a new four-year term. The clerk of courts is a constitutional officer responsible for custody of all court records, jury management, public access to court services, and financial administration including collection of fees and fines. Wick has worked in the office for 24 years, serving 12 of those years as the elected clerk. She told the Superior Telegram she had considered retiring but chose to run again primarily to oversee an ongoing software implementation project between Douglas County and the state. The November 3 general election is the next procedural step.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegam.com/news/local/wick-expected-to-win-clerk-of-courts-race-in-douglas-county>

Langlade County uncontested races advance to November

Three Langlade County incumbents advanced through the August 2026 primary election unopposed, each set to appear on the November general election ballot. Sheriff Dan Bauknecht received 2,734 votes, Clerk of Courts Tina Wild received 2,699 votes, and Coroner Larry Shadick received 2,686 votes, with no opposing candidates on the ballot in any of the three races. Bauknecht noted he began his campaign on April 15 and stated he is working with Sheriff Westen to prepare for a transition. Wild indicated she is seeking another four-year term serving Langlade County residents. All three officeholders will face voters again in November, where, absent write-in challenges, each is positioned to secure another term in their respective offices.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/langlade-county-uncontested-races-advance-to-november/article_c8cfa747-8802-4483-b36f-892c3a0ecf9b.html

Hawn, Randall win Republican primary for Price, Iron county sheriff

Robert Hawn won the Republican primary for Price County Sheriff on August 12, 2026, and Mike Randall won the Iron County Republican primary, according to unofficial results, with Randall defeating Logan Dahlbacka 993 votes to 755. Both races were uncontested by Democrats, making the primary winners the presumptive incoming sheriffs. The contests arose because both incumbent sheriffs are retiring: Brian Schmidt is not seeking reelection after 37 years in law enforcement, and Iron County Sheriff Paul Samardich is retiring after 32 years of service. Amy Casey also won the Republican primary for Price County Coroner. Because neither county had Democratic candidates filed for sheriff, Hawn and Randall are positioned to take office following the general election without opposition in those races.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/hawn-randall-win-republican-primary-for-price-iron-county-sheriff/article_2077df13-ef9a-445b-8430-071ff1448b09.html

How Juneau County voted in Tuesday's primary

Juneau County Undersheriff Zac Board won the Republican primary for Juneau County Sheriff on August 12, 2026, defeating challenger Steven Johnson 2,500 votes to 1,509, more than 62 percent to less than 38 percent. No Democrats filed for the office, making Board the effective successor to Sheriff Andrew Zobal, who chose not to seek a second four-year term after winning in 2022. Board follows a pattern of internal advancement at the Juneau County Sheriff's Office, as Zobal himself rose from undersheriff before winning the top post. In other Juneau County primary results, Rebecca Cooke received 1,117 votes to Emily Berge's 357 in the Democratic Congressional District 3 race, and David Varnam won the Republican lieutenant governor primary in the county with 2,255 votes to Will Martin's 1,130. Board will take office in January following the November 3 general election.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_8716dbf3-ef5a-46e6-9d62-64df9696a1c8.html

OSC closes Hatch Act complaint against Chris Weaver

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel closed a Hatch Act complaint against Monroe County Chief Deputy Christopher Weaver on August 7, 2026, determining the federal law did not apply to him because his involvement with federally funded programs at the Monroe County Sheriff's Office was too limited. The complaint alleged Weaver violated the Hatch Act by having sheriff's office staff participate in a campaign parade and by using his position as chief deputy to influence his 2026 campaign for Monroe County sheriff through social media comments referencing nonpublic information about his opponent. The Office of Special Counsel identified two federal funding streams at the sheriff's office: a bulletproof vest reimbursement program, administered by a sergeant, and the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, which required the sheriff's signature and approval by county committees and the Monroe County Board. The agency found Weaver had no responsibility for preparing grant applications, completing paperwork, or signing funding requests, made no determination on whether the alleged conduct would have constituted a violation, and closed the case without further action.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | <https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/osc-closes-hatch-act-complaint-against-chris-weaver,177457>

Chippewa County Sheriff wins primary, faces rocky relationship with prosecutors

Chippewa County Sheriff Travis Hakes won his Republican primary on August 12, 2026, and will appear as the sole candidate on the November general election ballot, with no Democratic challenger filed. On July 23, 2026, Chippewa County prosecutors signed a letter stating they do not believe Hakes is fit to serve as sheriff. Hakes, a sitting elected constitutional officer, publicly characterized the letter as disappointing in its timing and method. The Chippewa County District Attorney's office confirmed to WEAU that its views toward Hakes have not changed since the letter was sent. Hakes acknowledged ongoing disagreements with prosecutors, described the conflict as a clarity issue, and stated that post-election conversations would need to occur to mend the relationship. Both the sheriff and the district attorney hold elected constitutional offices in Chippewa County. No formal mediation or intergovernmental proceeding has been announced, and Hakes indicated reconciliation talks would follow the November election.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/13/chippewa-county-sheriff-wins-primary-faces-rocky-relationship-with-prosecutors/>

City Administrator position voted down by the La Crosse City Council

The La Crosse Common Council defeated a charter ordinance to create a new city administrator position on August 14, 2026, with the measure failing 8 to 5, one vote short of the required two-thirds supermajority. This was the second defeat of the proposal in 2026. Council member Aron Newberry, a legislative sponsor, stated the ordinance remains active and can be reintroduced at any time under charter ordinance procedures. Opponents, including Council member Erin Goggin, objected to the proposed first-year funding mechanism, which would have drawn from a tax incremental district capital reserve fund; Goggin argued that fund serves as an emergency reserve and that a permanent, secure funding plan is a prerequisite for her support. Newberry indicated that one or two members are still seeking constituent input before reconsidering their votes, and stated his intent to resolve outstanding concerns and reintroduce the ordinance before the end of 2026.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/14/city-administrator-position-voted-down-by-la-crosse-city-council/>

Green County reporting delayed due to server issue

Green County Clerk Arianna Voegeli announced that a server malfunction prevented timely release of unofficial election results following the August 11 primary. Around 9 p.m. on election night, the Green County Clerk's Office identified a communication failure between the county's server equipment and its results reporting program, supplied by vendor Liberty Vote, causing transmitted results to remain locked in encrypted files that staff could not access. County staff pivoted to manually contacting municipal clerks across all Green County precincts to collect and load results individually. By 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 12, all unofficial results had been received from municipalities and posted to the county website with 100 percent of precincts reporting. Voegeli stated the delay does not indicate any problem with the election itself or votes

cast, and committed the Clerk's Office to implementing contingency procedures with Liberty Vote before the November general election to prevent recurrence.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-election-coverage/green-county-reporting-delayed-due-to-server-issue/>

Town of Rockland to merge with Village of Greenleaf

The Rockland Town Board and the Greenleaf Village Board voted unanimously at a public hearing on Monday, August 10, 2026, to merge the Town of Rockland into the Village of Greenleaf under an intergovernmental agreement. Town Chairman Dennis Cashman said the boards had worked on the merger since the beginning of the year to move the boundary line north, consolidate services, and halt further annexation by the City of De Pere, which he said has taken town land over the past 20 years. The Village of Greenleaf will more than double in both land area and population and will assume Rockland's government, with two town representatives added to the new Village Board. Rockland residents keep the same home address, school district, and municipal services including garbage collection, police, and EMS. The City of De Pere stated it sought to reopen boundary agreement discussions after learning of the agreement and that the town declined, and noted that a municipality cannot annex privately owned property because annexation is initiated by the owner under state statutes.

Source: WGBA NBC 26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://www.nbc26.com/homepage-showcase/town-of-rockland-to-merge-with-village-of-greenleaf>

La Crosse Common Council approves \$90,000 to appeal French Island incorporation

The La Crosse Common Council voted 12-1 on August 13, 2026, to appropriate \$90,000 from the city's Contingency Fund to continue its legal challenge to the Village of French Island's incorporation. The approved resolution directs the funds toward attorneys, court filings, expert analysis, and related costs. The Wisconsin Incorporation Review Board approved the incorporation petition on March 19, 2026, and the Common Council first voted to appeal that decision in April 2026. The city had already spent \$95,000 on the legal challenge prior to this appropriation, bringing total expenditures to \$185,000. French Island residents approved incorporation in a May 2026 referendum vote and elected their first village government in July 2026. No next procedural step in the appeal process was specified in the article.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/local-news/la-crosse/la-crosse-common-council-approves-90-000-to-appeal-french-island-incorporation/article_e3a91a5c-3a33-41ae-a269-24ebf12824ff.html

La Crosse County DA investigates election bribery complaints against Elon Musk

La Crosse County District Attorney Tim Gruenke is investigating complaints against Elon Musk related to the 2025 Wisconsin Supreme Court race, after being asked to step in due to a conflict of interest at the Brown County District Attorney's office, which originally held the case. The Wisconsin Elections Commission previously determined that Musk likely violated Wisconsin's election bribery statute by offering \$1 million to individuals who voted in the Supreme Court race. Under Wisconsin law, offering anything of value to influence whether a person votes constitutes a felony. Gruenke stated he is currently gathering information and communicating with the Wisconsin Elections Commission to determine what additional materials he needs before making

a charging decision. He noted that potential penalties include felony conviction, fines, jail time, prison time, or probation. Gruenke did not provide a timeline for completing his review.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/elections/la-crosse-county-da-investigates-election-bribery-complaints-against-elon-musk/article_7b49d3a0-112b-4497-a708-5667ffe6d94c.html

Rock County Board appoints Brent Waters to vacant Lori Pennycook's District 19 seat

The Rock County Board unanimously appointed Brent Waters to fill the vacant District 19 seat on August 13, 2026, following the death of Supervisor Lori Pennycook, 62, who died in May 2026 after being elected to her third term. Waters, a Janesville resident of 10 years originally from Elkhorn, had run against Pennycook in the 2026 election. Rock County Clerk Lisa Tollefson administered the oath of office. District 19 represents the City of Janesville's wards 2 and 5 on the west side of the city, bordered by the Rock River to the north and west. Waters addressed the board following his swearing-in, stating his intent to vote in what he believes is the best interest of Rock County residents.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/rock-county-board-appoints-brent-waters-to-vacant-lori-pennycooks-district-19-seat/article_b31bb970-6556-4f18-bdb6-b9fe002ca1e9.html

Human Services

Fox Cities resource center to provide tornado recovery assistance

A Multiagency Resource Center serving residents affected by a tornado reopened at the Winnebago County Fox Cities Campus Engineering Building, 1655 University Drive, Menasha, for two days, operating Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The center consolidates at least 15 nonprofit organizations, community partners, and local agencies at a single in-person location. Available services include Winnebago County FoodShare registration and food replacement assistance, Catholic Charities short-term housing vouchers covering stays of up to 10 days, St. Joseph Food Program registration providing up to six months of weekly food assistance, American Red Cross cleanup kits and financial assistance, and Fox Valley Veterans Council emergency financial assistance for veterans. Additional resources include medical and dental services through Partnership Community Health Center and Vida, debris cleanup coordination through JustServe and Team Rubicon, and emotional support through Victim Crisis Response. No further center dates beyond August 15 were announced.

Source: WHBY 1150 AM Appleton (Northeastern) | <https://www.whby.com/2026/08/14/storm-assistance-hub-opening-in-the-fox-cities/>

Madison is about to open a new men's shelter. Here's a peek inside.

The City of Madison will open a purpose-built emergency men's shelter at 1904 Bartillon Drive on September 1, 2026, delayed from an initial June target. The two-story, 42,000-square-foot facility will house 250 men and will be operated by Porchlight Inc., a nonprofit contracted to run overnight services. Community Development Division Director Jim O'Keefe noted the design incorporated findings from a 2022 study by Shopworks Architecture that gathered input from nearly 200 community members. The shelter features individual twin-XL bunk beds with device charging

access, secure personal lockers, a commercial kitchen, cafeteria, a medical wing offering foot care and wound treatment, and strategically placed security cameras. The 250-bed capacity was set based on safety precautions and cost considerations, as city engineers determined additional capacity would require a third floor. Transition to 24-hour operations remains contingent on securing additional funding; the Friends of the Dane County Shelter reported surpassing \$1 million in private donations in April toward that goal.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-is-about-to-open-a-new-mens-shelter-heres-a-peek-inside/article_da3127b5-1b01-49bc-8423-c23d8958b2a5.html

DHS declares measles outbreak in Lafayette, Iowa counties

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services declared a measles outbreak in Lafayette and Iowa counties on August 11, 2026, after two confirmed cases were identified; by Thursday morning that count had risen to 15 confirmed and six probable cases. State Epidemiologist Ryan Westergaard confirmed active local transmission unrelated to any previously confirmed Wisconsin cases. Of the 23 statewide measles cases recorded in 2026 at time of reporting, 22 involved individuals unvaccinated against measles, mumps, and rubella. Lafayette County's MMR vaccination rate for 24-month-olds stands at 60.1 percent, compared to the state figure of approximately 79.8 percent, and the county's completed vaccine series rate is 48.1 percent. Green County Public Health Director RoAnn Warden reported no confirmed cases or exposures in Green County as of Thursday but stated active preparedness measures are underway. No public exposure locations had been identified as of Thursday afternoon, and the department will post exposure locations to its Outbreaks and Investigations page if identified.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/dhs-declares-measles-outbreak-in-lafayette-iowa-counties/>

School Districts

Whitewater School Board schedules special meeting as it eyes referendum question

The Whitewater Unified School District School Board scheduled a special meeting for Monday, August 18, at 6 p.m. to attempt a second vote on placing a four-year operating referendum question on the November 3, 2026, ballot, after the board failed to approve a question at its August 10 meeting. The district's current four-year, \$17.6 million referendum, passed in 2022, expires after the 2026-27 school year and has allowed the district to exceed the state revenue limit by \$4.4 million annually. The board will consider four options, all four years in length: renewing the existing \$17.6 million total at an estimated \$1.73 tax rate; a \$20 million total at \$5 million annually and a \$1.93 rate; a \$24 million total at \$6 million annually and a \$2.32 rate; or a \$28 million total at \$7 million annually and a \$2.70 rate. The deadline to submit a question for the November 3 ballot is August 25, and Superintendent Samuel Karns recommended the November ballot over April due to higher expected voter turnout.

Source: Daily Jefferson County Union (South Central) | https://www.dailyunion.com/news/whitewater-school-board-schedules-special-meeting-as-it-eyes-referendum-question/article_7d4ebbb64-85fe-4363-801d-0df532f71871.html

BOE: No referendum this fall

The School District of Monroe Board of Education decided at its August 10 regular meeting not to pursue an operational referendum this fall, with board president Jim Curran stating he would not support a spring 2027 attempt either. The district's most recent operational referendum failed in spring 2025. Over the past five years, the district has eliminated more than 50 positions, 34 professional staff and 16.3 support staff, and cut more than \$2 million from its budget over the past 24 months. Business Administrator Ron Olson indicated an additional \$500,000 to \$1 million in cuts may be required for the 2027-2028 school year. Monroe is the only school district in Green and Lafayette counties that has not passed an operating referendum in the past three years. The board did not formally table the referendum question for 2027, and the topic will return for further discussion at a future meeting. Board member Steve Mayer raised the possibility of school closings if funding conditions do not improve.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/boe-no-referendum-this-fall/>

Student tracking and parent communication to radically change

Plymouth School District Assistant Superintendent Dena Budrecki presented the NextPath platform to the Board of Education at its August 10 Committee of the Whole meeting, describing it as a single, secure online gateway for staff and families to track each student's progress in real time. The district is scheduled to implement NextPath at the start of the current school year. A vote count, contract dollar figure, and vendor identification beyond the platform name were not available in the published portion of the report.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/student-tracking-and-parent-communication-to-radically-change/>

State-Local Interface

Get your 4-year-old ready for elementary school for free through new Wisconsin program

Governor Tony Evers secured \$65 million in state funding earlier in 2026 for Get Kids Ready, a new school readiness initiative administered by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The program pays child care providers to deliver 437 required hours of instruction per year in academic, physical, social-emotional, and self-help skills to 4-year-olds, making those hours free to families statewide. Approximately 900 providers across Wisconsin are currently participating. Children who are 4 years old or will turn 4 by September 1 are eligible. Parents apply by submitting a Department of Children and Families application directly to a participating provider, which must then accept the child; the department does not accept applications directly. Providers may charge families for care hours beyond the 437 covered instructional hours. COA Youth and Family Centers announced it received a grant to implement the program at its Riverwest Campus at 909 E. Garfield Ave. in Milwaukee. There is no application deadline, and the department maintains a current list of participating providers online.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-4-year-old-get-kids-ready-elementary-school-free-program/>

Evers announces \$374 million in state building projects

The Wisconsin State Building Commission, meeting August 12, 2026, at State Fair Park in West Allis, approved approximately \$374 million in building projects at state-owned facilities statewide. The package includes the sale of two Madison office buildings, GEF 2 and GEF 3 at 101 and 125 S. Webster St., which will reduce state office space by 135,334 square feet and avoid an estimated \$213 million in deferred repairs. Additional approvals include Phase II utility improvements at Mendota Mental Health Institute, reconstruction of the century-old Pattison State Park dam following an embankment breach, a new Food Service and Laundry Facility at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King, a BSL-3-capable UW-Madison Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in Barron County, instructional space renovations at UW-Milwaukee and UW-Green Bay, infrastructure projects at UW-Parkside and UW-La Crosse, and 37 maintenance and repair projects across 16 counties covering nine state agencies and the UW System. Governor Tony Evers chairs the Commission.

Source: WiscNews (Statewide) | https://wiscnews.com/community/article_732aa0ae-c0e5-55e6-a300-26964353313d.html

State advances sale of 2 Downtown Madison office buildings to developer

The State Building Commission voted 7 to 1 on August 13, 2026, to advance the sale of General Executive Facility 2 and General Executive Facility 3, two state-owned office buildings occupying a 2.5-acre block at 100 South Webster Street in Downtown Madison, to developers Brad and Mark Binkowski for \$12.65 million. The buildings carry combined deferred maintenance needs exceeding \$200 million, according to the Wisconsin Department of Administration. GEF 2 was appraised at \$45.45 million in July 2025 and \$52.4 million in September 2025. The Binkowskis' preliminary plan calls for renovating GEF 2 into approximately 150 apartments and demolishing GEF 3 to construct 100 to 250 additional apartments, likely with commercial space and a plaza. Representative Robert Wittke and Senator Andre Jacque, both Republicans, cast the lone dissenting vote and voiced concern, respectively, over the gap between appraised value and sale price. The proposal next requires approval from the Legislature's budget committee before the sale can proceed.

Source: WiscNews (Statewide) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_0566172e-052d-5b07-9558-f05338a69d0f.html

Fire response ranger station in Crandon to be replaced

The Wisconsin State Building Commission approved a capital project to replace the Fire Response Ranger Station in Crandon, a facility dating to the 1930s, as part of the \$374 million statewide package of building approvals. The replacement station will protect forestry, wildlife, and law enforcement equipment belonging to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and is intended to improve emergency response capability serving Oneida, Florence, Marinette, Oconto, and Langlade counties. The Commission's full approval package also includes 37 maintenance and repair projects across 16 counties, the sale of two Madison state office buildings at 101 and 125 S. Webster St. totaling 135,334 square feet, Phase II utility improvements at Mendota Mental Health Institute, reconstruction of the Pattison State Park dam following an embankment breach, and a Food Service and Laundry Facility upgrade at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. No individual dollar figure for the Crandon station was reported.

Source: WXPB 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/outdoors-leisure-and-sports/2026-08-13/fire-response-ranger-station-in-crandon-to-be-replaced>

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Chris Taylor sworn in Friday

Justice Chris Taylor was sworn in as a Wisconsin Supreme Court justice on Friday, August 14, 2026, in Madison, taking the oath of office and receiving her robe at the ceremony. Taylor will serve a 10-year term on the court. She replaces Justice Rebecca Bradley, a conservative who did not seek reelection. Taylor's seating follows her April 2026 election victory, and her addition to the court establishes a liberal majority on the seven-member body. No further procedural steps were reported following the swearing-in ceremony.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Statewide) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/wisconsin-supreme-court-justice-chris-taylor-sworn-in-friday/73441282>

State commission files misconduct complaint against Winnebago County judge

The Wisconsin Judicial Commission filed a complaint on August 3, 2026, alleging probable cause that Winnebago County Circuit Court Judge Scott Woldt violated the state Code of Judicial Conduct. The complaint alleges Woldt confronted two attorneys at an Oshkosh gathering weeks after his contested 2023 reelection, telling one she could not speak to him because she had endorsed his opponent and telling another there would be consequences for displaying an opponent's campaign sign. It further alleges Woldt asked a psychiatrist appearing as an expert witness, identified in the complaint as Filipino, whether he understood English, and cites a 2023 television interview in which Woldt described his work as dealing with society's garbage. Woldt's attorney told WLUK-TV that the judge contests the allegations and denies any wrongdoing. Woldt, a circuit judge since 2004, was suspended seven days without pay in 2021 for undignified comments in five hearings and for twice using a firearm as a courtroom prop. Court of Appeals judges Jennifer Nashold, Gregory Gill, and Sara Geenen were appointed to a three-judge panel to recommend whether Woldt should be disciplined, and he has until September 17 to file his answer.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/state-commission-files-misconduct-complaint-against-winnebago-county-judge>

Summaries are drawn from the linked source reporting and are not independently fact-checked, so errors in the original coverage can carry through. Some Wisconsin outlets restrict automated access to their content, which leaves known gaps in any given edition, and I keep refining the collection workflow to close them. If you spot an inaccuracy, or know of a governance story a colleague in another community would want to see, I want to know. Forward this edition to someone who works in Wisconsin local government. Reach me at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.
