

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

September 5 to September 12, 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

Marshfield considers \$25 annual vehicle fee to fund street maintenance

The Marshfield Common Council was scheduled to vote Tuesday, September 9, 2026, on a proposed \$25 annual municipal vehicle registration fee dedicated to street and pavement maintenance. The fee would take effect January 1, 2027, and would apply to vehicles weighing

8,000 pounds or less that are customarily kept within city limits, including passenger cars, SUVs, vans, and light trucks. Motorcycles, mopeds, trailers, motor homes, buses, and trucks registered above 8,000 pounds would be exempt. The proposed ordinance restricts revenue to transportation purposes and dedicates it to the city's annual seal coat and crack fill program. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation would collect the fee at registration and renewal and remit funds to the city monthly. City officials state the fee would reduce reliance on long-term borrowing for routine road maintenance. As of September 1, 2026, 38 cities, 15 villages, four towns, and 14 counties statewide have enacted comparable vehicle registration fees.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/08/marshfield-considers-25-annual-vehicle-fee-fund-street-maintenance/>

Wisconsin Policy Forum: Wisconsin's total tax levy posts largest increase in nearly two decades

The Wisconsin Policy Forum, a nonpartisan research organization, reported that Wisconsin's total local tax levy recorded its largest increase in nearly two decades. In Dane County, the gross tax levy for all local governments rose 9.9 percent on December tax bills, the largest single-year increase in that county since 1992. The findings cover levies set by all local governments appearing on county tax bills. Forum researcher Mark Sommerhauser said the results are likely to prompt a 2027 legislative debate over local government funding structures and property tax policy, involving a newly elected governor and potentially new lawmakers. The report identifies no specific legislative proposals or bill numbers. Sommerhauser is scheduled to discuss the findings with reporter Elly Laliberte on the program For the Record at 10:30 a.m. Sunday.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-policy-forum-wisconsins-total-tax-levy-posts-largest-increase-in-nearly-two-decades/article_bfa89a63-36f6-4d7a-86fd-64dd362b9f04.html

Dane County keeps highest-available bond rating, but outlook is negative

S&P Global Ratings reaffirmed Dane County's AAA bond rating on September 10, 2026, and shifted the county's outlook from stable to negative, citing reserve draws and fund performance. County Executive Melissa Agard announced the action and said the county enters the 2027 budget cycle with a roughly \$15 million structural deficit, down from the \$31 million deficit carried the prior year. Earlier in summer 2026 Agard directed all departments to identify \$10 million in general purpose revenue reductions for their 2027 requests, prohibited requests for new positions funded with general purpose revenue, and required restraint on capital requests. She also directed the Department of Administration to develop a five-year capital improvement plan identifying capital needs and anticipated borrowing, and her administration will create a formal fund balance standard for the Human Services Fund along with a five-year operating forecast. The first department budget request hearings were held Wednesday evening, and County Board approval of the 2027 budget is expected in early November.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/dane-county-keeps-highest-available-bond-rating-but-outlook-is-negative/article_41dc9fb3-e2c9-4371-bf49-3d45a07b3ccc.html

Madison Common Council rejects Willy Street financial relief fund

The Madison Common Council rejected the Williamson Street Business Stabilization Support Program, a proposed \$100,000 budget amendment intended to aid businesses affected by the

July 22 shooting death of Corey Ruiz, 38, near Williamson and Baldwin streets in the Marquette neighborhood. The measure received 13 votes in favor and seven against but failed because a budget amendment requires a supermajority of 15 votes, according to Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. The Madison Finance Committee had rejected the proposed use of the contingent reserve on August 31, citing potential city funding needs later in the year. In a separate action the same evening, the Council rejected, 12 to 7, a proposal to allocate an additional \$28,500 to the Office of the Independent Police Monitor for staffing and services covering July 22 through September 8. The Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation continues to investigate the July 22 incident.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-common-council-rejects-willy-street-financial-relief-fund/article_2aac966a-f81a-4e48-92d3-3e2acf8ce3bd.html

Madison mayor's 2027 capital budget includes police body cameras

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway released her proposed 2027 Executive Capital Budget on September 8, 2026, including funding for body-worn cameras for the Madison Police Department. Police Chief John Patterson identified body cameras as the department's top priority following the July 22 shooting death of Corey Ruiz on Madison's near east side. The proposal carries \$90.6 million less in general obligation borrowing than city agencies originally requested. Major allocations include \$42.1 million for street reconstruction including the Regent Street redesign, \$17.9 million for parks system improvements, \$12.6 million for water main maintenance, \$8.7 million for pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, \$7.9 million for flood mitigation and stormwater improvements, \$5.4 million for John Nolen Drive reconstruction, and \$3.3 million for traffic safety improvements. Rhodes-Conway cited cuts in state and federal funding as shifting greater costs to local property taxpayers. She is scheduled to present her proposed 2027 Executive Operating Budget in October.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-mayor-s-2027-capital-budget-includes-police-body-cameras/article_5465145b-d2cf-434a-9c84-df784f3675c0.html

Dunn County officials announce \$1.4M budget gap for 2027

Dunn County Manager Dan Dunbar announced on September 9, 2026, that the county faces a projected \$1.4 million budget shortfall for fiscal year 2027. Dunbar attributed the gap to five converging pressures: state-imposed limits on property tax levy increases, rising employee compensation and benefit costs, inflation, increasing operational costs, and growing human services placement expenses. He said the shortfall is not isolated to a single department and reflects systemwide fiscal strain, and that service reductions to the public are anticipated. Dunbar stated the county cannot generate sufficient revenue under current state fiscal restrictions to maintain existing service levels while retaining employees, and that there are no easy cuts. The announcement identified no specific departmental targets, position eliminations, or dollar-denominated service reductions. The county has made additional budget gap information available publicly, and no formal board vote or budget adoption date was reported.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/09/dunn-county-officials-announce-14m-budget-gap-2027/>

Paid parking in downtown Eau Claire generates \$30K in its first month

Downtown Eau Claire's paid on-street parking program generated just over \$30,000 in revenue during its first full month of operation in August 2026, according to parking administrator Aaron Roths. The program launched with limited enforcement, and officials issued only warnings rather than fines throughout August. A technical failure with the employee parking website during the first week led administrators to offer those employees free parking until the issue was resolved. The city subsequently relocated kiosks to higher-density locations in response to business requests and is adding supplemental signage within the coming weeks. Roths did not specify when fine-based enforcement will begin, and the transition away from the warning-only phase is the program's next operational step.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/10/paid-parking-downtown-eau-claire-generates-30k-its-first-month/>

Workforce and Labor

La Crosse approves interim finance head after Hawkins resigns

The La Crosse City Council unanimously appointed Dan DeGier interim finance director at its September 11, 2026 meeting, following the voluntary resignation of former director Chad Hawkins in July. DeGier, previously the deputy finance director, had served as the de facto department head since June, when Hawkins began an extended leave. Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey acknowledged Hawkins's contributions and confirmed that DeGier and the finance team would carry operations through the transition. Council member Jennifer Trost, speaking in August, credited DeGier with making the months-long budgeting process more transparent and accessible to elected officials. The city has launched a permanent replacement search; human resources head Rebecca Franzen reported that the application window closed in late August and that staff have begun initial review of candidates.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_0abd7f52-b349-5814-bb60-525963ea6b82.html

New Onalaska fire chief highlights funding and staffing as areas of interest

The City of Onalaska appointed Jeremy Southworth fire chief of the Onalaska Fire Department effective September 1, 2026. Southworth is a 26-year veteran of the department and most recently served as assistant fire chief; he succeeds William Hayes, who resigned in February 2025. The department responds to nearly 2,600 calls annually. Southworth identified staffing and funding as his primary priorities and cited the existing auto-aid agreement with the Holmen Fire Department as a model for regional cost sharing. He said the department will review its annual budget for internal funding options and pursue federal SAFER grant funding to supplement staffing positions until a reliable long-term funding source is secured. Southworth also plans to expand collaborative training with ambulance providers and neighboring fire departments as a cost containment strategy.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/10/new-onalaska-fire-chief-highlights-funding-staffing-areas-interest/>

Wisconsin school districts face retention, recruitment challenges

The most recent Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction workforce data show that 52.6 percent of teachers remain in Wisconsin public school classrooms by their eighth year, with retention lower among special education teachers at 43.2 percent at the same benchmark. Wisconsin Education Association Council president Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, whose organization is the state's largest teachers union, described the attrition rate among the newest educators as alarming in remarks on the program For the Record. The DPI data establish a statewide pattern affecting districts across Wisconsin. No single district action, legislative measure, or formal policy response is reported. WEAC stated its focus is on ensuring educators have collegial and resource support to remain in classrooms. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-school-districts-face-retention-recruitment-challenges/article_241b4e29-4fcd-4981-b348-a7eab571e518.html

Wisconsin workforce report: Stalled job growth amid rising costs

The University of Wisconsin-Madison High Road Strategy Center released the State of Working Wisconsin 2026 report, documenting stalled job growth, declining union membership, and racial disparities across the state's labor market. Wisconsin has lost jobs since early 2025, and Black workers face an unemployment rate nearly three times that of white workers. The state's unionization rate fell nearly by half between 2011 and 2025, while the national rate declined from 13 percent to 11 percent over the same period. Lower-wage workers recorded some of the strongest wage gains despite the overall labor market contraction. Report author Laura Dresser, an associate director at the center, presented the findings on the For the Record program. No legislative or administrative response to the report was announced. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-workforce-report-stalled-job-growth-amid-rising-costs/article_49ef0122-713a-40f6-b95a-951823264c83.html

Infrastructure and Utilities

Dane County Board calls for delay, more review of proposed 765-kV transmission project

The Dane County Board unanimously adopted a resolution Thursday, September 10, 2026, urging Midcontinent Grid Solutions and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to delay consideration of the Bell Center to Columbia to Sugar Creek to Illinois-Wisconsin state line 765-kilovolt transmission project, known as BECI, pending additional review and public input. The project would run roughly 190 miles across southern Wisconsin with potential routing through Dane County. Board Chair Patrick Miles said the current timeline does not allow adequate scrutiny for a project of this scale. The county criticized the review process for providing a single joint open house serving both Dane and Dodge counties and a September 7 feedback deadline. The resolution requests an independent analysis of the project's necessity, a cost-benefit analysis for ratepayers, an environmental assessment comparing routes, an evaluation of alternatives, and an analysis of prime farmland impacts by route. The Town of Bristol Board unanimously passed a resolution last month opposing the routing through that town, and Midcontinent Grid Solutions has not yet filed a formal application with the PSC.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/11/dane-county-board-calls-delay-more-review-proposed-765-kv-transmission-project/>

Lawmakers and candidates take firm stances against proposed transmission line

A bipartisan group of Wisconsin state legislators, led in part by State Senator Sarah Keyeski of Lodi, called on Midcontinent Grid Solutions to postpone its Public Service Commission filing for the proposed 190-mile transmission line crossing nine counties in the Driftless region until the company holds a third round of public open houses. The company has conducted one round of open houses across all nine counties within a four-day period, drawing nearly 5,000 attendees according to Director of Community Engagement Brian Radday, with one additional round scheduled before the proposal goes to the PSC. Republican gubernatorial candidate Tom Tiffany said all alternatives should be exhausted before the project proceeds, and Democratic gubernatorial candidate David Crowley issued a statement opposing the line as currently proposed. Midcontinent Grid Solutions stated that no route recommendation is off the table and that it remains committed to minimizing community and environmental impact as the project advances toward a PSC filing.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/lawmakers-and-candidates-take-firm-stances-against-proposed-transmission-line/article_20a17db9-4dd8-41cf-8fe9-74f32d04552b.html

Master Plan process begins for Dane County Regional Airport

Dane County Executive Melissa Agard announced on September 10, 2026, a \$5.8 million master plan for Dane County Regional Airport to document current conditions and plan future infrastructure upgrades. The Federal Aviation Administration will fund 90 percent of the total cost, approximately \$5.22 million, with the airport and the Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics each covering 5 percent, approximately \$290,000 apiece. The plan will be developed jointly by the airport and the FAA, beginning with a complete airfield evaluation. Scope includes property inventory mapping, environmental assessments, future needs and demand analysis, an airport geographic information system survey, parking and ground transportation evaluations, and future development options on airport property. The county and the FAA will use the outputs to incorporate identified needs into capital improvements. No vote count, resolution identifier, or completion timeline was reported.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/11/master-plan-process-begins-dane-county-regional-airport/>

“It's just too much to take,” Milwaukee St. homeowners say of thousands in road project costs

Madison's Board of Public Works unanimously approved a motion to explore an extended payment period for qualifying residents following a public hearing Wednesday on a \$5.5 million reconstruction of Milwaukee Street from Starkweather Creek to West Corporate Drive. The project includes a new sanitary sewer main, water main, pavement, medians, and a shared-use path, with construction scheduled to begin in April and run through November 2027. Individual property assessments range from approximately \$7,000 on the low end to \$10,000 or more, broken down by street reconstruction costs and sewer connection and sanitary lateral charges. Under current terms, residents may pay in a lump sum or over eight years at 4.5 percent interest. The board's motion directs staff to examine whether a longer repayment period can be offered to eligible

property owners. Final assessment amounts will be calculated from actual bid prices and completed work, and the project is expected to go out for bid this winter.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/10/its-just-too-much-take-milwaukee-st-homeowners-say-thousands-road-project-costs/>

County to invest in popular Waubedonia Park

Ozaukee County's Natural Resources Committee voted to award a \$68,271 contract to Lee Recreation of Cambridge for new playground equipment at Waubedonia County Park in Fredonia, following County Board approval of the replacement in April 2025. The committee received two bids for the project. A memo to the committee states the existing equipment does not meet current state safety and accessibility standards. New equipment will include a climbing log, a roofed platform, a spiral slide, and a toddler swing set. Camping fee income at the park rose from \$14,450 through July 2024 to \$22,205 through July 2025, and the park drew 135,127 visitors in 2025, with its 17 campsites routinely at capacity through most of the camping season. Improvements under consideration include showers connected to the Village of Fredonia's water treatment plant, an accessible floating kayak and canoe rental station, and a fishing pier; no votes on those items were reported.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/county-invest-popular-waubedonia-park>

Power line foes double down in ATC fight

The Fredonia Town Board approved a \$5,000 donation in August to the Responsible Energy Alliance, a grassroots coalition opposing American Transmission Company's proposal to extend high-tension power lines across greenfield routes in the towns of Fredonia and Saukville to serve the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington. Supervisor Eric Schmitz supported the donation. A meeting of the electors was scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, September 9, to authorize the expenditure. The Wisconsin Public Service Commission earlier rescinded ATC's application because the utility had made too many changes for the document to be deemed complete. The alliance is pursuing nonprofit status to enable tax-exempt donations to offset growing legal costs, and intends to challenge any ATC use of eminent domain, arguing that condemnation authority cannot be exercised for the benefit of a private entity under Wisconsin law.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/power-line-foes-double-down-atc-fight>

Town of King says goodbye to old town hall, welcomes modern replacement

The Town of King, a Lincoln County municipality of 880 residents located outside Tomahawk, completed a new town hall approximately one month before a September 5, 2026 community farewell event for the former building. Town Supervisor Andy Tomaszewski said updating the circa-1930 one-room schoolhouse to current standards would have cost approximately \$170,000, not including ongoing repair expenses, and that the structure lacked indoor plumbing and posed ADA accessibility barriers during winter election events. The new building includes modern indoor plumbing, heating, and full ADA accessibility, and the town board held its first meeting there in August 2026. The old schoolhouse is scheduled for demolition in early 2027, with the cleared site to be converted into additional parking. Historical materials from the former building will be preserved with the Tomahawk Area Historical Society.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/town-of-king-says-goodbye-to-old-town-hall-welcomes-modern-replacement/article_7ec1581a-0e81-4718-b5e2-f1b6b3c02dc1.html

Second year of community well water study in Pierce

Pierce County has commenced the second year of a five-year community well water sampling program funded by the County Board of Supervisors following recommendations from its Groundwater Ad Hoc Committee. Wells enrolled in the study are tested annually each fall for six parameters: nitrate-nitrogen, chloride, pH, hardness, conductivity, and alkalinity, through the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Water and Environmental Analysis Lab. The county's Land Conservation Department administers the program. Participants receive sample bottles by mail and must return their 2026 samples to a post office by September 25, 2026, or arrange county assistance for collection. Fall 2025 results are available on the Land Conservation Department's groundwater webpage. No statistical trends have been drawn from the data, and the study is designed to track how local groundwater quality changes across the full five-year period.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/second-year-of-community-well-water-study-in-pierce,205023>

Public Safety

Beloit city manager pitches plan to build new police station on Springbrook Court

Beloit City Manager Daniel Ortiz Hernandez, who took office June 22, proposed to the City Council on Tuesday a new police station on more than six acres of city-owned land at 2351 Springbrook Court, adjacent to the public works building. The concept calls for a 65,000 to 70,000 square foot station, three parking lots, and a 15,000 to 20,000 square foot accessory support building. The Beloit Police Department has operated out of approximately 14,000 square feet at City Hall since 1983. A 2024 needs assessment by a Minnesota firm estimated construction cost at \$43.1 million, and the National Association of Home Builders reports building material costs have risen 10 to 15 percent since. Ortiz Hernandez said he will include funding for site feasibility due diligence in the upcoming city budget proposal; if approved, design would take 12 to 18 months with construction potentially beginning in 2028. Council member Nancy Forsbeck noted the council has discussed the need for a decade, and Ortiz Hernandez said future presentations will include response-time impact data.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/beloit-city-manager-pitches-plan-to-build-new-police-station-on-springbrook-court/article_34a1224f-a1c7-4242-8c7b-7c3726c89af6.html

City and Town of Beloit end fire, EMS agreements with neighboring communities

The City of Beloit and the Town of Beloit terminated fire and EMS service agreements with several neighboring communities after a cost-of-service review found those communities were paying rates significantly below actual service costs, with Beloit residents and taxpayers absorbing the remaining difference. The review was initiated as the city and town work to consolidate their fire and EMS departments, a structural merger aimed at improving response capacity and staffing. City Manager Daniel Ortiz Hernandez and Town Administrator John Malizio issued a joint release confirming the terminations. The City of Beloit terminated agreements with the Town of Turtle and a portion of the Town of La Prairie, effective at the end of the calendar year. Officials noted that

even updated cost estimates may understate the true cost because capital expenses for stations, ambulances, and equipment were not fully incorporated into prior agreements. Both governments stated they remain open to negotiating new agreements that reflect full cost recovery.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/12/city-town-beloit-end-fire-ems-agreements-with-neighboring-communities/>

Flock cameras suspended in Stevens Point amid privacy concerns

Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza suspended the city's use of all 10 Flock Safety license plate reader cameras indefinitely as of Tuesday, September 8, 2026, citing data privacy concerns that include an incident in which Flock Safety offered to sell five years of speed and traffic data to the City of Sheboygan without disclosing to city officials that the cameras were collecting that data. All 10 cameras were physically covered by Tuesday morning. Wiza said the suspension will be accompanied by an investigation into whether the contract's risks outweigh its documented benefits, which in Stevens Point include solved crimes and located missing persons. The mayor identified three conditions for any resumed use: verified data security, approval over how data is shared, and limitation of camera access to agencies the city explicitly authorizes. No timeline for the investigation was reported, and the city is exploring termination of its Flock Safety contract.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/flock-cameras-suspended-in-stevens-point-amid-privacy-concerns/article_ea0feee2-20eb-496e-bb5f-62a0afe15b52.html

Police chief addresses Flock camera concerns

Amery Police Chief Dan Peters appeared before the Amery City Council on September 2, 2026, to publicly explain the department's Flock Safety license plate camera system following questions raised by Alderperson Jason Bottolfson. Peters said the city has operated Flock cameras for nearly three years and that the cameras photograph only the rear of vehicles, capturing license plate numbers and general vehicle characteristics such as color and make. Thousands of plates pass through the cameras daily, but officers do not monitor the feed continuously, and any system search requires an officer to document a reason, typically tied to a case number. Mayor Rick Van Blaricom asked about data sharing with federal agencies, and Peters confirmed the department holds no agreements with ICE or other federal agencies and shares data only with Wisconsin law enforcement on a case-by-case basis. Peters said he would like three or more additional cameras but acknowledged the city cannot afford the expense. No vote on the system was taken at the meeting.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/police-chief-addresses-flock-camera-concerns/article_a67428a6-ce65-4045-a952-ef74c1317dd0.html

WILL Files Lawsuit Over Waukesha County Flock Cameras

The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty filed a lawsuit on September 10, 2026, seeking to require law enforcement to obtain a warrant, or qualify under a valid warrant exception, before conducting certain searches using Flock Safety license plate reader cameras in Waukesha County. More than 120 Flock cameras currently operate across the county and are capable of generating detailed records of vehicle movements. WILL stated it is not seeking removal of the cameras but is pursuing legal safeguards to balance law enforcement operational needs against residents' privacy rights. The lawsuit challenges current county and law enforcement practices

governing access to and use of the camera network's data. No specific court, judge assignment, or next scheduled proceeding was reported.

Source: Seehafer News (Southeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/09/11/will-files-lawsuit-over-waukesha-county-flock-cameras/>

“I feel that we were lied to”: Jefferson Co. Sheriff's Office suspends Flock cameras

Jefferson County Sheriff Travis Maze announced the suspension of his agency's Flock camera system on September 11, 2026, citing unauthorized release of investigative data. Maze said that when the sheriff's office expanded its Flock system in 2025, company representatives told him data would not be released without the agency's permission, and that he subsequently learned case data from 2025 investigations was made public without the office's consent. Maze stated he has no evidence of wrongdoing by sheriff's office staff in how they used the system. The suspension applies to the full camera network operated by the office, and the sheriff said he is awaiting a response from Flock explaining how the data release occurred. Jefferson County joins at least two other Wisconsin agencies that have suspended or terminated Flock contracts: the City of Menasha covered its cameras the prior week, and the Dane County Sheriff's Office covered its cameras in June 2026. Stoughton's city council separately voted to terminate its Flock contract.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/i-feel-that-we-were-lied-to-jefferson-co-sheriffs-office-suspends-flock-cameras/article_cb460d59-cc2c-4641-b717-6242cc950e76.html

Gun found in courthouse renews security/cost debate in rural Wisconsin

The Langlade County Public Safety Committee convened September 10 to discuss courthouse security upgrades after a firearm was discovered in the Langlade County Courthouse in Antigo on July 16, 2025, stashed behind a toilet on the third floor near a note bearing the name of a trial witness. Sheriff Mark Westen told the committee that a single scanning machine would cost between \$80,000 and \$100,000, and that two full-time employees to operate a screening checkpoint would run approximately \$130,000 annually, with additional construction for a screening structure adding further costs. Westen said he first proposed security upgrades roughly eight years ago, but the county board rejected the plans over estimated costs. A Badger Project review found that neighboring Lincoln and Shawano counties also do not screen courthouse visitors, while Marathon County's 2017 metal-detector and X-ray system cost more than \$300,000 plus ongoing staffing. The committee asked Westen to submit a written proposal; its next scheduled meeting is October 1, and the county board retains final authority over any budget determination.

Source: The Badger Project (Central/Northern) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/09/11/gun-found-in-courthouse-renews-security-cost-debate-in-rural-wisconsin/>

Deputies driving squads to homes outside Waupaca County are sheriff's call

The Waupaca County Sheriff's Office operates a take-home vehicle program covering all 50 of its law enforcement vehicles, nine of which are driven daily to residences outside the county, Sheriff Tim Wilz confirmed by email. Wilz, who is running for re-election, said the furthest out-of-county employee lives approximately 15 miles from the county line; a records investigation identified at least one deputy commuting to Stevens Point in Portage County, roughly 18 miles from the county line. The take-home policy was established in 2017 and grants the sheriff sole discretion to assign

or revoke vehicle privileges. Seven administrative positions, including division captains and the civilian 911 dispatch captain, also receive take-home vehicles, all within the county. Independent challenger Justin Malueg, who worked at the office from 2020 to 2024, estimated that two administrative vehicles and associated fuel and maintenance expenses between January and August 2025 totaled nearly \$100,000. Wilz contested that figure, noting vehicle purchase prices are not recurring costs. The contested sheriff's race is expected to appear on the November ballot.

Source: The Badger Project (Northeastern) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/09/08/deputies-driving-squads-to-homes-outside-waupaca-county-are-sheriffs-call/>

Ex-Racine Co Sheriff's investigator pleads guilty, gets jail time in wife abuse case

Jonathan Bechman, a former investigator with the Racine County Sheriff's Office, pleaded guilty on August 21 to two counts of battery with domestic abuse modifiers and one count of attempted misconduct in office, all misdemeanors. Racine County Judge David Paulson sentenced Bechman to six months in jail with work release, followed by three years of probation, with the jail term to be served at the Walworth County Jail beginning September 18. Bechman had been employed by the sheriff's office since 2011, was placed on administrative leave in January after his wife filed for a domestic abuse restraining order, and his employment ended May 1, according to the county's human resources department. The court approved the restraining order in February, and formal charges were filed in May. Sentence conditions bar contact with the victim and firearm possession and require completion of a batterer's intervention course, domestic violence counseling, and a mental health evaluation. Under state law, the misdemeanor domestic violence convictions result in loss of his law enforcement certification.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Southeastern) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/12/ex-racine-co-sheriffs-investigator-pleads-guilty-gets-jail-time-in-wife-abuse-case/>

Milwaukee alder says 'days are numbered' for Water Street entertainment district as neighbors push to keep area alive

Milwaukee's Public Safety and Health Committee voted unanimously Friday to restore a 1 a.m. curfew for food trucks operating in the Water Street entertainment district, reversing the stricter 10 p.m. restriction the city enacted in April to control downtown crowds. The committee acted after a food truck owner filed a lawsuit challenging the earlier curfew, and the change was approved to avoid a prolonged legal process. Under the restored rule, food trucks must cease operations between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. District 4 Alder Bob Bauman, who characterized food trucks as a factor drawing crowds rather than an incidental presence, said publicly that the Water Street district's days in its current form are numbered. The city has separately expanded police presence and installed additional barriers on Water Street as part of broader safety measures. The measure now proceeds to the full Milwaukee Common Council for a final vote.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/milwaukee-alder-says-days-are-numbered-for-water-street-entertainment-district-as-neighbors-push-to-keep-area-alive>

Land Use and Development

Amery to pursue housing strategic plan targeting city's top identified need

City Administrator Alex Mansfield informed the Amery Common Council on September 2, 2026, that the city is drafting a housing strategic plan designed to deploy every available municipal mechanism to encourage new residential construction. Mansfield said he has been consulting with housing development specialists to review strategies and best practices used by other Wisconsin communities. The plan responds to housing, which was identified as Amery's number one community need under the city's 2045 comprehensive plan. No vote count or specific ordinance identifier was reported for the September 2 meeting. The article does not specify a completion date or the next scheduled Council action on the plan.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-to-pursue-housing-strategic-plan-targeting-citys-top-identified-need/article_c7f0291a-0681-4dec-9350-30ca5309a5ac.html

Sunshine Place unveils renovation plan

The Sun Prairie Plan Commission voted unanimously on September 8, 2026, to recommend approval of a conditional use permit for Sunshine Place's campus renovation at 1632 and 1610 W. Main Street, covering construction of a new 20,576 square foot single-story building to replace the existing Sunshine Supper structure. The \$13 million project had secured \$9.2 million in commitments as of September 9, including \$1 million from the Sun Prairie City Council and \$2 million allocated by the Dane County Board of Supervisors in its 2025 budget. A letter of intent from OPN Architects states construction could begin as early as February 2027, with completion approximately one year later. Staff conditions attached to the recommendation include completion of a certified survey map combining both parcels, approval of a final utility plan by the city engineer and Sun Prairie Utilities, and a shared-parking agreement. The Sun Prairie City Council will take up the final permit decision at a future meeting.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/sunshine-place-unveils-renovation-plan/article_2c47a884-aad0-4990-84e1-03ced50bc50a.html

Wisconsin Rapids data center developer wraps up webinars, community still uneasy about project

PNK Group has scheduled a conditional use permit public hearing for September 16 at the Rapids Performing Arts Center in Wisconsin Rapids, the next formal regulatory step toward developing a data center on the former Wisconsin Rapids mill site. The developer completed four public webinar sessions in August covering Wisconsin River water usage, noise pollution, and a community benefits plan that projects 64 full-time jobs and includes a partnership with Mid-State Technical College and riverfront improvements. Community opposition group South Wood County Neighbors for Responsible Development, co-founded by Kaitlyn Federwitz, disputes the project's assurances and questions the enforceability of any community benefits agreement. PNK Group Chief Development Officer Anton Voronkin confirmed that former New York City Mayor Eric Adams, whose federal indictment on bribery, conspiracy, and fraud charges was dismissed in 2024, continues to serve as an advisor on the project. PNK Group is also hosting an open house at Hotel Mead on September 13 ahead of the hearing.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/wisconsin-rapids-data-center-developer-wraps-up-webinars-community-still-uneasy-about-project/article_5e8c9f69-3065-435b-b4fd-0a4b5756fadd.html

Port Washington residents look for answers from Vantage, Oracle and OpenAI on massive data center project

Approximately 150 Port Washington residents attended a public community forum Thursday evening to question Vantage, Oracle, and OpenAI about a large data center project under construction in the city. Oracle Vice President of Community Relations Beatrice Fullan represented the development team and stated that local Port Washington residents are a priority for the approximately 1,000 jobs projected inside the facility upon its anticipated 2028 opening. Residents raised concerns spanning environmental impact, energy costs, artificial intelligence implications, and backup diesel power generators planned for the site. Vantage disclosed that construction is ongoing and that approximately 15 to 20 percent of the project is now complete. No formal vote, permit action, or regulatory decision was announced at the forum, and Vantage confirmed that additional community engagement is planned.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/port-washington-residents-look-for-answers-from-vantage-oracle-and-openai-on-massive-data-center-project>

Chippewa And Barron Counties Join Regional Push For Data Center Moratoriums

The Chippewa County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a 12-month moratorium on data center development on August 11, applying to all towns under county zoning, following a public hearing at which residents cited groundwater, electrical grid, and community character concerns. Board Chair Jason Bergeron attributed the action to zoning ordinances failing to keep pace with industry growth. In Barron County, a special Committee of the Whole meeting lasting more than three hours was held August 31, featuring presentations from Wisconsin Counties Association President Mark O'Connell and Attolles Law attorney Rebecca Roeker; no county-level moratorium vote was reported. At the township level, the Town of Lakeland adopted Resolution 2026-03 on August 13 and the Town of Maple Plain adopted Resolution 2026-02 on August 5, each formally petitioning Barron County to enact a minimum 12-month moratorium covering data centers and large-scale renewable energy projects. The Town of Dovre enacted its own 12-month moratorium earlier this summer and hosted an informational meeting September 8 with Barron County Zoning Administrator Ben Cole on joining county zoning.

Source: Bloomer Advance (Western) | https://www.bloomeradvance.com/news/front_page/article_78bc46e0-7fc5-42d7-a292-5e88f547b5b5.html

Sheboygan Establishes Temporary DORA for Riverfest 2026

Sheboygan's Common Council approved a resolution establishing a temporary Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area for Riverfest 2026, scheduled for September 19, 2026. The DORA will be active from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., coinciding with the full duration of the event, and the designated area runs along the Riverfront Boardwalk from Salon Sase south to the vicinity of 819 Riverfront Drive. The resolution limits the open-intoxicant zone to alcohol service areas, sidewalks and boardwalks, and portions of the right-of-way not open to vehicular traffic, explicitly including crosswalks and other pedestrian crossing areas within the permitted zone. The event will feature

local vendors, food trucks, and live music along Riverfront Drive. No vote count or resolution identifier was reported.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/09/11/sheboygan-establishes-temporary-dora-for-riverfest-2026/>

New program offers incentives to out-of-state individuals, families to live in Vernon County

Vernon County launched Driftless Bound, a workforce attraction program funded primarily through a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Talent Recruitment Grant, designed to draw out-of-state workers and families to establish primary residency in the county. The program provides financial incentives across three housing categories: renters may receive up to \$2,500 toward a security deposit and first month's rent, while homebuyers and homebuilders may each receive up to \$12,500, subject to program and lender requirements. To qualify under the state grant, applicants must currently reside outside Wisconsin and have a combined annual household income of at least \$55,000. Additional Vernon County requirements include being at least 18 years old and having at least one household member employed full time. Vernon County Community Development Director Amy Oliver announced the program. No application deadline or total program funding cap was disclosed.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/10/new-program-offers-incentives-out-of-state-individuals-families-live-vernon-county/>

Governance and Elections

City of Sheboygan Looking to “Strengthen Trust with the Community”

The Sheboygan Common Council unanimously approved a resolution appropriating approximately \$42,000 to Allyson Brunette Consulting and CP2 Consulting for a comprehensive strategic planning engagement. City documents cite considerable organizational change over the past several years as the rationale and identify a need to reset direction, rebuild internal culture, and establish community priorities. The contracted scope covers development of organizational values, a mission and vision statement, and strategic priorities for the 2028 through 2032 period. Planned activities include interviews with elected officials, community surveys, public engagement events, and strategic planning workshops. Full scope details were published in the September 8 Common Council agenda.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/09/11/city-of-sheboygan-looking-to-strengthen-trust-with-the-community/>

Divided board picks Rishel to fill trustee seat

The Grafton Village Board appointed former Ozaukee County Supervisor Scott Rishel as trustee on a 4 to 2 vote following three ballots and approximately 90 minutes of deliberation. Rishel was one of four applicants for the seat previously held by Dave Armstrong, who was appointed village president three weeks earlier to fill the vacancy left by Dan Delorit's retirement. On the first and second ballots, Rishel and former trustee Andrew Schwartz each received three votes, deadlocking the board; on the third ballot Rishel received four votes to Schwartz's two, with Trustees Sarah Scarpace and Kevin Curtis dissenting. Rishel was sworn into office at the same meeting. He served eight years on the Ozaukee County Board and noted that emergency medical

services constitute approximately 25 percent of the village's tax levy. The trustee seat, along with Armstrong's village president seat, will be on the ballot again in April.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/divided-board-picks-rishel-fill-trustee-seat>

Madison officials appoint Devine Nzegwu to District 1 council seat

The Madison Common Council appointed Devine Nzegwu to represent Alder District 1 at its September 9, 2026 evening meeting. Nzegwu fills the vacancy created when Alder John Duncan resigned effective July 31, 2026; Duncan had been elected to the Council in April 2023. The Common Council Executive Committee recommended Nzegwu for the appointment on September 1, 2026. Nzegwu works as a credit analyst at John Deere Financial and serves as founding member and president of Umu Igbo Unite Wisconsin. She has held treasurer and community service chair roles with the Urban League of Greater Madison Young Professionals and sits on the city's Park Facilities, Programs and Fees Subcommittee. Her appointment term runs through April 20, 2027, at which point the seat is subject to regular election.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-officials-appoint-devine-nzegwu-to-district-1-council-seat/article_cac8ffac-1747-4c30-9d31-852632f8b879.html

Wausau mayor talks city government, cleanup and community event

Wausau Mayor Doug Diny announced that the city will hold a public open house on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, to discuss the possibility of converting Wausau to a city administrator form of government. The open house represents a formal public engagement step in evaluating a structural change to the city's municipal governance model. Diny made the announcement during a monthly mayoral segment on NewsChannel 7. No vote date or resolution identifier was reported in connection with the potential transition, and the article does not identify which city body initiated the review, specify a timeline for a formal decision, or name any staff leading the process. The September 15 open house is the next reported step and would precede any formal governing body action on the charter or administrative structure change.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/10/wausau-mayor-talks-city-government-cleanup-community-event/>

Petition presented to reinstate Huepfel to village committees

Resident Dianne Thomas presented a 303-signature petition to the Spring Valley Village Board on September 2 calling for the reinstatement of Trustee Matt Huepfel to the Public Works and Emergency Services committees, from which Village President Theresa Koch removed him in June, citing unruly behavior, profanity, and threatening remarks toward a village employee. The board tabled the petition because Huepfel was absent from the September 2 meeting. In separate action, the board approved updates to the village's comprehensive plan following nearly two years of community input, with a focus on housing, land use elements, and a new planned urban development provision requiring coordinated planning for residential build-out. The Glade Avenue bridge project continues under a previously approved slope fill option, and the village is negotiating four easements with adjacent property owners before construction work can begin.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/petition-presented-to-reinstate-huepfel-to-village-committees,205020>

DHS voter fraud probe in Wisconsin draws criticism from election officials, voting advocates

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice launched a voter fraud investigation covering nine states, including Wisconsin, with the Wisconsin Elections Commission receiving formal notice in early September 2026; the probe is scheduled to run through mid-October 2026. Federal officials have indicated that states failing to comply risk losing federal funding. Andrew Mercil, Dunn County Clerk and president of the Wisconsin County Clerks Association, noted that state records document 68 criminal voter fraud convictions in Wisconsin since 1982, and that Wisconsin routinely audits approximately 20 percent of polling locations following major general elections. Mercil characterized the federal funding threat as largely ineffective, stating that federal support for local election operations has declined substantially over the past decade, with most funding now sourced from the state. Under Wisconsin law, uninvited federal agents and outside law enforcement are barred from stationing inside polling places on Election Day. Mercil said county clerks will cooperate within the boundaries of applicable state and federal law while protecting voter privacy.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/11/dhs-voter-fraud-probe-wisconsin-draws-criticism-election-officials-voting-advocates/>

Clerks share what happens 'behind the ballot' in Douglas County

Superior City Clerk Heidi Blunt and Douglas County Clerk Kaci Lundgren presented a public Behind the Ballot session Wednesday detailing election administration procedures in Douglas County. Blunt announced that Superior will offer expanded in-person absentee voting hours on two Saturdays, October 24 and October 31, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., a new option for the city this election cycle. Superior operates five polling sites, each requiring nine to eleven staffing shifts, and Blunt said she needs to hire at least 20 additional election workers before the November 3 election. The city maintains four ballot drop box locations: near the East End laundromat, Webster Dream Park, Fire Department headquarters, and outside the Government Center. Tabulator accuracy testing occurs within 10 days before the election and is open to the public. A second Behind the Ballot presentation is scheduled for 5 p.m. September 16 at the Superior Public Library.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/clerks-share-what-happens-behind-the-ballot-in-douglas-county>

Madison Clerk's Office begins mailing absentee ballots for Nov. 3 election

The Madison Clerk's Office announced on September 8, 2026, that it has begun mailing absentee ballots for the November 3 general election, which includes the gubernatorial race between Tom Tiffany and David Crowley. Voters may request ballots through the My Vote Wisconsin website by submitting their name and date of birth. Completed ballots must be signed by the voter and countersigned by an adult witness who also provides a name and address, and may be returned by mail or deposited at city-designated drop box locations, which open three weeks before Election Day. The clerk's office stated that absentee ballots are sent to polling places to be counted on Election Day. The announcement coincides with ongoing federal litigation in which U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani extended an order barring the Postal Service from enforcing an executive order restricting mail ballots; the administration has filed a third appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to allow the restrictions to take effect before the November elections.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-clerks-office-begins-mailing-absentee-ballots-for-nov-3-election/article_08d1a055-9a6f-4d5b-b361-53c63db25d63.html

WEAU Investigates: Rebecca Cooke cleared of wrongdoing after concerns of possible electioneering

Barron County District Attorney Brian Wright declined to prosecute congressional candidate Rebecca Cooke following an investigation into two alleged electioneering incidents during Wisconsin's August 2026 primary cycle. The first incident occurred August 4, when Eau Claire City Clerk Nick Koerner asked Cooke and her team to leave a press conference held in front of Eau Claire City Hall, where in-person absentee voting was underway, on the grounds that they were within 100 feet of the voting location. The second occurred August 11, primary election day, when Cooke and approximately six team members, some wearing campaign shirts, were present at VFW Post 305 in Eau Claire, which also houses a polling place, and Koerner again asked Cooke to leave. Wright concluded in his written decision that insufficient evidence existed to prove Cooke acted with intent to violate Wis. Stat. § 12.03(2)(a)1, citing ambiguity in the statute as applied to the City Hall location and finding no evidence of electioneering within the statutory definition of the polling place at the VFW.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/10/weau-investigates-rebecca-cooke-cleared-wrongdoing-after-concerns-possible-electioneering/>

Narveson sentenced to pay fines, restitution

A jury convicted Green County Highway Commissioner Chris Narveson on August 21 on two misdemeanor counts, theft and resisting or obstructing a police officer, stemming from the theft of a campaign sign belonging to his opponent in the 2025 New Glarus Town Board chair race. Circuit Judge Jance Bucher sentenced Narveson to a \$1,000 fine plus court costs on the theft charge and a \$750 fine plus court costs on the obstructing charge; no jail time was imposed. Narveson had served as chair of the New Glarus Town Board since 2015 and as a board member for nearly two decades. The Town of New Glarus announced on August 10 that Narveson resigned his Town Board position, effective September 10. The victim in the case is Rob Ready, a former hazmat team leader for the Madison Fire Department, whom Narveson defeated in the April 2025 town board election. No statement from Narveson had been issued as of press time.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/narveson-sentenced-to-pay-fines-restitution/>

Population increase allows for additional liquor license

The Plymouth City Council adopted a resolution increasing the city's Class B liquor license cap by one, from 17 to 18. City Administrator and Utilities Manager Tim Blakeslee explained that Wisconsin law permits municipalities to add one Class B license for every 500-person increase in population. The new license is available for a restaurant, bar, or tavern. No vote count or resolution identifier was reported. No applicant or additional procedural step was reported in the available article text.

Source: Plymouth Review (Northeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/population-increase-allows-for-additional-liquor-license/>

La Crosse refuses to return Citgo's tobacco, liquor licenses

The La Crosse City Council denied Christine Taylor's applications to restore liquor and tobacco licenses to the Citgo gas station she now operates, citing insufficient separation between Taylor and the previous license holder. The city originally revoked the licenses after employees of the station, then operated by Taylor's stepfather Inderyaas Chiragdin, served alcohol to underage customers and illegally sold generic Viagra pills. Taylor created a new business entity, assumed the Citgo lease from her parents, and applied first for a tobacco license and then for a liquor license; the city rejected both applications after identifying her family relationship with Chiragdin. The Judiciary and Administration Committee held a special meeting before the full council vote. Council member Mackenzi Mindel stated that the council found insufficient separation between the applicant and the previous license holder for the same premises. Chiragdin currently faces criminal charges related to the pill sales, and Taylor is barred from reapplying for another 12 months.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_bcf086c4-b041-5e07-8521-7903a1e57e9c.html

Human Services

Wisconsin measles outbreak grows to 155 confirmed, 6 probable

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported on September 12, 2026, that the southwest Wisconsin measles outbreak had grown to 155 confirmed and six probable cases. Lafayette County accounted for 73 confirmed and six probable cases, Iowa County had 62 confirmed cases, and Grant County had 20 confirmed cases. DHS reported five measles-related hospitalizations and no deaths as of that date, and all but one of the 163 total Wisconsin cases in 2026 occurred in unvaccinated individuals. DHS stated that the investigation has not identified locations in public settings for which a full list of exposed people can be obtained. DHS and the affected counties' health departments are working to identify and notify potentially exposed individuals. A separate case was recorded in Madison in February 2026, when a University of Wisconsin-Madison student tested positive. DHS advised anyone developing symptoms to remain home and call a medical provider before visiting a clinic or office.

Source: Journal Times (Statewide) | https://journaltimes.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_8dea779f-a444-5148-a1af-5f3ba56f0dd4.html

William's House of Hope denied funding from City of Antigo

The Antigo Committee of the Whole voted on September 10, 2026, to deny a \$30,000 funding request from William's House of Hope, a nonprofit serving residents experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. The request represented the organization's first-time application for city funding. Nicole Barron, president of William's House of Hope, stated that the denial threatens the organization's capacity to continue operations at its current level. The organization has assisted 171 people since the start of 2026. No final Common Council vote or subsequent procedural step was reported.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/10/williams-house-of-hope-denied-funding-city-antigo/>

Despite bipartisan support, 988 Crisis Lifeline faces funding shortage

Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin, which operates Wisconsin's 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, answered 9,000 of more than 11,200 calls received in July 2026 in state, an 81 percent in-state response rate that places Wisconsin among nine states at or below that threshold. The line has received more than 345,000 texts or calls since launching in July 2022, and the organization is continuously recruiting counselors to meet demand. Wisconsin has not enacted a permanent funding mechanism for 988, unlike 12 states including Illinois and Minnesota, which impose telecommunications fees on phone bills and reported 90 percent in-state response rates in July. Wisconsin's existing 911 telecommunications fee stands at 75 cents per month per phone bill, a model advocates have presented to state legislators as a funding template for 988. Senior Vice President Tana Koss said Family Services requires sustainable long-term funding independent of federal appropriations or the state's biennial budget cycle. Wisconsin's in-state answer rate rose from 74 percent in January to 81 percent in July as call volume increased.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/health/2026-09-11/despite-bipartisan-support-988-crisis-lifeline-faces-funding-shortage>

School Districts

Amery board approves budget corrections as district tracks two ongoing audits

The Amery School Board voted unanimously on September 5, 2026, to approve a series of 2025-26 budget revisions correcting a data error that omitted certain debt payments from the district's original adopted budget. Business Manager Isaac Christenson, working with auditor CliftonLarsonAllen, identified four categories of changes: a roughly \$1.688 million transfer from the general fund to Fund 27, a reduction in OPEB disbursements to \$83,000, updated debt service fund figures, and adjustments to capital projects referendum Fund 49 for expenses carried over from a prior referendum paid out in early 2026. Christenson attributed the omission to a broken spreadsheet cell link that prevented correctly calculated levy figures from carrying into the board-adopted budget document. Superintendent Shawn Doerfler reported the district is simultaneously managing its regular annual audit, due to the state in early December, and an ongoing forensic audit by Intellex Forensics stemming from former Finance Director Jon McBride's resignation. Intellex will present findings to the board and the public upon completion.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-board-approves-budget-corrections-as-district-tracks-two-ongoing-audits/article_6adbfbcf-b4a9-45a6-8f98-216fbb388f44.html

By the numbers: Lunch fees, laptop costs and restraints

Superior School District officials presented three financial and compliance items at a committee of the whole meeting on September 8. Director of Food Service Jamie Wilson reported the district pays \$40,000 to \$50,000 annually in credit and debit card processing fees through the My School Bucks system, with the fee rate rising from approximately 3 percent to 10 percent; the district will now pass roughly half the cost to parents, equal to \$1 per \$20 deposit, while check payments remain fee-free. Director of Information and Technology Dan Widiker reported an estimated \$1.135 million in savings from switching elementary students from HP laptops, priced at \$1,050 each, to Chromebooks at \$399 each, with a planned extension of the replacement cycle from four to five years. Director of Student Services Dena Hagen presented the annual restraint and

seclusion report required by state law, documenting 14 incidents involving seven students in 2024-25, down from 41 incidents in 2021-22.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/by-the-numbers-lunch-fees-laptop-costs-and-restraints>

Board could act next week on new charter school proposal

The Plymouth Board of Education is scheduled to vote at its regular meeting on Tuesday, September 15, on a proposal to authorize Plymouth Forest Montessori as the district's first official charter school. The school submitted the authorization request to allow expansion of its existing partnership with the Plymouth school district. That partnership began in the current school year. The article does not report vote counts, dollar figures, resolution identifiers, or additional terms of the proposed charter agreement, as the full text is behind a subscriber paywall.

Source: Plymouth Review (Northeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/board-could-act-next-week-on-new-charter-school-proposal/>

Mequon neighbors talk Rennie Field relocation as school district launches \$8M fundraising effort

The Mequon-Thiensville School District launched a private \$8 million fundraising campaign to relocate Rennie Field from its off-campus location to the Homestead High School campus, with the campaign live on the district's homepage. The project scope includes a new baseball diamond, a new soccer stadium, and additional athletic facility improvements. The district has stated it intends to fund the entire project without any public money. The current Rennie Field site has been part of Homestead High School's baseball program since approximately 1970. The relocation is prompted by Mequon's civic campus redevelopment, which will convert the existing field site into a public plaza and amphitheater. The district indicated it will establish a clearer project timeline and roadmap after fundraising targets are secured.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/ozaukee-county/mequon-neighbors-talk-rennie-field-relocation-as-school-district-launches-8m-fundraising-effort>

State-Local Interface

Line 5 clean up continues, concerns about transparency grows

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources sent two letters to Enbridge on or around September 10, 2026, ordering the company to halt bypass construction and focus on cleanup following a 1.3 million gallon natural gas liquids spill near Saxon, the largest reported oil and gas pipeline spill in Wisconsin history according to a WPR analysis of federal data. One letter came from DNR Secretary Hyun and one from Integration Services Section Manager Kyle McLaughlin, whose letter stated that land disturbances, waterway crossings, and wetland matting associated with the bypass do not have authorization to proceed and that county or town approval may also be required. Secretary Hyun's letter cited additional environmental discharges since an earlier August 27 communication. Conservation group Clean Wisconsin has formally called for transparency over environmental monitoring, with its attorney noting the public is currently reliant on Enbridge's self-reported data. Enbridge stated it remains on schedule to reopen Line 5 via bypass on September 12, 2026.

Source: WXPB 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-09-11/line-5-clean-up-continues-concerns-about-transparency-grows>

Wisconsin voters to decide future of state equity programs

Wisconsin voters will decide in November 2026 on a proposed constitutional amendment titled Governmental Entity Discrimination Prohibited, one of three constitutional questions appearing on the midterm ballot. The amendment would ban preferential treatment in government programs and institutions on the basis of race, sex, color, or ethnicity. Programs identified as potentially affected include targeted health initiatives for Indigenous and Black communities, scholarships for marginalized students, and teacher incentive programs in rural and underserved areas. Debra Cronmiller, executive director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, stated that passage would roll back decades of equity programs designed to address systemic disparities, and noted that discrimination is already prohibited under existing federal law. Proponents argue that governmental entities should not grant special treatment based on the listed classifications. Voters will encounter this amendment alongside two other constitutional questions on the November ballot. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: WXPB 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/election/2026-09-11/wisconsin-voters-to-decide-future-of-state-equity-programs>

Beach access ruling reverberates in Ozaukee

Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge J.D. Watts on September 1 reversed a municipal court trespassing conviction against Paul Florsheim, a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee professor who walked from a public beach onto a private beach in Shorewood, ruling his action was protected by Wisconsin's public trust doctrine. Watts wrote that land below the ordinary high water mark is lake bed owned by the state of Wisconsin and that Florsheim's shoreline walk constituted a recreational activity. The decision does not overturn the governing 1923 Wisconsin Supreme Court precedent but found that case provided little guidance. The ruling carries implications for a Town of Grafton dispute near Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve, where private landowners had erected rope barriers and no-trespassing signs; the Department of Natural Resources ordered the rope removed as an unpermitted structure and marked the ordinary high water mark on site. Homeowner Mark Harris stated the ruling does not change existing law and that the rope line was adjusted to stop at that mark. Florsheim's attorney indicated the principles should be applied statewide.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | <https://ozaukeeexpress.com/content/beach-access-ruling-reverberates-ozaukee>

State invalidates Arcadia Middle School test scores

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction invalidated the English Language Arts Forward Exam scores of seventh-grade students at Arcadia Middle School for the 2025-26 school year after a review identified possible data irregularities. DPI communications director Chris Bucher confirmed Friday that the seventh-grade ELA administration was not a standard administration. The department's review encompassed irregularities involving seventh-grade ELA scores across two school years, 2024-25 and 2025-26. Superintendent Lori Frerk, Director of Curriculum Carmen Lee, and Middle School Principal Andrea Eisner communicated the determination to families and staff in a letter. Frerk, who joined the district in July 2024, stated the district is conducting its own parallel investigation and is cooperating fully with DPI, and that further details

cannot be shared because the matter involves a personnel issue. The impact on student and district accountability report cards remains unclear, and the district stated it will communicate next steps to affected families as additional guidance from DPI is received.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Statewide) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/education/article_25efaa7d-11fc-57c3-901e-c166efa9cc8b.html

International student losses pull down UW system enrollment

The Universities of Wisconsin reported preliminary fall 2026 enrollment of 163,260 students, a decline of 1,742 students compared to official fall 2025 enrollment of 164,992. International student enrollment fell by 1,100, the primary driver of the system-wide decrease of approximately 1 percent. UW-Eau Claire posted the largest percentage decrease at 5.2 percent, a drop of 498 students, and UW-Green Bay recorded the largest projected percentage increase at 3.5 percent, growing by 400 students. UW-Milwaukee announced its largest first-year class in 17 years, with 5,056 new undergraduates including 3,903 first-year and 1,153 transfer students, lifting overall UW-Milwaukee enrollment 0.7 percent to 22,662. Federal visa policy set to take effect September 15 limits international students to four years of study in the United States, and UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee have cited those proposed limits in recent court filings as already impeding international student recruitment. Official tenth-day enrollment counts will be released later this fall.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Statewide) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_8deb3d6c-740f-5792-8fef-794fc9a56d64.html

Gov. Evers approves WIS 35 Waumandee Creek Bridge project

Governor Tony Evers signed a contract exceeding \$500,000 for rehabilitation of the bridge carrying WIS 35 over Waumandee Creek in Buffalo County, according to a Wisconsin Department of Transportation press release dated September 12, 2026. The project scope includes repairs to the bridge deck, a concrete overlay of the bridge deck, and replacement of tipping wing walls. Construction is scheduled to begin September 14, 2026, with completion targeted for late October 2026. During construction, WIS 35 will remain open to a single lane of traffic across the bridge, controlled by temporary traffic signals.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/09/12/gov-evers-approves-wis-35-waumandee-creek-bridge-project/>

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.
